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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

FACTORS RELATED TO SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER JOB COMMITMENT:
A STUDY OF ONE LARGE METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT
IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy

by

Joseph David Green

April, 2011

Christopher A. Lund, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Joseph David Green

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beautiful wife Christina, and my wonderful children, Natasia and Nathaniel. You have supported me unconditionally throughout this journey, and I am truly grateful to you for that. I love you.

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VITA

JOSEPH GREEN**EDUCATION**

Master of Arts in Psychology, 2002 Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA,
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Master of Arts in Education, 1999 Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA,
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology, 1996 University of California, Los Angeles

Associate of Arts, 1993 Santa Monica College, Santa Monica, CA

CERTIFICATION

Professional Clear Level II Education Specialist Instruction Credential

CLAD Certificate

Professional Clear Administrative Services Credential

Nonviolent Crisis Intervention (NCI) Trainer for Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE***Transition Specialist, Division of Special Education***

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), 2007-present

- Provide technical support and supervision in the implementation of secondary transition programs
- Provide assistance to secondary transition and special education teachers in the identification of appropriate educational program planning
- Assist in the development, implementation and presentation of staff development
- Collaborate with District offices, interagency partners and community partners
- Coordinate and evaluate Certificated personnel
- Liaison to Support Unit Administrators, Schools, and the Division of Special Education
- Experience with website design
- Experience creating videos for staff development purposes
- Compose and edit Division's official numbered documents
- Manage the Division's Inside LAUSD document library of documents
- Develop written responses to parents, staff, Office of the Superintendent from the Associate Superintendent

- Investigate and respond to parent concerns on behalf of the Associate Superintendent in both English and Spanish, as appropriate

Bridge Coordinator

Fairfax High School, 2006-2008

- Coordinated special education instructional program
- Managed all aspects of compliance
- Provided support and supervision for forty special education paraprofessionals
- Assisted with the development of school master schedule, with a focus programming of students with disabilities
- Monitored and analyzed data related to student achievement, behavior, and attendance

Instructor – District Intern Program

Los Angeles Unified School District, 2006-2008

- Participated in evaluation of student portfolios
- Participated in student exit interviews
- Instructor for “Induction” seminar; guided intern research projects

Resource Specialist Teacher

Fairfax High School, 2005-2006

- Co-taught senior high school English classes in general education setting

Pre-K Intervention (Orthopedically Handicapped)

Burbank Elementary, Summer 2005

- Taught students with moderate-severe disabilities during a summer school session

Educational Research

Pepperdine University, 2002

- Co-Authored research article on overcoming academic anxiety with Cara Garcia, Ph.D. (published in the Gestalt Journal, 2007)

Special Education Teacher and Department Chair

Sepulveda Middle School, 1999-2005

- Taught all subjects in special day class setting

ADDITIONAL RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

- Planned, delivered, and evaluated success of professional development for school site staff, Bridge Coordinators, Leadership Excellence through Administrator Development (LEAD) Academy participants, Special Education Leadership Academy (SPELA) participants, District Office of Transition Services (DOTS) teachers, and at Division Leadership Team (DLT) meetings.
- I am a current, registered NCI trainer, and have completed several trainings this school year.

RELEVANT COMPUTER PROFICIENCIES

PC / Macintosh: SPSS, Adobe Professional, various office-suite applications

Online learning: Sakai, BlackBoard, Elluminate, Xythos, TurnItIn

ABSTRACT

Researchers have focused their attention on the subject of special education teacher attrition for many years. While these researchers have made valuable findings, the need to abate the staggering numbers of special education teachers who leave the field still exists. Districts desiring to retain their teachers must place greater emphasis on the development of evidence-based strategies to reduce teacher attrition (Billingsley, 2004).

The purposes of this study were to: (a) provide an overview of the extent, if at all, to which perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California differ on the basis of those teachers' demographic characteristics; (b) identify the extent, if at all, to which perceptions of job satisfaction and stress are related to perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California; (c) identify the common reasons/conditions expressed by current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California for wanting to leave teaching special education; and (d) identify the reported career plans of current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California.

Examining the literature in non-teaching fields, general education teaching, and special education and considering the findings from this study, the salient factors relating to burnout appear to be: (a) personal/demographic factors (e.g., marital status, age, gender, race/ethnicity, type of student population, experience on the job, certification and preparation, and self-concept/self-confidence); (b) employment factors (e.g., mentoring opportunities, salary, workload, caseload and class size, administrative support, colleague

support, interpersonal relationships, availability of resources, and employee involvement in decision-making, level of parent involvement, school climate, and student discipline issues); and (c) external factors (e.g., lack of respect or prestige, community/societal support for the occupation). There are other personal factors that should not be attributed to burnout, such as retirement, promotion, relocating, health, pregnancy, and other family-related issues.

This study employed a survey design. The target population for this study was the over 4,000 full-time special education teachers (as designated by district criteria) employed by a large metropolitan school district in Southern California. The specific form of data collection was the administration of a web-based survey using Survey Monkey. The instrument used was an adapted version of a questionnaire by Billingsley and Cross (1992, as revised by Theoharis, 2008). In addition, two questions pertaining to “Future Teaching Plans” were borrowed from Billingsley, Pyecha, Smith-Davis, Murray, and Hendricks (1995). Data analysis included both quantitative (descriptive statistics, correlation, ANOVA, multiple regression) and qualitative techniques (coding and sorting responses into themes).

The findings of this study suggest the following demographic variables are related to job commitment: being female, Hispanic, and teaching students with eligibilities other than learning disabilities in an elementary setting. Job satisfaction was positively correlated with job commitment and career longevity, but negatively correlated with job stress. In addition, job stress was negatively correlated with both with job satisfaction and career longevity. Also, job satisfaction and career longevity were positively correlated. The most frequently indicated factors related to wanting to leave the field

included lack of administrative support, workload issues, salary issues, paperwork issues, class size issues, lack of parent involvement, negative school climate, inadequate resources, lack of respect or prestige, student discipline issues, lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making, lack of time to interact with colleagues, lack of community support, negative teacher-teacher relationships, and negative teacher-student relationships. The majority of the special education teachers who participated in this study indicated that they planned to remain in their job at least until retirement. For those who planned to leave within the next 3 to 5 years, the most frequently indicated reasons (in order of popularity) were retirement, followed by obtaining a promotion within school or district, seeking employment in a non-teaching job in education, and teaching special education in another district.

Future research should examine the relationship between teacher predictions for career plans and actual behavior, and should explore the specific employment or external factors that lead some special education teachers to indicate intent to remain in or leave the field. Further research is recommended to explore the relationship between years teaching special education and job commitment, the nature of colleague interaction and its effect on job satisfaction, and intent to remain in or leave the field. Future research should also examine the nature of support provided by administrators in schools where special education teachers perceive satisfactory levels of support, and further research is needed to investigate the association between race and job satisfaction.

Chapter One: The Problem

Introduction

The public school system in America has become a revolving door for some teachers. In each of the last 5 years in the United States, an average of 15% of public school teachers have either left or changed positions (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2009). Even more disconcerting is the fact that upwards of 50% of beginning educators vacate the field within the first 5 years (Ingersoll, 2003; Scherer, 1999). Such fluctuation not only impacts student achievement and the overall solidity of schools, but also substantially affects the number of qualified instructors in the teaching workforce altogether. Policymakers must consider the causes of changes in the educator labor force as they adopt new policies and implement programs that address teacher retention, attrition, and quality.

This introduction is presented in eight sections: (a) background information, (b) description of the problem, (c) the purpose of the study, (d) research questions, (e) operational definitions of variables and conceptual definitions of key terms, (f) importance of the study, (g) assumptions, and (h) limitations of this study.

Background of Problem

A momentous shift in the teaching profession is imminent. As NCES (2009) reports, the United States will face a dearth of over two million teachers within the coming 10 years stemming from teacher attrition, increases in student enrollment, and teacher retirement; furthermore, within the same time frame, upwards of 700,000 new teachers will be needed in poverty-stricken rural and urban school districts alone.

The National Education Association (NEA, n.d.) reports that the national starting salary of teachers is \$30,377, which is up to 35% less than other professions requiring similar training and responsibility, such as computer programmers, accountants, and registered nurses. How can school districts expect to keep highly qualified college graduates in the teaching profession when their selection leads to an abysmal financial future?

Currently, there is an enormous shortfall of qualified teachers in several specific subject areas. The areas with the greatest need are special education, science (especially physical science), mathematics, computer science, English as a Second Language, and foreign languages (American Association for Employment in Education, 2007).

Exacerbating the problem is the fact that as of the 2002-2003 school year, the nation's public schools experienced a shortage of 13.4% (54,000) qualified special education teachers (Boe, 2006). The demand for special education teachers has grown 47% over the past 17 years, amounting to 10,000 additional openings each year for the past 6 years (Boe, Sunderland, & Cook, 2006); however, the annual attrition rates among special education teachers nationwide is between 8-10% (Nickson, Kritsonis, & Herrington, 2006).

Brownell, Hirsch, and Seo (2004) reported, "Annually, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, spends approximately \$90 million to increase the numbers of special education teachers available to serve our nation's students with disabilities" (p. 56). This funding is in addition to the numerous incentive programs that states put into place to address special education teacher shortages.

Brownell et al. continued, “Unfortunately, these combined costly efforts have been insufficient to adequately increase the number of qualified teachers in special education, particularly teachers who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD)” (p. 56). It is critical that policymakers implement teacher retention programs that will have high potential, while abandoning programs that have had little success.

Urban districts have felt the brunt of the deleterious effects of special education teacher shortage, with 97.5% of urban districts experiencing shortages as of 1999 (Boyer & Gillespie, 2000). California experienced a special education teacher shortage every year from 1993 through 2008 (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2010), with an annual attrition rate of 24.2% (Pyecha & Levine, 1995). Intensifying the problem is the high number of special education teachers in California who do not have special education credentials. In the 2002-2003 school year, 15% of teachers providing services to students with disabilities did not have adequate preparation (Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2004). The number of complaints being filed against school districts due to lack of services in special education is on the rise. As reported by Boghossian (2008), in one large urban school district in Southern California, parent complaints regarding special education have risen 25% from 2001-2008. In 2007, the total number of complaints was 2,302, and the amount paid in attorneys’ fees was a staggering \$2.2 million.

The Charlotte Advocates for Education reported costs of up to \$11,500 to replace a teacher in an urban school district (Bullock, Warren, & Hawk, 2007). Notwithstanding

the financial ramifications, school districts suffer tremendous losses to the continuity of their instructional programs when teachers do not remain in their jobs.

Reasons special education teachers leave. Researchers have focused their attention on the subject of special education teacher attrition for many years. While researchers have made valuable findings, the need to swiftly abate the staggering numbers of special education teachers who leave the field persists. Districts desiring to retain their teachers must place greater emphasis on the development of evidence-based strategies to reduce teacher attrition (Billingsley, 2004).

The first step in accomplishing this goal is to understand the current trends in special education teacher attrition. Billingsley's (2004) review of the literature summarizes the key findings of special education attrition researchers over the past 15 years:

1. Younger and less experienced special education teachers are more likely to leave their positions when compared to their elder, more experienced equivalents.
2. Special education teachers without proper certification are more apt to leave their jobs than those with certification.
3. The workplace environment has been shown to have a large influence on special education teacher job satisfaction and future career plans. Specific variables that relate to special education teachers' workplace environment have been identified, such as salary, school climate, administrative and

collegial support, professional development, teacher roles, paperwork, and student and caseload issues.

4. Work-related problems, such as increased stress levels, decreased job satisfaction, and decreased commitment to their job result in negative affective reactions.
5. Special education teachers who score higher on teacher proficiency tests, such as the National Teacher Exam, have a higher attrition rate than their counterparts with lower scores.
6. Personal and familial issues, such as pregnancy/child rearing, health, and retirement are strong correlates to special education teacher attrition (p. 28).

A large number of special education teachers who leave their positions accept other positions in the general education setting (Brownell, Smith, & Miller, 1995). Boe, Cook, Bobbitt, and Weber (1995) used USDOE's Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) to investigate the factors that cause special education and general education teacher attrition, retention, and transfer. The surveys yielded national data from over 2,500,000 teachers. Boe et al. reported that 11% of special education teachers who were teaching during the 1990-1991 school year did not return for the 1991-1992 school year, and 5% left in favor of other teaching positions in the general education setting. The results imply that educational leaders must place a high priority on mitigating special education teacher attrition.

Special education teachers may leave their jobs due to frustration resulting from well-intentioned, yet increasingly burdensome, federal policies. Special education law

traces its roots back to Public Law (P.L.) 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (USDOE, n.d.). This law mandated that students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education, are guaranteed due process rights, receive individualized education programs (IEPs), and are given an educational setting and service delivery within the least restrictive environment (LRE). This law was the foundation of federal funding for special education, which was promised at 40% of the total program cost, but has never been delivered beyond about 12%. This law was enacted in 1975 and was made policy in October of 1977, when the set of regulations was finalized. In its inception, this law did tremendous good for students with disabilities and became a cornerstone for equality for young people with disabilities. It allowed disabled students to become included and participate in an educational program with their non-disabled peers. In 1990, P.L. 101-476, The Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments (since renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA]) were developed. These amendments added more stringent control over the provision of services, the identification of students with disabilities, and the devices and other such technology that would be deemed necessary for students with disabilities to gain equal access to the educational curriculum. The most current special education law, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004, sets forth increased demands on school districts. Included in this revision is the strengthening of the parents' role; greater consideration for ethnic, racial, and linguistic diversity to counteract misidentification; and additional considerations relative to due process rights for parents and families (USDOE, n.d.). While all of this is well-intentioned, there is a

price to pay for increasing the ease of obtaining and the number of services children receive. An increase in the number and amount of services necessitates that funding be available to provide what the law mandates. As states continue to spend more of their funds to sustain these programs, the federal government has not matched the costs incurred by the states. This mismatch results in overworked teachers, understaffed schools, a lack of sufficient instructional materials, and higher student-to-teacher ratios.

In 1988 Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) formed a Presidential Commission on the Conditions of Special Education Teaching and Learning. The purpose of the Commission was to discover any obstacles to a first-rate special education program and to set forth an action plan that would guarantee that all special needs students were taught by a highly qualified teacher in a suitable environment with appropriate materials and amenities. The Commission's findings summarize the system's inability to provide greatly needed high-quality instruction for special needs students.

The salient conclusions were:

1. Students with special needs are not being sufficiently educated to meet the demands of the 21st century.
2. Special education teachers feel they have too many competing interests, and the roles they are asked to fulfill are fragmented and ambiguously defined.
3. Special educators are overwhelmed by paperwork resulting from increases in demands for procedural compliance.
4. Special educators experience significant feelings of isolation (Kozleski, Mainzer, & Deshler, 2000, p. 5).

Most at-risk special education teachers. Many individuals who enter the teaching profession out of a desire and passion to positively influence the lives of children leave the profession prematurely. In a given year, approximately 6% of all teachers in the nation vacate the profession, while more than 7% change from one school to another. Within 3 years, 20% of all newly hired teachers vacate the profession (NEA, n.d.). In urban school districts, more than 50% of newly hired teachers leave the field of teaching completely within their first 5 years (Darling-Hammond, 1996). Despite earnest efforts by school districts to put in place programs to provide much-needed support targeted specifically at budding special education teachers, rarely do these programs provide the particular assistance these teachers need (Boyer & Gillespie, 2000). The special education teacher who most frequently leaves the field fits the following profile (Butterfield, 2004; Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 1998; White 1995):

- White
- Female
- Under 35 years of age
- Has earned a Master's degree
- Has fewer than 5 years of experience teaching special education
- Works in an elementary school setting
- Teaches children with emotional, visual, hearing, or speech disabilities
- Possesses an emergency or provisional certification

The Problem

Although teacher attrition in general, and special education teacher attrition in particular, have been widely studied by researchers over the past 15 years, there are several gaps in the literature. Billingsley (2004) proposed that future researchers investigate the relationship of special education teacher job satisfaction to attrition (Klecker & Loadman, 1996; Ouyang & Paprock, 2006; Perie, Baker, & Whitener, 1997; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005). The effects of variables such as personal factors (e.g., age, gender, race, and teacher certification and preparation), employment factors (e.g., yearly salary, issues related to school climate, support from administrators, support from colleagues, role conflict, paperwork, caseloads, stress, and job satisfaction), and external factors (economics, societal perspectives, and support from family and colleagues) as they relate to job commitment need further investigation (Billingsley, 2004). This investigation will address the factors related to special education teacher job commitment among a sample of special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study are to: (a) provide an overview of the extent, if at all, to which perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California differ on the basis of those teachers' demographic characteristics; (b) identify the extent, if at all, to which perceptions of job satisfaction and stress are related to perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in

Southern California; (c) identify the common reasons/conditions expressed by current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California for wanting to leave teaching special education; and (d) identify the career plans of current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. To what extent, if at all, do perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California differ on the basis of those teachers' demographic characteristics?
2. To what extent, if at all, are perceptions of job satisfaction, stress, and career longevity related to perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California?
3. After controlling for demographic characteristics, to what extent, if at all, are perceptions of job satisfaction, stress, and career longevity related to the perceived level of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California?
4. What common reasons/conditions do current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California give for wanting to leave teaching in special education?

5. What do current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California report their career plans to be?

Conceptual and Operational Definitions of Key Terms

The following are both conceptual and operational definitions of the terms as they relate to this study:

- *Administrator.* Administrators provide supervisory services in grades 12 and below. Administrators develop and monitor instructional programs, evaluate personnel, provide student discipline, supervise staff, manage school sites, recruit and employ certificated and classified personnel, and coordinate student support services (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing [CCTC], 2007a).
- *Attrition.* Attrition refers to exiting the profession of special education as a result of resignation, changes in career, family reasons, retirement, or other reasons (Billingsley, 2004).
- *College or university internship program.* University Internship Credentials are earned by enrolling in an approved internship program. California colleges and universities administer these programs in collaboration with school districts. They are designed to give candidates full-time work experience while they work towards fulfilling course work requirements for the preliminary or professional clear credential. University Internship Credentials permit the holder to provide services in the area or subject listed on the credential (CCTC, 2007b).

- *College or university training program.* Traditional training program where students enroll in a full-time course of study toward earning their credential (CCTC, 2007b).
- *Commitment.* Mowday, Porter, and Steers (as cited in Theoharis, 2008) define organizational commitment as the degree to which a worker identifies with and is involved with an organization. Three factors are included in commitment: (a) the degree to which the worker believes in and accepts the profession's goals and values; (b) the degree to which the worker is willing to exert effort to further the goals and values of the profession; and (c) the degree to which the worker desires to remain within the profession.
- *Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH).* This is a type of certification that allows a teacher to provide specialized instruction for students who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or deaf-blind, and services to students with a hearing loss that manifests itself in conjunction with additional disabilities including unilateral or bilateral, fluctuating, conductive, sensorineural, and/or auditory neuropathy, and authorize service to individuals ages birth through 22 (CCTC, 2007b).
- *District intern program.* Provides candidates an option for an alternative route to certification. Candidates work full-time while completing an accredited course of study within their own school district (CCTC, 2007b).
- *Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE).* This is a type of certification that allows the teacher to provide specialized instruction for students with

mild/moderate and moderate/severe disabilities, traumatic brain injuries, developmental delays, and disabling medical conditions, and authorize service for children ages birth to 5 years (CCTC, 2007b).

- *Itinerant teacher.* Itinerant teachers travel from class to class or school to school. They sometimes work specifically with students receiving special education services, providing intensive instruction and support. In this study, itinerant teachers are classified as teachers providing service to students with the following disabilities: deaf/hard of hearing, and visual impairment (CCTC, 2007b).
- *Job satisfaction.* Job satisfaction is the degree to which a worker is satisfied with his or her work situation (Perie et al., 1997). Job satisfaction can be thought of in terms of one's perception of one's career, in terms of specific aspects (salary, coworkers), and can be tied to specific results, such as output or efficiency (Rice, Gentile, & McFarlin, 1991). With teachers, job satisfaction and student learning may be directly correlated (Perie et al., 1997). Some researchers contend that teachers who do not feel supported may be less likely to put forth their best efforts in the classroom (Ashton & Webb, as cited in Perie et al., 1997; Ostroff, 1992).
- *Mild/Moderate Disabilities (M/M).* This is a type of certification that allows the teacher to provide specialized instruction for students with aphasia, specific learning disabilities, mild to moderate intellectual disabilities, other health impairments, and emotional disturbance, and authorize service in

grades K-12, and in classes organized primarily for adults through age 22 (CCTC, 2007b).

- *Moderate/Severe Disabilities (M/S)*. This is a type of certification that allows the teacher to provide specialized instruction for students who are autistic, are deaf-blind, have moderate to severe intellectual disabilities, have multiple disabilities, have an orthopedic/other health impairment, have an emotional disturbance, or are visually impaired. A teacher with an M/S certification has the power to authorize service in grades K-12 and in classes organized primarily for adults through age 22 (CCTC, 2007b).
- *Physical and Health Impairments (PHI)*. This is a type of certification that allows the teacher to provide specialized instruction for students who have an orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, multiple disabilities, or traumatic brain injury, and authorize service to individuals ages birth through 22 (CCTC, 2007b).
- *Resource specialist teacher*. A special education teacher who provides instruction and services for students with disabilities who are assigned to a general education teacher for the majority of the school day. These services include: providing information and assistance to students and their parents; providing collaborative consultation and co-teaching; monitoring of pupil progress; emphasizing academic achievement; career and vocational development; and preparation for adult life (CCTC, 2007b).

- *Retention.* Remaining in the field of special education as a special education teacher (Billingsley, 2004).
- *Special day class teacher.* A teacher who delivers special education services in a classroom environment apart from the general education population for the greater part of the school day for students with similar and more intensive needs (CCTC, 2007b).
- *Special day class teacher (mild/moderate disabilities).* In this study, special day class teachers (mild/moderate disabilities) are classified as teachers providing service to students with the following disabilities: aphasia, mild/moderate intellectual disabilities, and specific learning disabilities (CCTC, 2007b).
- *Special day class teacher (moderate/severe disabilities).* In this study, special day class teachers (moderate/severe disabilities) are classified as teachers providing service to students with the following disabilities: autism, deaf/blind, deaf/hard of hearing, emotional disturbance, moderate/severe intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, and visual impairment (CCTC, 2007b).
- *Special education teacher.* A teacher of students found eligible for special education. For the purposes of this study, a special education teacher is a certificated staff member working within a public school system and includes the following: special day class (SDC) teacher, resource specialist teacher (RST), or itinerant teacher (CCTC, 2007b).

- *Stress*. In this study, stress is a term used to assess participants' "feelings" that they experience concerning their jobs.
- *Teacher burnout*. A condition caused by lack of ability to manage stressful occupational conditions accompanied by low morale, low productivity, high absenteeism, and high job turnover ("Teacher burnout," n.d.).
- *Teacher ethnicity/race*. For the purposes of this study, teacher ethnicity will be defined in terms of membership in one the following categories: African American/Black, American Indian or Alaskan, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or Other (to be specified by the participant).
- *Total number of years teaching*. The total number of years teaching includes the total time spent teaching as a general and special education teacher, combined.
- *Total number of years teaching special education*. The total number of years spent teaching as a special education teacher.
- *Visual Impairments (VI)*. A type of certification that allows the teacher to provide specialized instruction for students who are blind or visually impaired, and authorize service to individuals ages birth through 22 (CCTC, 2007b).

Importance of the Study

This research topic is opportune in light of the nationwide need and effort to retain special education teachers (Billingsley, 2004; Boe, 2006; Boe et al., 2006; Boyer &

Gillespie, 2000; Brownell et al., 2004; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005; Gerald & Hussar, 2003; Ingersoll, 2001; Nickson et al., 2006; Voke, 2002). The entire State of California has recognized a significant staffing problem in special education (USDOE, 2010); therefore, this research is important to all school districts in the state. The results of this study may help policymakers and educational administrators, both locally and beyond, develop systems and implement practices that will positively impact special education teacher job satisfaction and increase the retention of special education teachers specifically, and all teachers in general. This study also presents potential benefits for students and schools because retaining experienced, qualified special education teachers is positively related to student achievement and maintaining a positive school climate (McLeskey, Tyler, & Flippin, 2004). This study will also expand the existing knowledge base and body of literature by providing recommendations about factors contributing to special education teacher job commitment, which is a known predictor of plans to remain in or leave the field (Billingsley, 1993, 2004).

Assumptions

Because the investigator does not have the wherewithal to make direct observations and ratings of teacher job satisfaction over time and in a variety of settings, a questionnaire was used, which afforded the participants in this study the opportunity to self-report. It is necessary to assume that the participants provided honest answers on the survey instrument. This assumption seems tenable because the participants completed their surveys electronically and their identities remained confidential.

Limitations

This sample was taken from a population of special education teachers in Southern California; to generalize the results of this study more broadly, it would be necessary to also include participant samples from other regions of the country. Another limitation that is generally attributed to survey research is the tendency to oversimplify one's lived experiences. The subjective design of questionnaires and multiple-choice questions with predetermined categories may not allow respondents to provide answers that truly reflect their thoughts, feelings, or opinions regarding a particular question (Fowler, 2008). Another limitation of this study is that the respondents may not be representative of the entire population; rather, they may only be those who agree to participate, which may bias their responses. A common pitfall to survey research that may apply to this study is that participants may misunderstand survey questions. Surveys are also susceptible to under-rater or over-rater bias, which is the tendency for respondents to give consistently high or low ratings (Isaac & Michael, 1995). Since this survey will be conducted via the Internet, it is important to note that this type of research typically has notoriously low response rates. Thus, the results of this study will be highly tentative, as only data from those who choose to respond will be included in the results (Patten, 2005). Another limitation is conducting a study during a time when so many teachers are being laid off. Morale is very low and this may have an effect on the responses given to the survey items. Finally, the respondents' familiarity with the Internet and computer technology may pose challenges to their ability to access and complete the survey accurately.

Chapter Two: Review of Relevant Literature

This chapter will present a review of the extant literature on the various factors that relate to perceptions of job commitment. While the focus of the current study is on how demographic and employment factors relate to job commitment of special education teachers, this literature review will also include an overview of how these factors relate to teachers in general, as well as those in non-teaching fields. Reviewing the literature pertaining to burnout in non-teaching fields will identify commonalities and draw meaningful conclusions that can be applied not only to the special education teaching profession, but also to general education and to non-teaching fields.

The variables in this study all fall within the construct of burnout—a term that is used to describe how people perceive their overall work experience, and what can happen when someone’s perception of their work experience becomes negative (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Stress and job satisfaction are variables that relate to commitment, which appears to be a predictor of the likelihood of burnout. Attrition is the end result of burnout.

The first section of this literature review will explore the variables that have been found that relate to burnout in non-teaching fields. The next section will include a discussion of burnout factors among teachers in general (non-special education). This section will be followed by a review of the literature related specifically to burnout factors among special education teachers. This chapter will conclude with a summary of the main issues and a discussion of why the researcher considers the current study important.

For this literature review, various databases were searched, including ERIC, Psychological Abstracts, Dissertation Abstracts International, and other online resources. Sources such as articles, reports, and book chapters provided additional information. Literature pertaining to special education support personnel (e.g., psychologists, related services providers, paraprofessionals) was excluded from this review, because this study focuses on special education teaching staff. To be included in this review, studies must have reported historical or theoretical constructs related to job satisfaction, job related stress, or job commitment, and empirical data via quantitative or qualitative research methods, and must have directly addressed the issue of employee burnout.

This literature review begins with a summary of what is known about burnout and attrition among employees in non-teaching fields, then moves into what is known about burnout and attrition among teachers, followed by findings related to special education teacher burnout and attrition. Within each major section of this chapter, the researcher will outline the historical and theoretical background of the topic being discussed, followed by pertinent empirical studies. Additionally, this literature review provides background information to justify the rationale for this study.

Factors Related to Burnout in Non-teaching Fields

Historical and theoretical. The initial articles pertaining to job burnout research began in the 1970s with the primary purpose of documenting the burnout phenomenon and describing the burnout process (Freudenberger, as cited in Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach, as cited in Maslach et al., 2001). Two themes emerged from early research about issues related to employee burnout among service providers in the health and

human services sectors: (a) emotional exhaustion, which is the result of high job demands and work overload; and (b) depersonalization, which is the service provider's self-imposed emotional distancing from his/her client(s). Paradoxically, many workers detach from their clients in an effort to avoid burnout, in spite of their need to connect with their clients to obtain job fulfillment; moreover, this emotional detachment results in workers treating clients in callous and dehumanizing ways, further exacerbating feelings of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).

With this theoretical framework in place, Maslach and Jackson (as cited in Maslach et al., 2001) investigated burnout using a more empirical approach. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), designed by Maslach and Jackson in 1981, yielded quantitative data to measure the theoretical constructs of burnout: (a) emotional stress factors, and (b) interpersonal stress factors—an outgrowth of the term *depersonalization*—that employees experience on the job (Maslach et al., 2001).

Irvine and Evans (1995) developed a different theory to explain burnout in terms of motivating and maintenance factors that relate to people's attitudes towards their work. The motivating and maintenance factors in Irvine and Evans's model were enveloped later into what Maslach et al. (2001) categorized as the situational factors. Irvine and Evans described motivating factors as whether workers feel appreciated by coworkers or supervisors, the degree to which they feel they are contributing, and if there are opportunities for upward mobility. Motivating factors also include perceived levels of self-satisfaction. Irvine and Evans described maintenance factors, which are issues that

affect a worker's decision to remain in their job, such as salary and accompanying benefits, organizational policies, and work environment.

In the 1990s, the MBI was used in areas other than education and human services fields, including computer technology, clerical, military personnel, and management. Burnout was defined according to three core dimensions: (a) exhaustion, (b) cynicism, and (c) inefficacy. Of these three dimensions, exhaustion was the most widely reported. Exhaustion was defined as a state of physical and emotional diminution caused by prolonged stress and excessive job demands. Cynicism is the process of deliberately creating an emotional distance between oneself and those with whom one works, and it occurs in an effort to make the demands of work more manageable. Inefficacy, which was defined as a worker's feeling of incompetence and a feeling of low productivity and achievement, occurs as a result of exhaustion and cynicism (Maslach et al., 2001). Maslach et al. further posited that exhaustion is a necessary precursor to burnout; however, exhaustion alone is insufficient to cause the experience of burnout. People experiencing burnout attempt to cope by creating emotional distance or cynicism (referred to as depersonalization by Maslach et al.) between themselves and those with whom they interact by considering them as impersonal objects. As Maslach et al. explain:

A work situation with chronic, overwhelming demands that contribute to exhaustion or cynicism is likely to erode one's sense of effectiveness. Further, exhaustion or depersonalization interfere with effectiveness: It is difficult to gain

a sense of accomplishment when feeling exhausted or when helping people toward whom one is indifferent. (p. 403)

Burnout appears to have many adverse affects on oneself as well as on others in the workplace, in addition to negatively affecting job performance. Consequences of burnout may include withdrawal and absenteeism. Burnout can affect one's colleagues by creating interpersonal conflict and disrupting job tasks. Burnout also impacts psychological and physiological health, which can impact one's ability to handle stressors and to effectively cope with those stressors (Maslach et al., 2001).

Maslach et al. (2001) expanded the three-pronged model (exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy) by summarizing the research findings over the past 25 years in terms of:

1. The situational factors (where burnout occurs), including (a) job characteristics, (b) occupational characteristics, and (c) organizational characteristics); and
2. The individual factors (among which burnout occurs), including (a) demographic characteristics, (b) personality characteristics, and (c) job attitudes (see Table 1).

Table 1

Situational and Individual Factors Associated With Burnout

Situational Factors	
Job characteristics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quantitative job demands (i.e., too much work, not enough time). 2. Role conflict and ambiguity. 3. Absence of job resources (i.e., social support). 4. Lack of support from supervisors. 5. Lack of autonomy and little participation in decision-making.
Occupational characteristics	Emotional challenges of working with other people (i.e., jobs which require the displaying or suppressing of emotions).
Organizational characteristics	Psychological factors: Employees are expected to exert greater effort and give more of their time while maintaining high flexibility, but employers offer insufficient advancement opportunities and job security.
Individual Factors	
Demographic characteristics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Age: Employees under the age of 30 are more likely to experience burnout. 2. Sex: no conclusions. 3. Marital status: unmarried (especially men) are more apt to experience burnout. 4. Ethnicity: no conclusions. 5. Education: Those with higher levels of education are more apt to experience burnout.
Personality characteristics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Locus of control: Those with external locus of control are more apt to experience burnout. 2. Coping styles: Those who lack coping strategies for handling stressful events are more prone to burnout. 3. Personality dimensions: Neurotic personalities (hostility, depression, anxiety, self-consciousness) and Type-A personalities (competition, feeling that there is not enough time for one's lifestyle, extreme need for control) are most prone to experience burnout.
Job attitudes	People with high expectations have a high likelihood for burnout. High expectations cause workers to try to do more than they are capable of. <u>Note</u> : The findings related to job attitudes are inconclusive.

Note. Adapted from "Job Burnout" by C. Maslach, W. B. Schaufeli, and M. P. Leiter, 2001, *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52(1), p. 397-422. Copyright 2001 by Annual Reviews.

Factors related to job satisfaction in non-teaching fields. Ellenbecker (2004) and Leiter and Maslach (2009) proposed theories for job burnout among nurses. These theories complement each other well, with Ellenbecker's theory encapsulating a wide range of empirical research, and Leiter and Maslach's building on the foundation of Maslach's prior work related to job burnout. Together, these theories summarize the salient empirical findings; however, in isolation, they are incomplete. Using results of empirical research findings, Ellenbecker developed a model with the aim of identifying factors that predict future job satisfaction. The model includes two categories related to job satisfaction: (a) intrinsic factors (autonomy in relationships with patients and group cohesion among peers and physicians); and (b) extrinsic factors (stress/workload, autonomy and control of work hours, salary/benefits, and perceptions of outside career opportunities). Ellenbecker's model also includes a category related to individual characteristics, which are related to intent to stay in the field: age (older nurses tend to stay in the field longer), and marital status and kin care (those who were married with children under age 6 were more likely to stay in the field). Leiter and Maslach developed a theoretical model to explain a sequence of burnout occurring among nurses: (a) negative relations with supervisors lead to feelings of exhaustion; (b) feelings of exhaustion evolve into cynicism, particularly common among nurses who lacked support from colleagues; and (c) feelings of inefficacy ultimately lead to burnout.

Findings from empirical research appear to suggest that nurses who perceive higher job satisfaction are more likely to avoid burnout (Aiken, Clark, Sloane, Sochalski, & Silber, 2002; Coomber & Barriball, 2007; Lambert, Hogan, & Barton, 2001; Leiter &

Maslach, 2009; Leveck & Jones, 1996; Shields & Ward, 2001). The ideas described in Leiter and Maslach's theoretical model were consistent with Coomber and Barriball's literature review, Leveck and Jones' study, and Shields and Ward's study, all of which presented various employment-related and individual factors related to job satisfaction and burnout.

Coomber and Barriball (2007) presented the following key points: (a) unsupportive management exerted the greatest influence on job dissatisfaction and attrition among nurses; (b) salary and level of education completed were secondary factors related to job dissatisfaction and attrition; and (c) nurses' perceived connection between their core values and their job has been found to predict job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, which is a precursor to burnout.

Shields and Ward (2001) found that nurses who reported job dissatisfaction were 65% more likely to quit than those who reported job satisfaction. In a national survey of 14,400 nursing hospital staff, the factors that led to the highest job satisfaction included relations with colleagues and patients and involvement in decision-making. Factors contributing to job dissatisfaction included lack of administrative support, promotional opportunities, and training opportunities.

In 1988, Leveck and Jones (1996) distributed questionnaire packets to 670 nurses at four hospitals in a southeastern metropolitan area. Results suggested that management style of nursing supervisors had the greatest relationship to nurse job satisfaction and commitment. Nursing supervisors who included staff in decision-making, and who

established a cohesive working style were most effective in increasing the job satisfaction among their nurses.

Aiken et al. (2002) conducted analyses of cross-sectional data for 10,184 staff nurses at a hospital. The results were consistent with Ellenbecker's (2004) theoretical model, which suggested that stress-related factors are major causes of burnout. The results revealed that in hospitals with high ratios of patients to nurses, there was a higher mortality rate among patients, resulting in a 15% increase in nurses' job dissatisfaction, and a 23% increase in the likelihood of experiencing burnout.

Lambert et al. (2001) developed a survey that was used to measure the impact of demographics/personal factors and employment factors on job satisfaction and attrition among a national sample of 1,515 workers, including nurses. The results indicated that work environment was more important to job satisfaction than demographic characteristics, and job dissatisfaction was highly predictive of intent to leave the field (an outcome of burnout).

Studies of job satisfaction for male and female sports coaches have uncovered specific factors that appear to lead to burnout (Bradford & Keshock, 2009). Based on their review of empirical literature over the past 20 years, Bradford and Keshock found the following salient issues pertaining to burnout in the coaching profession: (a) lack of female role models (for female coaches), which is a result of limited recruitment efforts to attract females to the coaching profession; and (b) occupational structures, such as the unmanageable workload of teaching full-time while assuming coaching responsibilities. Females also reported stress and emotional exhaustion in greater numbers than did their

male counterparts. Social support and experience were positively correlated with job satisfaction. Lack of resources seems to be connected to high stress levels, low job satisfaction, and subsequent attrition among coaches.

In researching job satisfaction of workers in the sales profession, Kauffeld and Lehmann-Willenbrock (2010) conducted quasi-experimental research with 64 participants. The job satisfaction of sales professionals increased when job training was provided on an ongoing basis, as opposed to providing one-time orientation-type training. Sales professionals also reported higher levels of perceived job satisfaction when provided with opportunities to receive support from colleagues throughout the training process.

Applying these findings back to Maslach et al.'s (2001) expanded model, situational factors (job characteristics, occupational characteristics, and organizational characteristics) appear to be more salient predictors of job satisfaction among nurses than individual factors. Among coaches, both situational factors (mainly job characteristics) and individual factors (demographics) were salient in predicting burnout. Among sales professionals, situational factors (job characteristics) were more important. This suggests that additional research should be conducted to learn more about the relationships between specific variables within the various components of the situational and individual sections of the theoretical model, and how those variables relate to employee burnout.

Summary. In non-teaching fields, such as nursing, coaching, and sales, findings from several studies have yielded similar conclusions about job satisfaction and burnout.

Mentoring and colleague support (Bradford & Keshock, 2009; Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2010; Leiter & Maslach, 2009; Shields & Ward, 2001), stress and emotional exhaustion (Bradford & Keshock, 2009; Leiter & Maslach, 2009; Maslach et al., 2001), high caseloads (Aiken et al., 2002), and lack of resources (Bradford & Keshock, 2009) are all linked to job dissatisfaction. In applying these findings to Maslach et al.'s (2001) theoretical model, it would appear that employment/situational factors (job and organizational characteristics) are the most salient predictors of burnout.

Factors Related to Teacher Burnout

Historical. Since the 1970s, researchers have noticed links between teachers' job dissatisfaction and burnout. A number of demographic factors (gender, marital status, teacher ages and years of experience in the classroom, level of education completed, grade level taught, teaching position), employment factors (class size, size of community, role conflict), and emotional factors (locus of control) seem to be related to job dissatisfaction and teacher burnout (McIntyre, 1983).

The following is a summary of demographic factors cited in the literature since the 1970s. Based on McIntyre's (1983) review of the literature, male teachers consistently reported fewer feelings of personal accomplishment and more frequently reported intense negative feelings and attitudes toward their students. Hewitt's (1993) review of the literature revealed that female educators were more apt to have higher stress levels than males. Unmarried, divorced, separated, or widowed teachers more frequently reported feelings of emotional exhaustion and feelings of depersonalization. Younger teachers more frequently reported feelings of depersonalization and job dissatisfaction,

while teachers between the ages of 41-50 reported the highest feelings of personal accomplishment. While many studies found that teaching experience was positively correlated with greater job satisfaction, number of years of experience has not been quite as reliable a predictor of intent to leave the profession. In the 1970s and 1980s, level of education attained did not seem to have any major bearing on predicting teacher job satisfaction. Secondary teachers seemed to have lower levels of emotional exhaustion than their elementary school counterparts (McIntyre, 1983), and secondary special education teachers stayed an average of 1.6 fewer years than their elementary counterparts (Singer, 1992).

Based on a 1997 review of international literature pertaining to the relationship between demographic factors on teacher stress, both Chen and Miller (1997) and McIntyre (1983) described the following factors: (a) age and experience (the youngest and least experienced teachers experienced higher stress), (b) gender (female teachers were more satisfied and experienced less stress), and (c) marital status (unmarried teachers experienced higher stress). The salient points in this literature review in the area of gender were inconsistent with Hewitt's (1993) findings, which noted that females experienced higher stress levels than males.

The following is a description of employment factors that were related to job burnout from studies conducted in the 1970s and early 1980s. Teachers who perceived their class size was too large reported feelings of emotional exhaustion. Size of community (e.g., large city, medium city, small town, or rural area) had no effect on burnout. Teachers who reported experiencing role conflict and/or role ambiguity

reported more frequent and intense feelings of emotional exhaustion and negative feelings toward their students (McIntyre, 1983).

A 1985 survey research study with 939 teacher participants from San Diego identified five main causes of burnout among those surveyed: feelings of being trapped in the profession, classroom discipline issues, isolation from peers and colleagues, lack of support for professional problems, and lack of support for personal problems. The top five items related to job dissatisfaction were: too much paperwork, poor public image of teachers, low salary, no participation in decision-making, and difficulties with classroom discipline (Hock, 1985).

In a 1993 literature review of the employment factors related to burnout in beginning teachers, Hewitt found that, nationwide, 50% of fledgling educators leave the field within their first 7 years. The following contributing factors were noted: student behavior, unmanageable workload, negative school climate, lack of clear expectations, lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making, low parent involvement, poor university preparation, low salary, and lack of colleague support.

Chen and Miller (1997) reviewed international literature pertaining to the effects of employment factors on teacher stress. They found that the following employment factors were correlated with stress: time constraints, workload due to excessive paperwork, job demands, role conflict and ambiguity, inadequate salary, insufficient resources, large class size, lack of administrative support, insufficient opportunities to participate in decision-making, few opportunities to interact with colleagues, student behavior issues, lack of recognition, and lack of promotional opportunities.

Emotional factors are also related to burnout, as cited in the literature. When teachers perceive that they are less in control over their lives, they are more apt to exit the profession (McIntyre, 1983). Hewitt (1993) emphasized the importance of teachers' relationships with their students. Teachers desire positive interactions with and positive feedback from their students. Those who did not experience positive interactions were more apt to experience feelings of dissatisfaction. In addition, a teacher's personality (i.e., a teacher's self-concept) seemed to be related to success in the classroom.

Theoretical framework. Ouyang and Paprock (2006) developed a framework for the prevention of teacher burnout on the basis of models that were developed by other researchers. Ouyang and Paprock explained that their reason for limiting the framework to issues of community and school factors, while excluding teacher characteristics (demographic variables, such as age, race, gender, etc.), was that teacher characteristics are static and not changeable. Therefore, they reasoned, the framework should only include issues that may be adjusted to help with teacher job satisfaction (see Table 2).

Teacher shortages. The attrition of educators has become one of the most troubling issues facing policymakers. It is anticipated that over two million new teachers will be necessary within the next decade to provide adequate staffing in U.S. schools (Gerald & Hussar, 2003). Researchers have affirmed that the shortage is real and must be addressed (Voke, 2002). Based on Voke's review of the literature, rising enrollment, increases in retirements, and large class sizes will cause an even greater strain on the teaching workforce in the future, which will lead to an increased shortage of teachers.

Table 2

Theoretical Framework for Preventing Teacher Burnout

Community Factors	
Community conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for principals, colleagues, and family members to bolster support for teachers. • Provide teachers with essential materials and resources. • Offer day care services for children of teachers during the school day.
Community ties	Build partnerships with local businesses, other schools, and educational organizations.
School Factors	
Collegiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish teacher support groups. • Increase networking opportunities for teachers to communicate with teachers within the district and beyond.
School environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve school security. • Create an atmosphere where all teachers feel supported and treated equally.
Stress reduction	Identify risk factors for stress and burnout and respond swiftly (e.g., stress-reduction strategies, support groups).
Professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create meaningful professional development that is integrated into the goals, mission, and vision of the school. • Encourage teachers to further their education. • Allow teachers to provide input into professional development, encourage teachers to conduct research, and attend conferences and/or symposiums.
Career path alternatives	Offer opportunities within the school or district for teachers to gain different experiences by taking on different roles and participating in different types of experiences.

Note. Adapted from *Teacher Job Satisfaction and Retention: A Comparison Study Between the U.S. and China*, by M. Ouyang and K. Paprock, 2006, February, Paper presented at the Academy of Human Resource Development International Conference, Columbus, OH. Copyright 2006 by the authors.

Ingersoll (2001) posited that the problems schools face with regards to adequate staffing are due to high demand resulting from high turnover. There is an unequal allotment of teachers across regions, resulting in some locations having an overabundance of qualified teachers and others facing shortages (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005). The first schools to be affected by teacher shortages are located in poverty-stricken communities. Schools whose students are at poverty levels of higher than 50% seem to have substantially higher teacher burnout rates than their counterparts that serve more affluent populations (under 15% of the population living in poverty) (Ingersoll, 2001). There seems to be an insufficient supply of teachers who are not only willing, but also qualified, to work in areas serving socioeconomically disadvantaged students (Voke, 2002).

Across the nation, many school districts currently grapple with, or expect to face, a shortage of teachers in certain subject areas. Many of the schools with teaching vacancies have had major challenges finding qualified teachers to fill those openings (Ingersoll, 2003). The inability to find qualified teachers has garnered the attention of national media and spurred an increasing number of policy and education reform initiatives (Ingersoll, 2001). In the hope of attracting people to become teachers, particularly among people with an earned bachelor's degree in shortage fields (science and math), several states have implemented different routes for teachers to obtain certification, such as school district internship programs (Voke, 2002).

Teacher recruitment. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003) found that the retention of highly qualified teachers is the solution to

staffing the nation's classrooms: "Our inability to support high quality teaching in many of our schools is driven not only by too few teachers entering, but by too many leaving" (p. 8).

It is of paramount importance that the U.S.'s most disadvantaged schools find ways to not only recruit, but also retain highly qualified teachers. Schools need to develop stability through continuity in their teaching staff if they are to provide effective instruction and raise student achievement. According to Ingersoll (2003), effective teacher recruitment programs in and of themselves would only provide a short term solution to the problem of teacher shortage.

Policymakers at both the state and local levels have proposed and implemented a variety of initiatives to recruit new teachers. Examples include: (a) outreach efforts to entice professionals from other fields to enter the teaching profession; (b) alternative certification programs which allow college grads to earn their credentials while working full-time; (c) outreach to other countries; and (d) offering financial motivation, such as new teacher signing bonuses, incentives that forgive student loans, first-time home buyers' assistance, and reimbursements for tuition expenses (Hirsch, Koppich, & Knapp, 2001). Several programs to entice top college students, such as Teach for America and Troops-to-Teachers have attempted to bolster the teacher supply (Ingersoll, 2002). While these strategies may prove successful in recruitment, there is no guarantee that teachers who join these programs will remain in the field (Hirsch et al., 2001).

Burnout and new teachers. The burnout of beginning teachers is an issue of ongoing concern to all public schools in America (Mihans, 2008). Considering the

organizational and personnel expenditure that it takes to produce a certified educator, the known loss of up to 50% of beginning teachers in their first 5 years on the job is particularly disconcerting (Ingersoll, 2003; Scherer, 1999). School districts suffer in the face of teacher attrition, as they spend valuable time and financial resources in their efforts to attract new teachers to fill the voids (Voke, 2002). Because it is so expensive to replace teachers, many districts consider the cost to replace teachers a problem that needs fixing.

Concerns about the supply of qualified teachers are growing, and warnings regarding teacher shortages abound (Stedman, 2004). Based on a review of the literature pertaining to the characteristics of effective teachers, Claycomb and Hawley (2000) posited that neophyte teachers need between 3-7 years before reaching full competency. Using a sample of 50,000 teachers with data generated from their participation in the USDOE's SASS and the TFS, Provasnik and Dorfman (2005) concluded, "Generally, beginning teachers (those with 3 or fewer years of teaching experience) are not as effective as teachers with more years of teaching experience, with brand-new teachers typically being the least effective teachers" (p. 5). This research suggests the importance of finding ways to avoid teacher burnout early on, because teachers become more effective over time.

Studies of the causes of burnout. In all professions, change is normal. Over time, people commonly seek promotions or look for change, causing them to leave their current job in search of something else. Sometimes, people determine that their current job is not a match for their strengths or abilities. In other instances, people elect to go

back to school to pursue other types of careers. While some individuals may begin a job with high hopes and excitement, over time they may become disenchanted by various factors, which can cause them to leave.

Teacher attrition can have many adverse effects on the morale of students, parents, and other teachers (Joftus & Maddox-Dolan, 2002). Ingersoll and Smith (2003) stated, “Employee turnover has especially serious consequences in workplaces that require extensive interaction among participants and that depend on commitment, continuity, and cohesion among employees” (p. 31). Teacher turnover can impact not only the morale of remaining teachers and parents, but also has a detrimental effect on student achievement (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). The next three sections will cover individual/demographic factors, situational/school factors, and external factors that relate to teacher burnout.

Teacher commitment. Based on a review of the empirical literature pertaining to attracting, recruiting, and retaining qualified teachers, Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley (2006) uncovered the following primary factors pertaining to teacher job commitment:

1. Individual/ demographic factors—females have lower levels of commitment, and graduates of alternative credentialing programs have higher levels of commitment;
2. Situational/ school factors—salary, the availability of mentoring and induction programs, the provision of administrative support, and opportunities for participation in decision-making all relate to teacher commitment; and

3. External factors—urban school districts had less committed teachers, and schools with higher numbers of low-income, low-achieving, and minority students had more teachers with low levels of commitment.

Commitment seems to be a likely predictor of teacher retention. Committed employees have a greater likelihood of remaining in their jobs and are less apt to present other types of at-risk behaviors, such as stress and job dissatisfaction. Commitment has also been linked to greater job effort, increased productivity, and greater interest in the work of teaching (Guarino et al., 2006; Shann, 1998; Weiss, 1999).

Based on results from surveys and interviews with 92 teachers in four urban middle schools, Shann (1998) found several following employment factors to be related to teacher job satisfaction and commitment. Having a positive school culture, positive teacher-pupil relationships, and parent-teacher relationships were factors related to job dissatisfaction and decreased commitment. Like Shann, Weiss' (1999) study of a national sample from the USDOE's SASS database for 1987-1988 and 1993-1994 of teachers in their first year, the investigators asserted that a school culture that provides teachers with opportunities to collaborate and participate in decision-making are related to job commitment and plans to remain in the field.

Research suggests that administrative support is a key determinant in fostering teacher commitment (Billingsley & Cross, 1992), especially given that many teachers have cited problems with administrative support as a reason for leaving (Farber, 2000). In their study to identify variables influencing teacher commitment, job satisfaction, and teaching plans, Billingsley and Cross received 952 responses in their study that included

general and special education teachers (83% response rate) to their questionnaire. Data were analyzed by regression. The findings implied that work-related variables are more important predictors than personal/demographic variables. Participants indicated that support from the principal was highly important (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). This suggests that principals have a major impact on the organizational culture in which teachers work. A primary duty of the principal is to work in partnership with teachers to clarify their roles and responsibilities. A principal who does this effectively should help alleviate problems with role conflict, ambiguity, and overload (Blase & Blase, 2000).

Like Billingsley and Cross (1992), Papastylianou, Kaila, and Polychronopoulos (2009) found that lack of commitment is also linked to role conflict among teachers. Teachers experience role conflict when they are expected to perform mismatched behaviors (e.g., performing administrative tasks while trying to teach students), and they experience role ambiguity when they are faced with expectations to play several roles in the course of their duties (Kyriacou, 2000). In a study designed to investigate the effect of role conflict on burnout, Papastylianou et al. used a six-scale instrument to examine 562 teachers. Using factor and reliability analyses, the findings suggested that role conflict, such as having too many responsibilities and not enough time to meet set expectations, is linked to lower job commitment in teachers.

Individual/demographic factors. Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, and Weber (1996) conducted a study with the purpose of identifying predicting factors related to attrition, transfer, and retention of teachers in both general education and special education settings. Data were collected from 4,159 general education teachers. Chi-

square was used to identify associations among variables. With regards to age, the percentage of teachers who remained in their position was lowest among teachers in the age range of 30-49 years. The percentage of teachers who left their jobs was highest among teachers in the age ranges of 25-30 and 55-65. No significance was found with regard to gender (male or female) or race (white or minority). Those who were never married were more likely to switch to another school, while those who were formerly married (separated or divorced) were more likely to remain at their current school ($p < .001$). Those with a child under 6 years of age had a greater likelihood of leaving the field than those with children over the age of 6 ($p < .001$). This finding was contrary to Ellenbecker's (2004) theoretical model that was presented earlier in this literature review, which indicated that nurses with children under the age of 6 were more likely to remain in the field. Teachers who were fully certified had a greater likelihood of remaining in the same school, as compared with those who were certified in an area other than the one they were teaching, and those who were not certified in any area ($p < .001$). Teaching experience was found to be statistically significant in predicting whether or not teachers would change schools or leave teaching altogether. Among those with greater than 4 years of experience, 6.8% changed schools, and 5.6% left teaching completely; in contrast, for those with fewer than 4 years of teaching experience, 14.5% relocated, and 9.2% left teaching altogether. While there was no marked difference in the attrition rates between elementary and secondary teachers, elementary teachers moved to different schools at much higher rates than those at the secondary level (9.2% versus 6.1%). Those with higher salaries were much less apt to leave or move. Teachers in districts with 4,000

or more students were more apt to switch schools than those who taught in districts with fewer than 4,000 students.

Mertler (2001) examined demographic variables associated with teacher job satisfaction. A web-based survey was administered in the fall semester of 2000 to 969 general education teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The majority of participants were white and female. Data analysis indicated that 77% of teachers reported being satisfied with their job. Unlike Boe, Bobbitt, et al.'s (1996) findings, 87% of teachers in the 26-30 age range, and 86% of teachers over the age of 56 reported above average level of job satisfaction. While Boe, Bobbitt, et al.'s findings indicated that teachers with fewer than 4 years of teaching experience had the highest rates of burnout, Mertler found that teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience and teachers with fewer than 5 years of experience reported the highest job satisfaction. Teachers at the middle school level were reported as having higher satisfaction than those in elementary and high school settings. Unlike Boe, Bobbitt, et al., whose study results indicated no significant differences in terms of gender and burnout, Mertler found that males were slightly more satisfied with their jobs than females. Because Mertler's study included mainly white, female participants, the results should be viewed with caution, as the broader population is not adequately represented in this study.

In a study of 77 New York City special and general education teachers, Gelman (2008) used the *t*-test and found no significant relationship between classroom type (general/special education) and burnout. Using Pearson Correlations, Gelman found

significant results when examining the relationship between teacher ages, years of experience, and burnout. Like the findings of Boe, Bobbitt, et al. (1996), younger and less experienced teachers seemed to exhibit greater signs of burnout.

Gates (2007) investigated the relationship between various demographic variables and teacher burnout with 307 participants who completed surveys in North Carolina. Using *t*-tests and multiple regression analysis to investigate relationships between demographics and teacher burnout scores, Gates found that younger teachers and teachers with less experience reported higher burnout scores, while teachers at the elementary level reported higher satisfaction scores. These results are consistent with prior studies.

Situational/school factors. Various situational/school factors have been shown to have an effect on teacher job satisfaction. These factors include teachers' relationships with their students, administrative support, support from colleagues, parental support, and teachers' emotional responses to their students.

Teacher job satisfaction seems to be connected to a teacher's job performance, which includes involvement, commitment, and motivation (Sargent & Hannum, 2005). Teachers who are highly satisfied, as opposed to those who are dissatisfied, appear to be more apt to remain in their teaching positions at their schools (Perie et al., 1997).

McLeskey et al. (2004) reviewed the literature pertaining to factors affecting supply and demand of special education teachers and noted the following salient points:

1. Employability—teachers who are more marketable and can find employment opportunities easily are more apt to leave the field;

2. Level of formal education completed and whether or not teachers are certified—teachers who are certified in the area they are teaching are less likely to leave their jobs;
3. Salary—teachers who receive competitive salaries are less prone to leave;
4. Mentoring—new teachers who have adequate support systems are less likely to leave;
5. Decision-making—teachers who are given opportunities to contribute to making important decisions report greater job satisfaction and are less likely to leave;
6. Support from administrators—teachers who feel supported by administrative staff are less likely to leave;
7. School climate—a school culture that is nurturing and collaborative causes teachers to stay in their positions for longer periods of time; and
8. Job design—teachers who do not feel overburdened by excessive paperwork, have a reasonable caseload, have access to support staff and clerical help (e.g., paraeducators), and/or opportunities for collaboration and planning time, seem less likely to leave their positions.

Using a sample of 50,000 teachers with data generated from their participation in the USDOE's SASS and the TFS, Provasnik and Dorfman (2005) reported findings based on their analysis of teacher attrition data in 1999-2000. The most frequently identified reasons for leaving were: lack of time to plan lessons, too large a workload, insufficient salary, and student discipline and behavior issues.

Scott (2004) examined the effects of eight independent variables on teacher burnout patterns in Texas during the 2001-2002 academic year: (a) percentage of teachers to total staff; (b) percentage of educational aides to total staff; (c) number of students per teacher; (d) average number of years teaching; (e) average teacher salary; (f) ratio of minority staff compared to total staff; (g) percentage of minorities to total student population; and (h) percentage of student population placed in alternative programs. Using the Texas Education Agency's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), data were captured regarding 250,000 educators. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and correlation. The study found the following issues to be of primary importance in explaining teacher burnout: (a) teacher salary, (b) years of teaching experience, (c) percentage of minorities to total staff, (d) student-to-teacher ratio, (e) percentage of student minorities, and (f) percentage of students with histories of behavioral misconduct.

In other studies that examined situational/school factors, Dorman (2003) studied a sample of 246 teachers who responded to a survey designed to measure the relationship between the school and classroom climate and perceptions of burnout in private schools in Queensland, Australia. Using LISREL analysis, the findings implied that school and classroom climate is a significant predictor of teacher burnout. Marlow, Inman, and Betancourt-Smith (1996) conducted a study on teacher job satisfaction that focused specifically on the effects of students on teachers. A randomly selected pool of 600 teachers was selected throughout several states in the western United States. Student attitude was measured to see what affect their attitudes had on their teachers' job

satisfaction. The students' attitudes were measured in terms of their motivation, attitude, and discipline. Of the 212 teachers who completed the survey, 44% reported intermittently thinking of leaving the profession. The reasons cited were: (a) issues related to student discipline, such as poor study habits and lack of effort; (b) emotional factors, such as lack of a feeling of purpose and overall fulfillment, feelings of boredom, and high levels of frustration and stress; (c) too little respect from the community, parents, administrators, and students; (d) difficult working conditions; and (e) low salaries.

Cheung (2009) posited that tension between teachers and struggling students accounts for high burnout among teachers. With a focus on two high schools with teachers of students who were struggling (both academically and behaviorally), Cheung examined the influences of principals on teacher commitment. Effective leaders worked with teachers who were experiencing student anxiety and resistance to raise learning expectations and discussed how teachers responded to these experiences among their students. The implications of the study were that teacher commitment seemed to be largely influenced by leaders. Leaders who are successful in increasing teachers' commitment foster positive relations with teachers through problem solving, coordinating teacher schedules to allow for common planning time, and spending meaningful time in classrooms.

In a survey of over 400 teachers, Maxfield (2009) found the following primary issues to affect teacher job satisfaction: (a) unsupportive school leaders—nearly two thirds reported that their school leaders were unsupportive, which led to increased stress;

(b) colleague support—teachers who helped struggling colleagues reported greater satisfaction, likewise, struggling teachers reported greater satisfaction when they received support from another teacher; (c) parental involvement—70% of respondents indicated dissatisfaction with a lack of parental support; and (d) student behavior problems—86% of respondents indicated struggling to get at least two students on task with their schoolwork.

Chang (2009) reviewed the literature pertaining to emotional factors and teacher burnout. As she described, historically, the literature focused on demographic and situational/school factors. Chang examined teacher burnout from the perspective of inter- and intrapersonal factors, grounded in the theoretical framework proposed by Maslach et al. (2001). Chang emphasized “transactional factors” (p. 198) which are grounded in the model developed by Lazarus and Folkman (as cited in Chang, 2009), which includes the following elements: (a) perceived principal/peer support, (b) self-concept, (c) internal rewards/professional satisfaction, and (d) student-teacher interactions. When these transactional factors are not present, teacher job dissatisfaction and subsequent burnout are more likely. Teachers have the opportunity to establish close and intimate relationships in their relationships with students and colleagues, which can lead to positive emotional responses, such as pride, hope, passion, excitement, and joy; however, these intense interactions may also result in feelings of worry, frustration, guilt, anxiety, and disappointment (Chang, 2009).

Teacher burnout can ensue when teachers do not experience emotional connections to their students and colleagues (Hargreaves, 2000). In interviews of 53

teachers in 15 different schools, Hargreaves posited that teachers experience negative feelings when they lack connections with their students. Later, Hargreaves (2002) found that when teachers felt a lack of support from administrators or colleagues, they experienced great dissatisfaction. Like Chang (2009), who posited that teaching is an emotional practice and that teachers are highly invested in the emotional satisfaction resulting from their work, Hargreaves (2000) posited that if a teacher is not experiencing emotional satisfaction, he or she will likely experience low job satisfaction.

Teacher participation in decision-making. Providing opportunities for teachers to participate in leadership decision-making has been shown to increase commitment and job satisfaction. Participatory decision-making processes are multifaceted; thus, there are many ways that employees can take part in making important decisions that can largely impact the school (Black & Gregersen, 1997; Klecker & Loadman, 1996; Rice & Schneider, 1994; Somech, 2002).

Klecker and Loadman (1996) examined the relationship between the degree to which teachers felt empowered and experienced job satisfaction. Their hypothesis was that opportunities for teacher empowerment would increase job satisfaction. Participants included 10,544 teachers across 307 schools in Ohio that were funded by the state to implement restructuring. Six dimensions of empowerment were measured: (a) teacher participation in decision-making, (b) teacher perceptions of their status, (c) teacher professional growth opportunities, (d) perceptions of autonomy, (e) teacher-perceived self-efficacy, and (f) teacher perceptions of their impact on students. These dimensions came from the School Participant Empowerment Scale created by Short and Rinehart (as

cited in Klecker & Loadman, 1996), which measures teacher perceptions of the degree to which they feel empowered to participate in leadership activities at their school, and the effects of those opportunities on their job satisfaction. Measures of teacher job satisfaction included: (a) satisfaction with regard to salary, (b) promotional opportunities, (c) degree of job challenge, (d) autonomy and independence, (e) working conditions in general, and (f) the nature of interactions with both colleagues and students. The analysis found a high positive correlation between teacher empowerment and job satisfaction. While a high positive correlation was found between job satisfaction and empowerment, more than half of teacher job satisfaction issues were not conclusively explained by issues related to empowerment; thus, the authors suggested that qualitative studies focusing on job satisfaction and working conditions would provide additional information that would be useful in guiding policy and putting structures into place to improve teacher job satisfaction.

Black and Gregersen (1997) examined a sample of participants from one medium-sized manufacturing company with headquarters located in the northeastern United States that instituted a corporate-sponsored employee involvement group (EIG) at five of the company's manufacturing facilities. The purpose of the study was to examine the degree to which employee participation in decision-making affects job satisfaction and performance. Members of the EIG participated in a workshop that included problem-solving and team-building activities that took place over two days. Questionnaires were completed by 370 employees. The results indicated significant positive correlations

between opportunities to participate in decision-making processes and job satisfaction and performance.

Rice and Schneider (1994) replicated a prior study conducted in 1980 to examine the effects of teacher empowerment on job satisfaction. The participants included 261 middle school teachers in schools in urban parts of Wisconsin who were asked to complete a survey. The analytic procedures used included descriptive analyses, factorial analysis of variance, correlation, regression, and *t*-tests. The findings implied that teachers desired more opportunities to be involved in leadership decision-making. Those who experienced higher levels of involvement reported higher levels of job satisfaction.

Somech (2002) used surveys to investigate how 99 elementary school principals decided to include teachers as participants in leadership activities at their school sites. Somech's survey measured the elements of participative management, which is the process of decentralizing decision-making and sharing power (Sidener, 1995). The elements of participative management included the following domains: (a) opportunities to participate in decision-making, and (b) degree of participation in important decisions (Somech, 2002). The findings implied that principals seemed to view building teacher leadership capacity and teacher participation in leadership decision-making as important; however, no definitive conclusions could be drawn regarding the consequences of administrators providing leadership opportunities to teachers on teacher job satisfaction and overall school improvement. Somech explicated that the components of participative management are complex processes, and the individual components must each be studied

further before attempting to determine their effects on teacher job satisfaction and overall school effectiveness.

Leadership capacity. Building teacher leadership capacity seems to result in greater job satisfaction (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2006; Lambert, 2003). Schools that are able to sustain improvement in student achievement and build capacity within their organizations seem to foster greater satisfaction among their teaching staff (Lambert, 2003). Professional learning communities, which are a group of professional educators working toward a common goal of raising student achievement, have been shown to be effective in developing leadership capacity. Through participation in professional learning communities, school leaders empower the members of their staff by enabling them to enter into a collective learning process through broad-based participation, collaboration, and discovery through inquiry (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

In these studies, some of the issues commonly faced among teachers experiencing burnout are salary, school climate, years of experience, paperwork, planning time, administrative support, student behavior issues, and meaningful connections with their students and colleagues. Teacher participation in decision-making and building leadership capacity are noteworthy factors that may mitigate the effects of burnout.

External factors. Researchers have documented the effects of external factors, and in particular, the influence of society's perceptions of teachers and teaching and how this impacts the job satisfaction of those who have positions as teachers, as well as the profession's ability to attract, recruit, and retain teachers (Billingsley, 2004; Hall & Langton, 2006; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Theoharis, 2008; Tye & O'Brien, 2002).

Teacher perceptions of the way they are viewed by the public, including social status and level of appreciation for what teachers do, seem to be connected to teachers' future teaching plans (Inman & Marlow, 2004). The purpose of Inman and Marlow's study was to examine beginning teacher attitudes and beliefs to uncover the pleasant and positive aspects of teaching that may lead to teacher retention. Five hundred beginning teachers participated in the research by completing a survey designed to measure career stability. One of the items in the survey was designed to compare beginning teachers' perceptions of the professional prestige they experienced from the community with their expectations regarding community perceptions of teachers prior to entering teaching. Over 40% of the respondents indicated that teaching carries a lower level of prestige than they expected prior to entering the profession. Inman and Marlow surmised that, as a result of the way teachers are presented in the media, combined with low levels of support from parents and community members, teachers seem to be likely to become disillusioned very early in their careers.

In another study aimed at determining the factors contributing to teachers' decisions to stay in or leave the profession, Tye and O'Brien (2002) sent questionnaires to 551 graduates of a teacher credentialing program at Chapman University in Orange, California. One hundred fourteen people completed the questionnaire. The results were as follows: (a) among those who already left teaching, *low status of the profession* ranked sixth out of seven reasons; and (b) among those who had not yet left, but would consider leaving the profession, *low status of the profession* ranked fourth out of seven reasons. In the open-ended response section, responses included, "This is an impossible job to get

done.” “We are not treated respectfully by anyone.” “I wouldn’t recommend this profession to anybody” (p. 7).

Hall and Langton (2006) conducted a study that included 1,145 participants (634 people who were 12-25 years of age, 411 adults 26 years and older, and 162 employers) who participated in telephone interviews regarding perceptions of the image of teaching, and the advantages/disadvantages of the teaching profession. The interviews lasted approximately 26 minutes each. Regarding the issue of status, teachers ranked fourth on the list, with doctors, lawyers, and politicians ranking higher. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 signifying *extremely high status*, teachers received an average ranking of 6.8. This translates to low status because those who participated in the study viewed teachers as having few opportunities to obtain power, money, and fame, as compared to other professions, which are perceived to have greater opportunities (e.g., doctors, lawyers, politicians). Of those who gave responses to the open-ended question regarding what comes to mind when thinking about a teaching career, approximately 50% of the respondents expressed negative comments, with 35% giving positive comments. The negative responses included issues such as pay, lack of authority and student behavior problems, lack of support or appreciation, stress, danger, and lack of status. Those who gave positive comments indicated job security, holidays, and hours of work. Based on the results from this study, when compared to other occupations, teachers seemed to have little power and status.

Using a sample of 50,000 teachers with data generated from their participation in the U.S. Department of Education’s SASS, and the TFS, Provasnik and Dorfman (2005)

reported findings based on their analysis of teacher attrition data in 1999-2000. The most commonly identified reasons for leaving were: (a) decisions to retire (20%), (b) family issues (16%), (c) pregnancy and other family issues (14%), (d) wanting a higher salary (14%), and (e) the desire to move towards another career (13%).

Some external factors that affect career decisions seem unrelated to burnout. Two common external factors affecting teacher turnover are when teachers change positions (move from one position to another, change schools, or move to another district) or retire from the profession. Teacher retirement is one form of turnover that is unavoidable (Boe, Bobbitt, & Cook, 1997). McLeskey et al. (2004) also cited personal reasons unrelated to burnout—teachers leave the field for reasons not related to their jobs, such as health issues, family issues, and relocating to another geographic location.

Summary. This section of the review of the literature revealed that, since the 1970s, the main issues causing teacher burnout can be categorized within three sets of factors: individual/demographic factors, employment factors, and external factors.

In individual/demographic factors, there has been some inconsistency in the findings pertaining to the effects of gender on burnout. Marital status has been shown, with consistency to affect job satisfaction and is related to burnout patterns. Across the literature, it has been shown that younger teachers and those with less experience are more prone to experience feelings of dissatisfaction and attrition. The findings have been mixed among studies that investigated differences in burnout patterns among elementary and secondary teachers. Few studies have examined the effects of teacher personality and teacher-student interactions on burnout; however, the results of studies that examined

teacher personality and the effect of teacher-student interaction on job satisfaction found that teachers with higher self-concept experienced greater success with their students; in turn, teachers with more positive interactions with their students seem to experience greater job satisfaction.

In situational/school factors, issues such as student behavior issues, workload (including paperwork and class size), insufficient resources, lack of opportunity to interact with colleagues, administrative support, school climate, and salary were found to be correlated with teacher burnout. While researched less extensively, increased levels of parent involvement, and building leadership capacity and providing teachers with opportunities to participate in decision-making seem to be related to job satisfaction.

Recently, external factors, such as promotional opportunities, have garnered attention among researchers. Factors such as community recognition, public perception, and community support have not been researched to a large extent; however, some studies have shown a correlation between these factors and intent to remain in the profession. Other external factors, such as retirement or changing positions, can explain teacher turnover; however, these factors should not be considered as expressions of burnout.

Teacher commitment seems to be adversely affected by role conflict, absence of sufficient administrative support, negative teacher-teacher relationships, negative teacher-student relationships, and negative teacher-parent relationships. Working in urban areas with minority, underachieving students affects commitment. Conversely, commitment can be increased through opportunities to participate in decision-making and by fostering

positive relations with students, parents, and other teachers. Increased salary and mentoring opportunities also have an effect on teacher perceptions of commitment.

Applying these findings back to the theoretical models, some individual/demographic factors (e.g., marital status and age) fit within Maslach et al.'s (2001) model, which also included individual/demographic factors, while findings in the situational/school factors section (e.g., teacher-to-teacher and teacher-to-student interactions, paperwork, student discipline issues, resources, colleague support, school climate, and salary) correlate with a combination of Maslach et al.'s model that contains situational factors, and Ouyang and Paprock's (2006) model that contains school factors. When combined, these models encompass most of the major issues found in the literature; however, in isolation, both models have their shortcomings. Community factors are missing from Maslach et al.'s model, and demographic factors are missing from Ouyang and Paprock's model.

Factors Related to Special Education Teacher Burnout

This section will address the shortages in the field of special education, as well as the theoretical, historical, and empirical findings related to personal/demographic factors, employment factors, and external factors, and how those variables relate to special education teacher commitment.

Shortage of special education teachers. The scarcity of highly qualified special education teachers is currently a nationwide problem (Billingsley, 2004; Menlove, Garnes, & Salzberg, 2004; Miller et al., 1998; Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007). Ninety-eight percent of school districts nationwide have shortages, and the problem is

expected to worsen as teachers retire (Boyer & Gillespie, 2000). Thornton et al. posited that the shortage of qualified special education teachers is pervasive, regardless of the type of special education program (i.e., type of disability or type of service delivery model).

Historically, researchers have documented the shortage of special education teachers in the field (Billingsley et al., 1995; Boe, Bobbitt, & Cook, 1997; Boe, Bobbitt, et al., 1996; Boe et al., 2006; Brownell et al., 1995). The shortage problem causes many students with disabilities to be taught by unqualified teachers. School administrators often have to recruit substitute teachers to fill the gap, or assign a teacher without the proper certification to fill vacant positions (Katsiyannis, Zhang, & Conroy, 2003). This is especially disheartening when considering the broad range of needs of students who require specialized instruction and services.

Recent studies have affirmed the critical shortage of special education teachers. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008) reported that job availability for special education teachers is expected to rise. Job prospects should be vast as many districts are reporting problems with finding sufficient numbers of certified special education teachers. As a result of such deficiencies, school districts are often forced to make reductions in much-needed services, such as speech therapy, and increase special education class sizes (Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, McIntyre, & Demers, 2008).

Cochran-Smith et al. (2008) enumerated the societal ramifications resulting from the shortage of special education teachers. The deleterious effects to students include

compromised educational experiences while in school. When students with disabilities are not educated by highly qualified special education teachers, they do not receive the intensive, individualized instruction they need, which may result in low achievement, and larger numbers of incompetent graduates who will not be able to compete for jobs.

As policymakers continue to study the conundrum of special education teacher attrition and grapple with finding creative ways to prevent it, research indicates that recruitment strategies have proven insufficient. The special education shortage remains because such high numbers of newly hired teachers leave after only a few years in the profession (Ingersoll, 2001). Ingersoll reports that of the teaching areas with the highest numbers of teachers who leave (special education, math, and science, respectively), the area of special education is most severely impacted by teacher attrition. Furthermore, special education teachers are likely to leave their special education assignments in favor of other teaching positions within the general education setting (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Boe, Cook, Bobbitt, & Weber, 1996).

Boe (2006) analyzed trends on the supply and demand of special education teachers over a period of 16 years (1987-2003), during which the shortage reached a level of nearly 54,000 nationwide, which was approximately 11% of the total teaching population. The shortage of qualified special education teachers has vast legal ramifications. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 require that highly qualified teachers serve for students in need of special education services (No Child Left Behind, n.d.). As a result of the shortage of highly qualified special education teachers, many

school districts are faced with increasing numbers of formal state complaints and litigious due process cases.

Thornton et al. (2007) outlined the primary issues contributing to special education teacher shortages. Those issues appear to be the following:

1. A lack of qualified applicants.
2. High rates of attrition resulting from (a) employment issues (e.g., poor working conditions, salary-related issues, unmanageable caseloads, and poor school climate); (b) personal issues (e.g., lifestyle, family, and relocations); (c) support-related issues (e.g., lack of colleague and administrative support); (d) student-related issues (e.g., discipline problems, low levels of motivation, and insufficient student progress); and (e) other issues (e.g., retirement and availability of better job options elsewhere).
3. Demands of NCLB—The requirements of NCLB specify that all students, including those with disabilities, perform at proficient levels as a measure of state testing by the 2013-2014 school year. The pressures associated with these mandates are driving special education teachers from the profession.
4. Changing student demographics—The number of students being identified with disabilities has outgrown the number of qualified special education teachers.
5. Changes in certification requirements—Prior to NCLB, school districts could place teachers without proper certification in classrooms with students with learning disabilities; however, by the end of the 2005-2006 school year, every

teacher in any public school had to be highly qualified with the proper certification.

Thornton et al. (2007) proposed the following solutions to the special education teacher shortage problem:

1. Increase the pool of qualified special education teachers (e.g., Troops-to-Teachers program, which provides a stipend to military personnel who are interested in employment opportunities in special education; another proposed option is for districts to develop in-house training programs);
2. Develop a proactive marketing strategy (e.g., have a well-organized website listing job opportunities, salary schedules, application forms, and district and school demographic data);
3. Retain existing special education teachers—provide effective induction for new teachers, establish mentoring programs, ensure meaningful professional development, and maintain high quality working conditions (e.g., provide additional compensation for work beyond the school day, build in time for collaboration, lesson planning, and completing paperwork, and ensure clerical support and access to high quality curricular materials and supplements);
4. Provide administrative support—principals must actively support and advocate for their special education staff. “To retain special education teachers, principals must change the realities of the role of special education and establish school climates that reflect its importance. Principals must make teaching in special education more appealing.” (p. 237)

Theoretical models. To date, two conceptual models exist that explain special education teacher burnout (a) Brofenbrenner's model, adapted by Brownell and Smith (as cited in Billingsley, 2004); and (b) Billingsley's model (1993). As explained by Billingsley (2004), Brofenbrenner's model (adapted by Brownell and Smith) describes the following four interrelated systems:

1. The *microsystem* is the immediate setting within which the teacher spends most of his or her time, and it includes the complex interplay of the interactions that occur between teachers and their students.
2. The *mesosystem* is the interrelationship of workplace variables (e.g., administrative support and relations with colleagues).
3. The *exosystem* is the social structures (e.g., community socioeconomic level).
4. The *macrosystem* is the cultural values and particular ideologies of a particular community combined with economic factors that impact schools and career decisions of teachers.

Brownell and Smith (1993) provide a theoretical model for understanding special education teacher attrition; however, the model is limited in that it was not designed to be tested. The underlying assumption of the model is that there is a complex interplay of relationships between the variables, and some variables may have higher correlates to attrition than others.

Billingsley (1993) developed a theoretical model with three categories of factors that are hypothesized to influence special education teacher perceptions of job commitment and career plans. The categories are: (a) demographic factors, (b)

employment factors, and (c) external factors and personal factors (factors that are external to the teacher and the district of employment). Demographic and personal factors include a host of variables that Billingsley noted may influence career plans. Examples of such factors include race, gender, marital status, certification/credentialing, and breadwinner status.

Billingsley (1993) theorized that employment factors include work conditions, including district and school climate, which may relate to teacher job commitment and career plans. District variables that may relate to job commitment and career plans include salary, benefits, and administrative support. School variables may include: administrative, collegial, and parent support; type of teaching assignment; class size; and teacher responsibilities. Billingsley further hypothesized that when work conditions are favorable, teachers will experience professional fulfillment and other rewards, which may be related to increased job commitment and decisions to stay in special education teaching; conversely, Billingsley stated that if “work conditions are not as favorable, teachers are likely to experience fewer rewards and, thus, reduced commitment” (p. 12).

External factors, which include economic, societal, and institutional issues, are hypothesized to indirectly affect career plans through their influence on personal and employment factors. For example, during unfortunate economic times (e.g., recessions), teachers may stay in their positions longer due to the scarcity of job opportunities elsewhere. Societal factors include characteristics of the community and the cultural norms and values of the community. In undesirable or dangerous communities, lack of support and recognition may be a cause for teachers to leave the field in favor of other

employment opportunities. Institutional factors include teacher incentives (e.g., bonuses for teaching special education) and teachers' unions, which may have an effect on teachers' career decisions through their efforts to improve working conditions (Billingsley et al., 1995).

The empirical findings related to Billingsley's (1993) theoretical model are described in the next section of this literature review.

Demographic factors. This section outlines the demographic factors related to special education job burnout that were found in the literature search.

Gender. The number of studies investigating the relationship between gender and attrition has been sparse with varying findings. Some studies did not find any conclusive data showing a significant relationship between gender and attrition (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, & Weber, 1997; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Eichinger, 2000; Miller et al., 1998), while others have had mixed results. Gonzalez's (1995) and Singer's (1992) investigations suggested that the highest rates of attrition seemed to occur among female special education teachers, while Morvant, Gersten, Gillman, Keating, and Blake (1995) and Singh and Billingsley (1996) found males to burn out more frequently.

In their survey research using a national sample of both general and special education teachers, Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, et al. (1997) examined a variety of characteristics, including demographics, as predictors of status changes (retention, transfer, or attrition). The analytic technique was path analysis, and chi-square was used to look at associations between variables. The researchers computed weighted national estimates for predicting the effect of the variables on the national supply of teachers. The

results of their study were not statistically significant, and indicated that gender did not appear to have any association with attrition. Cross and Billingsley (1994) investigated the relationship between gender and the likelihood of burnout among 412 teachers in Virginia. Similar to Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, et al. (1997), the results of the investigation could not disprove the null hypothesis, and no relationship between gender and a teacher's future career plans were found. Miller et al. (1998) sampled 1,576 special education teachers in Florida. Based on the use of chi-square and *F*-tests to analyze the results of the survey, and like Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, et al. (1997), and Cross and Billingsley (1994), no significant findings were found in the area of gender differences.

In a longitudinal study of special educators in Michigan and North Carolina between 1972 and 1983, Singer (1992) examined employment durations related to teacher characteristics, including gender. The results showed that female special education teachers seemed to have higher attrition rates than males.

Like Singer (1992), Gonzalez (1995) found burnout rates were higher among women. In an investigation of first-year special education teachers in Texas, survey data seemed to indicate that females were 50% more likely to experience burnout than their male counterparts.

Morvant et al. (1995) surveyed 868 special education teachers in three urban areas and conducted in-depth interviews with 17 special education teachers who left their positions following the 1991-1992 school year. Data analysis was conducted by looking for themes in the qualitative data. Quantitative data analysis was conducted by creating frequency distributions with means and standard deviations for all items and using factor

analysis to analyze the entire survey instrument to identify distinct factors related to job satisfaction. The results suggested that males had a greater likelihood for leaving than their female counterparts.

Like Morvant et al. (1995), Singh and Billingsley's (1996) findings suggested that women had a greater likelihood of remaining in special education positions longer. In their investigation of 1,157 special education teacher respondents who completed a survey, the results suggested that women had a greater likelihood of remaining in their positions when compared to men.

Eichinger (2000) surveyed 89 females and 43 males who had an average 5.6 years of experience teaching in special education, and who worked in various settings with varying levels of education. The participants responded to questions on several inventories, and the results were analyzed using ANOVA. The results supported the null hypothesis, which was that there was no relationship between gender and job burnout confirming the results of other studies, except on one inventory, where higher stress levels were reported among women ($M = 3.28$) than men ($M = 2.94$), $t(130) = 2.13$, $p < .05$.

As Billingsley (2004) observes, the irregularities in these findings may be explained by the different time periods during which the studies took place. Singer's (1992) data were from the 1970s and early 1980s, while Miller et al.'s (1998) and Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, et al.'s (1997) data were collected more than a decade later. The landscape of the labor force was vastly different between those two time periods. Patterns of employment of women are now much more similar to patterns of employment

among men. Due to the variation among the findings, further research seems to be needed to provide additional insight into the relationship between gender and special education teacher burnout,

Race. In Cross and Billingsley's (1994) study, teachers identified as white more frequently reported intent to stay in their positions; however, the study only measured intent to stay, not whether participants actually stayed or left, and minority groups were more likely to leave the field of special education because of more career options outside of the field of education.

Dworkin (1980) analyzed survey data from a sample of 3,549 public school teachers in a Southwestern metropolis. Data were analyzed using a frequency distribution with calculations for mean and standard deviation. Unlike Cross and Billingsley's (1994) findings, the results indicated that teachers most at risk for leaving identify as white, are under 35 years of age, and are assigned to schools in which the majority of student racial distributions is different than their own. Similar results were found in Billingsley et al.'s (1995) study, which employed mailed questionnaires and descriptive data analysis. The findings indicated that 70-78% of teacher attrition occurs among European-American teachers. Further research should reexamine the relationship, if any exists, between special education teacher race and attrition (intention and actual), and whether the results of Dworkin's study still hold true in the present time.

Other researchers have found no notable differences when investigating the effects of race on teacher attrition (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, et al., 1997; Miller et al., 1998; Singer, 1992).

Age and years of experience. Age and years of experience seem to be the only demographic variables that have been consistently linked to special education teacher burnout (Billingsley, 2004). When compared to teachers with greater teaching experience, those with fewer years of special education teaching experience were reported as being more apt to leave; moreover, there seems to be a greater likelihood that newer teachers will report feelings of job dissatisfaction and predictions that they will leave when compared to teachers with more experience (Coleman, 2000; Gersten Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001; Miller et al., 1998; Morvant et al., 1995; Singer, 1992; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Stempien & Loeb, 2002).

The purpose of Miller et al.'s (1998) study was to determine factors specific to the workplace that could predict a level of statistical significance in the career plans of special education teachers, including their decisions to leave or transfer out of the special education classroom. Participants included 1,208 special education teachers in Florida. The researchers used a survey and obtained an 80% response rate, measuring bivariate relationships using F-tests and chi-square analyses. Results showed that younger teachers more frequently indicated that they were planning to transfer to some other teaching position, while more experienced teachers intended to remain in the same teaching position for longer periods of time.

Morvant et al. (1995) had a twofold purpose for their study: (a) to identify special educators who had left an urban district, and (b) to identify special educators who intend to leave an urban district. Study One included 17 teacher participants. Study Two included 868 special education teachers from three urban districts. Data collection in

Study One was based on interviews with qualitative data analysis, in which themes were identified across the participants; in Study Two, a questionnaire was mailed and quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and factor analysis.

Significant results ($p < .002$) were found for younger teachers in the *intend to leave* group. These teachers were younger and had fewer years of experience than those who indicated intent to stay.

Singer's (1992) study examined the longevity of the typical special education teacher and, among those who leave, and at what ages they are more prone to leave. The study's purpose was to investigate whether there was a difference in the risk of leaving based on age at the time of hire, personal/demographic characteristics, teachers' ability to manage job-related responsibilities, and salary. This study included 6,642 special education teachers in Michigan and North Carolina. The methods for data collection and analysis included using discrete time survival analysis, which is a technique used for determining how long it will take for a given event to occur. In this study, the technique was used to determine the probability of a teacher leaving at any given year. The results of Singer's study suggested that younger special education teachers leave at rates twice as high as older special education teachers. The median life span of the special education teacher was reported as being 6.5-7.5 years. This is especially disheartening because the new teachers enter into the profession with the most excitement, optimism, and creativity. Singer reported that those who were 30 years of age or younger when hired were nearly twice as likely to leave. If teachers can be retained early on, they are more likely to remain throughout their working lives. These findings emphasize the importance of

finding creative ways to attract and retain the best prospects to become special education teachers.

In spite of the fact that some new special education teachers find contentment and satisfaction with their jobs, many others report difficulties early on in their careers, stemming from a host of issues mainly related to factors such as role conflict, paperwork, and caseload issues, which are specific to teaching in special education. These factors create feelings of dissatisfaction and a resulting reluctance to remain in their teaching positions. While new teachers seem to be most susceptible to leave prematurely and without warning, more experienced teachers seemed less likely to leave the field for a variety of reasons, such as having reached a higher salary level, reaching tenure status, and not wanting to have to go back to school to pursue additional training for another job (Singer, 1992).

Singh and Billingsley (1996) also examined job-related variables and their influence on measures related to professional commitment, job satisfaction, and the intent to carry on in the profession. Five hundred forty-two special education teachers in Virginia participated in the study by completing a survey. Data were analyzed using the computer program LISREL. Results indicated that teaching experience had a moderately positive effect on intent to remain teaching in special education. The statistically significant results suggested that teachers who had been in the profession longer were more likely to remain.

Coleman (2000) investigated factors associated with special education teacher burnout. The study included 246 special education teachers and administrators. The

methodology was probability-based random sampling and a survey, which included a Likert scale, a rank list, and checklist-type questions. Based on analysis using ANOVA, four out of every 10 special education teachers indicated plans to vacate teaching prior to their fifth year.

Gersten et al. (2001) used the analytic technique of path analysis to investigate specific occupation-related variables and how they affected special education teachers' intent to leave or stay in the profession. Participants included 887 special education teachers in three urban school districts. Results indicated that of those who indicated an intent to leave teaching, 69% actually left within 15 months of their stated desire to leave.

Stempien and Loeb (2002) compared job satisfaction of general and special education teachers. An 18-item Likert scale survey was employed in this study. One hundred sixteen surveys were received (58% response rate) from teachers at eight suburban schools from five districts near Detroit, Michigan. Regression analysis was used, and a significant correlation indicated that younger special education teachers had lower job satisfaction ($p \leq .05$). The results from this study suggested that new special education teachers need specialized support. Recommendations from this study included taking the first year to develop under a mentor teacher, allowing time to network, and gaining greater familiarity with grade-level curriculum guides to increase competency with teaching the general education curriculum. Since only teachers of students with emotional disturbances were included in the study, the results may not be an accurate representation of the total population of special education teachers; therefore, further

research should include a sample of teachers who teach students with varying types of disabilities.

Teacher certification and preparation. Few studies exist regarding the relationship between teacher certification and preparation and job satisfaction and future teaching plans; however, there is some evidence linking certification status with burnout patterns (Banks and Necco (as cited in Brownell & Smith, 1993); Billingsley, 2002; Boe, Bobbitt, & Cook, 1997; Bogenschield, Lauritzen, and Metzke (1988); Darling-Hammond, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Miller et al., 1998).

In the 1980s, several researchers explored the causes of special education teacher burnout. Banks and Necco's (as cited in Brownell & Smith, 1993) study, which included 203 special education teachers from the largest district in West Virginia, used a survey to determine the effects of teacher certification on length of time teaching in special education. They found significant differences in length of time teaching in special education for those who had full certification versus those who did not. Teachers without full certification taught for just over 4 years, while those who had full certification taught for an average of 6 years. Bogenschield, Lauritzen, and Metzke (1988) surveyed 400 general and special education teachers to determine salient variables related to burnout. The results indicated that burnout seemed to be negatively correlated with certification. Another study found that more experienced teachers with full certification and advanced degrees were less likely to leave their jobs (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, et al., 1997).

Boe, Bobbitt, and Cook (1997), Carlson and Billingsley (as cited in Billingsley 2002, 2004), and Miller et al. (1998) found relationships between teacher certification

and preparation and attrition patterns. Boe, Bobbitt, and Cook's (1997) study included both general and special education teachers and found higher levels of attrition among teachers who were not fully certified in their primary assignments. When special education teachers were looked at separately, the results were not significant. This is possibly due to the small sample size among the special education teachers included in this study. Carlson and Billingsley reported that teachers who lacked proper certification were more likely to express intent to leave the field when compared with teachers who had proper certification. Similar results were also reported by Billingsley (2002). In a study that included more than 1,000 special education teachers, Miller et al. found that teachers who lacked certification were more likely to leave the field than those with certification. Certification seemed to matter most when looking at those who exited the field, however, it seemed to be less of a factor for those who remained in the field but transferred to another position (Miller et al., 1998).

Darling-Hammond (1999) argues that when teachers are adequately prepared in pedagogy and content, "it makes an enormous difference not only to their effectiveness in the classroom, but also whether they're likely to enter and stay in teaching" (p.16). She goes on to say that more effective teacher preparation leads to a longer teaching life span of the teacher. She said it is "more expensive to under-prepare people, and then let them spin out again, than it is to prepare people more effectively and keep them in the profession" (p. 17). Darling-Hammond (2000) further explained that the effect a well-prepared teacher can have on student achievement can be more powerful than the effects of a student's background, such as poverty, learning English as a second language, or

belonging to a minority. However, out of the need to fill vacancies, school districts employ many teachers who lack proper certification. Based on Darling-Hammond's findings, it can be inferred that since teachers with adequate preparation and certification experience higher student achievement, this may have a direct relationship with teacher job satisfaction and subsequent attrition.

Teaching setting. Stempien and Loeb (2002) compared job satisfaction in special education teachers of students with emotional disturbances and general education teachers. One hundred sixteen teachers completed a questionnaire. There were no significant differences in demographic variables among the participants. Using ANOVA to measure the differences in job satisfaction among the groups and correlations to determine the specific relationships between demographics and satisfaction, the findings revealed that special education teachers were most dissatisfied. General education teachers are typically more satisfied than special education teachers. Special education teacher burnout was explained by the following factors: job-related stress, lack of effective pre-service training, need for colleague support, and need for more effective professional development.

Test scores. Frank and Keith (as cited in Brownell & Smith, 1992) examined special education teachers who had completed teacher preparation programs during 1975-1976 and 1980-1981. They were interested in the relationship between teachers' Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores and length of time teaching in special education. They found that teachers with higher SAT scores seemed to remain in their jobs as special education teachers longer than those with lower scores.

Urban areas. Dworkin (1980) found that teacher burnout seemed to be much more prevalent in urban areas. The study included 3,500 teachers in Houston who had left teaching special education after 5 years or fewer. No other studies were found that examine special education teacher burnout in urban or rural areas.

Employment factors. The special education teacher's ability to be effective is severely compromised when faced with work-related problems, such as large class sizes, excessive paperwork, lack of support, and insufficient resources (Billingsley, 2004). Such work-related problems can lead to lower job satisfaction, reduced professional commitment, and increased stress, all of which are correlates of burnout and attrition (Billingsley, 2004). Researchers have defined workplace circumstances in a variety of ways and have used an array of analytic techniques to measure the relationships between workplace circumstances on burnout and attrition. This section of the literature review will present the findings in empirical studies that examined the relationship between attrition and salary, workplace atmosphere, support from administrators, support from colleagues, issues related to role conflict, paperwork demands, service delivery models, and teacher caseloads.

Salary. Special education teacher salary has been strongly linked to attrition. Lauritzen (1988) investigated job satisfaction of teachers of students with emotional disturbances in 93 school districts nationwide. Lauritzen's findings suggest that special education teacher desire for a higher salary is related to whether teachers remain in or leave the field. Similarly, Singer (1992) suggested that special education teachers with higher salaries seemed to be more likely to stay in their jobs.

Three studies compared the salaries earned by teachers who had left the profession and those who stayed longer than 3 years. Boe, Bobbitt, Cook et al. (1997) examined the relationship between a national sample of general and special education teachers and found a relationship between an increase in salary and teaching in special education for longer periods of time. Miller et al. (1998) and Singer (1992) both concluded that special education teachers who received higher salaries were more apt to remain longer than those who received lower salaries. Billingsley et al. (1995) found that among special education teachers in urban areas, 10% listed low salary as their primary reason for leaving.

Sultana's (2002) study had a dual purpose: (a) to identify the factors contributing to high attrition rates, and (b) to develop recommendations to attract more candidates to preservice teacher prep programs. Two hundred ninety participants (80 special education teachers and 210 general education teachers) in Kentucky were included in the study. Answers to open-ended questions were coded, and frequencies were developed among the categories of themes. The results suggested that the highest area of dissatisfaction among those who were currently teaching at the time of the study was salary.

Starlings, McLean, and Moran (2002) researched the reasons for high special education teacher attrition in Alaska. This two-phase survey research study included 161 participants. Nominal responses from the survey (e.g., *yes/no* response options) were converted to quantitative values (e.g., 1, 2) and ANOVA was used to test for significance. Results indicated that dissatisfaction with salary was rated as the primary reason for

dissatisfaction. A significant difference was found between those who stayed in the field and those who left when *more money* was used as the independent variable ($\alpha = .05$).

School climate. While a sole definition of this term that is accepted by all researchers has yet to be developed, for the purpose of this study, *school climate* refers to whether or not a teacher regards his/her school or district as a supportive, positive, and good place to work (Billingsley, 2004; Busia, 2009; Taylor & Tashakkori, 1995). Three large-scale studies (Liu & Meyer, 2005; Miller et al., 1998; Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education [SPeNSE], 2002) indicate that teachers who have favorable perceptions of their school seem to have a greater likelihood of staying in teaching when compared to teachers who have perceptions that are less favorable.

Miller et al. (1998) defined school climate in terms of teacher satisfaction related to the morale of the school staff at their current school. This study found a significant relationship found favorable ratings of school climate and future plans to remain in teaching. In the SPeNSE (2002) study, school climate was defined as “the extent to which schools are caring and supportive of students and staff” (p. 2). The report indicated that a positive school climate appeared to counteract negative feelings associated with unmanageable or high workloads. The researchers indicated, “It appears that the negative effects of a burdensome workload may be offset by supportive administrators and colleagues, a key feature in schools with a positive climate” (p. 2). Liu and Meyer’s (2005) purpose was to find out how satisfied teachers were with various parts of their jobs. Using multivariate analysis to analyze data from a national sample of 6,279 teachers who responded to the TFS of 1994-1995, they found “[A] high correlation

between school climate and work conditions ($r = .77$) [confirming] the conventional wisdom about school environment” (p. 994). They continued, “When school leadership encourages teacher involvement in governance, school leaders are actively improving the work conditions” (p. 994).

Support from administrators. The results of several empirical studies over the past 30 years suggest a strong link between administrative support perceived by special education teachers and their job satisfaction and commitment (Billingsley, 2004; Billingsley et al., 1995; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Gehrke & Murri, 2006; George, George, Gersten, & Grosenick, 1995; Gersten et al., 2001; Littrell, Billingsley, & Cross, 1994; Miller et al., 1998; Otto & Arnold, 2005; Thornton et al., 2007; Vance, Miller, Humphreys, & Reynolds, 1989; Westling & Whitten, 1996).

Fimian and Santoro (as cited in Vance et al., 1989) surveyed 601 special education teachers, and found that supportive administrators can reduce the stress levels of special education teachers. Similar to Finian and Santor (as cited in Vance et al., 1989), Dworkin’s (1980) survey research that included over 3,500 participants led to the conclusion that supportive administrators can reduce the stress levels of special education teachers.

Lawrenson and McKinnon’s (as cited in Cross & Billingsley, 1994) qualitative study included 33 current and former teachers of students with emotional disturbances. The study employed telephone interviews and questionnaires sent via mail. The results suggested that one of the primary reasons teachers left special education was due to an inability to work with administrators.

Billingsley and Cross (1992) used frequency distribution and regression analysis ($p < .05$; $r = .94$) to determine that both special and general education teachers who reported perceptions of higher levels of administrative support were less likely to experience high job-related stress and reported higher levels of commitment when compared to those who experienced less support.

The purpose of Billingsley et al.'s (1995) two-part study was to understand the influence of commitment and job satisfaction on future teaching plans. The results of this mixed-methods 3-year study indicated that for 25% of special education teachers who leave, the primary reason is dissatisfaction with support given by central office administrators. Furthermore, 20% indicated a lack of support from their principal as the primary reason for their decision to leave. These findings were consistent with the findings of McLaughlin and Nolet (2004) and Patterson, Marshall, and Bowling (2000).

George et al. (1995) set out to investigate the relationships between variables associated with future teaching plans among teachers of students with behavior disorders. The study included 96 special education teachers who were currently teaching at the time of the study (51 who indicated plans to stay and 45 who were at risk for leaving). Mailed questionnaires were analyzed using bivariate analyses, and follow-up interviews were analyzed qualitatively. Ratings of supervisory support were significantly related to teacher career intentions, $r = .24$, $p < .01$, suggesting that when teachers perceived that the administrative support they were receiving was sufficient or more than sufficient, there was a lower probability that they would leave the field. Data analysis showed that

61% of those with plans to stay indicated they were receiving greater administrative support as compared to 32% of those with potential plans to leave.

Littrell et al. (1994) investigated the relationship between general and special education teacher perceptions of administrative support and how those perceptions related to teacher stress, commitment, job satisfaction, overall health, and intent to stay in teaching. The study included 385 special education teachers of students with learning disabilities, mental retardation, and emotional disturbance, and 313 general education teachers in the state of Virginia. Using ANOVA and regression analysis, the researchers analyzed results of a mailed questionnaire. They found that special education teachers assigned the highest importance to receiving emotional support from administrators (such as expressing appreciation), open communication with administrators, and administrators showing interest in the teachers' day-to-day work. Further, a positive correlation was found between emotional/instructional support and job satisfaction/commitment.

In Westling and Whitten's (1996) study, 158 special education teacher participants indicated that they were more inclined to remain in their jobs when they received administrative assistance with problem solving, teaching strategies, program enhancement, and creative strategies to increase inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education setting. Some comments from teachers in the "Not Stay" group in Westling and Whitten's study included:

- "In my situation, I do not feel that the administration has a clear understanding/knowledge of special education."
- "The one difficult administrator may lead to my changing jobs."

- “I feel the building administrators are not consistent in their dealings with special education students and teachers.” (p. 331)

Gersten et al. (2001) investigated 887 special education teachers from three school districts in urban settings. The results of this study suggest that perceived support from principals may help counteract teacher stress. Gehrke and Murri (2006) examined the intent to continue of first- and second-year special education teachers. Participants completed a 10-question Likert-scale survey regarding their interactions at work. Participant responses were categorized into themes. A frequency distribution displayed the most commonly recurring reasons for greatest satisfaction, which included positive relations with the administration.

In a study that included 228 experienced special education teachers in South Texas, surveys were used to determine satisfaction with administrative support (Otto & Arnold, 2005). The results suggested a relationship between perceived administrative support, job satisfaction, and intent to remain in the profession. Further, the results suggested that as teacher experience increased, they tended to perceive their administrators as more supportive. Among experienced special education teachers, 69% reported satisfaction with the support provided by their administrators. The causes of the differences in satisfaction between experienced and novice teachers were not considered in this study. As the authors note, one possible explanation is that less experienced special education teachers feel beleaguered by their job responsibilities, which can result in them placing blame for any difficulties they are facing on their administrators.

Thornton et al. (2007) posited that a direct relationship exists between principal leadership and school culture and climate. The instructional leadership, guidance, and support principals provide are both directly and indirectly related to teacher perceptions of working conditions. Supportive principals infuse a positive tone for the school (Gersten et al., 2001; Thornton et al., 2007). Further, supportive principals intervene to assist with dispute resolution; they encourage collaboration among staff in establishing school policy, particularly in connection with the special education program, which results in teachers and students feeling that they are involved in guiding the culture of the school. Recommendations for principals included providing their teachers with adequate access to necessary resources and instructional materials, ample classroom space, opportunities for peer/colleague support and networking, and relevant and meaningful staff development experiences to help special education teachers meet the challenges of working with students with disabilities (Gersten et al., 2001; Thornton et al., 2007).

One challenge for policymakers and central office administrators lies in the fact that many site-based administrators lack sufficient knowledge of and familiarity with to the needs and requirements of students with disabilities (Crockett, 2002). When school administrators do not possess this knowledge, an understanding of the unique needs and challenges that students with disabilities and their families face, or knowledge of effective research-based instructional practices for students with disabilities, their ability to be effective instructional leaders becomes severely compromised (Bays, 2004). This has implications for teacher job satisfaction and commitment to remain in the profession.

Billingsley (2005) indicated that the choices administrators make, and the way they interact with special education teachers, has a strong indirect effect on the quality of a student's education. The most effective school site administrators of the 21st century seem to be those who not only view themselves as evaluators or supervisors, but who also take on the role of instructional leaders and support providers and have the skills needed to cope with the challenges associated with educating students of varying abilities and from diverse populations (McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004; Patterson et al., 2000). Further, as McLaughlin and Nolet and Patterson et al. note, administrators who were viewed as supportive by special education teachers were abreast of all of the current laws pertaining to special education, such as IDEIA 2004, understood the requirements of NCLB, and worked creatively with all stakeholders to develop programs that would meet all students' needs.

Support from colleagues. While administrative support has garnered abundant attention from researchers, the issue of colleague support has attracted less consideration. Based on a review of empirical studies, the findings suggest that colleague support is related to special education teacher burnout. While several studies have found strong evidence of influence of colleague support on teacher job satisfaction and attrition, others have found less compelling or indirect evidence of the effects of colleague support.

Billingsley (2004) reiterated her conclusions from two earlier studies where she was the principal investigator. She found little evidence that collegial support was an important issue among special education teachers who leave the profession. In her 1993 study, using an open-ended questionnaire of 42 special education teachers who left their

positions, no respondents indicated issues related to colleague support as contributing to their decisions to stay or leave. In Billingsley et al.'s (1995) study of 99 special education teachers who left their positions, only four stated that their decision to leave was influenced by problems with colleagues.

In two studies that explored influences on special education teachers' future career plans, support from colleagues was identified at a significant level. Miller et al. (1998) found that increased colleague support led to longer periods of time teaching ($p < .0006$). Gersten et al. (2001) posited that support of the "principal and fellow teachers can help make a seemingly unmanageable job manageable" (p. 8). This finding was significant at the .05 level ($r = .23$).

Researchers have established the indirect role of the administrator in creating opportunities for colleagues to interact and provide support to one another. Singh and Billingsley (1996) posited that the principal can enhance special education teacher commitment by establishing a collegial environment. In this study, principal support had large effect on the special education teacher group and was significant at the .05 level.

These recommendations were corroborated almost a decade later by Schlichte, Yssel, and Merbler (2005). Using semi-structured, open-ended interview questions, Schlichte et al. examined the extent of collegial and administrative support and related stress factors as perceived by five special education teachers in their first year in a state in the Midwest in order to determine if there were any factors that helped these first-year teachers. Results of qualitative data analysis yielded two recommendations: (a) administrators need to provide support to special education teachers in order to foster a

collegial environment; and (b) novice teachers need access to mentoring opportunities with more experienced teachers. These recommendations show the importance of administrators in providing indirect support to their special education teachers.

Support through mentoring. Beginning special education teachers benefit from mentoring support. Three recent studies on special education teacher burnout provide information on the relationship between special education teachers participating in new teacher support programs and special education teacher attrition (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004; Holdman & Harris, 2003; Stempien & Loeb, 2002; Whitaker, 2000).

Whitaker (2000) investigated beginning special education teacher perceptions of what made a mentoring program effective and explored how mentoring programs related to future teaching plans. The study participants included 156 special education teachers in their first year of teaching in the state of South Carolina. The researcher used a mailed questionnaire to obtain information on teacher demographics and perceptions of mentoring programs. At the $p < .05$ level, a correlation was found between perceived effectiveness of mentoring programs, job satisfaction, and future teaching plans. This study shed some light on effective aspects of mentoring programs: (a) special education teachers reported more benefit when they were mentored by a special education teacher versus a general education teacher; (b) special education teachers indicated greater benefit when they perceived emotional support from their mentors; and (c) special education teachers reported greater satisfaction when they had more frequent opportunities to interact informally with their mentors as opposed to more formal and structured meetings.

Over 4 years, Holdman and Harris (2003) evaluated Project Launch, a rural induction program. This study included a sample of 11 special education teachers. After 4 years of completing the induction program, six were still teaching, and five of those six were still teaching in special education. Teachers who participated in this program indicated the program was beneficial.

Using data from SPeNSE, Billingsley et al. (2004) examined the effects of induction programs on career plans. The study included 1,153 special education teachers. Data analysis was conducted using WesVar, a statistical program that calculates data estimates. Their analyses included chi-square, descriptive stats, *t*-tests and ANOVAs. In contrast to Whitaker's (2000) results, Billingsley et al.'s results supported the null hypothesis that there was no significant relationship between formal mentoring and future plans to remain teaching in special education. Sixty-one percent of beginning teachers had an opportunity to experience a formal mentoring program, but only two thirds of the participants reported the program as being helpful. Billingsley et al. recommended that induction programs should allow for flexibility in providing support, allowing for various networking opportunities, frequent observations, and professional development activities, which are the greatest needs of beginning special education teachers.

In another study, Stempien and Loeb (2002) found significance at the $p < .05$ level on the effects of mentoring and special education teacher job satisfaction. Stempien and Loeb's study investigated the differences between the factors that contributed to special education and general education teacher job satisfaction. The main difference was that special education teachers more frequently cited the importance of interaction

with their colleagues. Stempien and Loeb emphasized the importance of collegial relationships, stating, “Mentors can ease the transition process by offering support and suggestions. They can also serve as role models for finding satisfaction in teaching children who have special challenges” (p. 265). They recommended: “1. Take the first year to listen to, observe, and establish functional relationships with a few experienced teachers; 2. Network with other special education teachers in the district for support and ideas” (p. 265). As Billingsley (2004) posited, “Induction programs must be designed with the primary purpose of helping teachers become more effective....If this is the primary goal and teachers develop competence and satisfaction in their work, attrition will likely be reduced” (p. 21).

Role conflict and ambiguity. Crane and Iwanicki’s (as cited in Miller et al., 1998) study included 443 special education teachers who were given questionnaires designed to target factors related to burnout in urban settings. The researchers posited that special education teacher burnout in urban areas was related to role conflict and role ambiguity.

In Billingsley’s (2004) literature review, she posited that issues related to role conflict and ambiguity “have been strongly linked to special education teacher attrition as much or more than any other work-related factor” (p. 22). Regardless of the type of research method used (qualitative or quantitative), results have consistently shown that role issues seem to be important in relation to special education teacher job performance, job satisfaction, and intent to leave teaching.

In three large-scale studies, researchers have found a strong link between role conflict and role ambiguity and their relationship to job satisfaction and intent to leave teaching (Edmonson & Thompson, 2001; Embich, 2001; Gersten et al., 2001). Gersten et al. used the term *role dissonance* to describe the relationship between role problems and job satisfaction, describing the term as “the degree to which special educators experience dissonance between their own beliefs about the role of the special educator and their actual day-to-day experiences” (p. 556). They found a negative correlation between support from principals and teachers and role dissonance ($r = -.23$). This was significant at the $p < .05$ level. This suggests that as special education teachers receive increasing amounts of support, their level of conflict (e.g., lack of control over various aspects of their job) decreases, and their level of incongruence with district special education administration and school site administration decreases.

Edmonson and Thompson (2001) conducted a 14-stage meta-analysis to investigate the impact of role ambiguity and role conflict on special education teacher burnout. Effect sizes were measured using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. The results indicated that role conflict was positively correlated with emotional exhaustion, with an average effect size of .516. This met the criteria for a large-effect size and represented 27% of the explained variance. Edmonson and Thompson concluded the following about role conflict:

[Role conflict occurs when] a person’s multiple roles within a job are in conflict with each other or may even be in conflict with the person’s expectations of what his or her role(s) should be. When educators are not sure of what is expected of

them, when they lack the information or support to understand what their role should be, then burnout is often a consequence. (p. 4)

Embich's (2001) purpose was to investigate factors that contribute to teachers of students with specific learning disabilities experiencing feelings of depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and a decrease in feelings of personal accomplishment. Embich cited Farber's definition of role conflict as occurring when "inconsistent, incompatible, or inappropriate demands are placed upon an individual" (p. 65). Embich also cited Farber's definition of role ambiguity as "a lack of clarity regarding a teacher's rights, responsibilities, methods, goals, status, or accountability" (p. 65). Embich's study included 310 teachers. The instruments used were the MBI and the Role Ambiguity Questionnaire. Using regression analysis, the researcher found that role conflict and ambiguity were both significant at the $p < .05$ level as correlates of emotional exhaustion.

Paperwork. Too much paperwork has consistently been identified as a contributing factor to burnout among special education teachers (Billingsley, 2004; Billingsley et al., 2004; Brownell, Smith, McNellis, & Miller, 1997; DeBettencourt & Howard, 2004; Luckner & Hanks, 2003; Mastropieri, 2001; Whitaker, 2000).

Brownell et al. (1997) discussed the results of their qualitative study to determine the causes of special education teacher attrition. Several participants in their study reported that paperwork and legalities caused teachers to decide to leave teaching in the special education setting. One teacher in the study reported that frustration with excessive paperwork spurred her decision to leave. She reported that she enjoyed teaching but felt the paperwork demands were unrealistic. In response to a question

regarding whether she would become a special education teacher if she had it to do over again, she said, “No, because of the excruciating paperwork, the necessity of redoing the paperwork for small errors [and] all the red tape” (p. 150).

Whitaker’s (2000) study included a focus group of 35 beginning special education teachers. The teachers were interviewed to determine their most significant area of need. Whitaker found high correlations (significant at the $p < .05$ level) between the frequency and effectiveness of mentoring assistance for completing paperwork provided to beginning special education teachers and the overall effectiveness of the mentoring program, noting that paperwork can indeed be overwhelming. As one beginning teacher in the study stated,

Your first year you are so bogged down with all the paperwork and just learning the mechanics of the job that when you start to set your priorities, the kids kind of come out last and the curriculum comes out last....There is so much emphasis put on the paperwork...That makes me feel like I’m not a real teacher. (p. 562)

Similarly, Mastropieri (2001) chronicled her experience as a first-year special education teacher at a public high school. She stated:

One aspect of the position that appeared overwhelming to me was the paperwork (including the evaluation and reevaluation process)....Initially, I did not understand the school system’s paperwork, particularly IEP forms....I could have also benefited from advice on and examples for maintaining records so that I would have had better information to share at [IEP] meetings. (p. 69)

Luckner and Hanks (2003) conducted a broad-based sample of teachers of deaf or hard of hearing students to examine their job satisfaction. The results of the 610 completed surveys indicated that issues related to the amount of paperwork were the most consistent threat to job satisfaction. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents assigned a rating of *dissatisfied* or *very dissatisfied* to “Amount of paperwork required” (p. 9).

In her review of the literature, Billingsley (2004) found that paperwork overload was significantly related to special education teacher intent to stay in or leave teaching. She posited that there is a significant relationship between the amount of paperwork and the degree to which the job is perceived as manageable. According to Billingsley, “The typical special education teacher reports spending 5 hours per week completing forms and doing administrative paperwork. This is as much time as they spend preparing for lessons” (p. 24). More than half of special education teachers reported that paperwork responsibilities interfere with their teaching.

DeBettencourt and Howard (2004) described the efficacy of a federally-funded training program that provides an alternative route to certification as a special education teacher. One of the goals of this program is to help new special education teachers acquire the necessary skills, such as efficiency with completing paperwork. In this study, 59 special education teachers in two school districts in the Southeastern United States participated in three surveys during their first year of teaching. The study employed a mixed-methods design with Likert-type and open-ended questions designed to assess the efficacy of the program in preparing new special education teachers. Five of the participants in the study were surprised by how much paperwork was involved with

individualized education programs (IEPs). Eight of the teachers stated that one of the most important skills they had acquired in the program was how to organize their paperwork.

Service delivery models. Students with disabilities are typically educated in one or a combination of one of the following settings: (a) general education setting with co-teaching with shared responsibility between a general education and special education teacher, (b) general education setting with collaboration between a general and special education teacher, (c) resource room setting for intensive support from a special education teacher, (d) self-contained special day classroom, (e) special education school or center, or (f) home or hospital program (Billingsley, 2004). These varying demands and constantly changing requirements have had an impact on the rates of special education teacher attrition and retention.

Researchers have studied the effects of increased inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings on the ability of special education teachers to successfully adjust to the challenges of teaching in inclusive settings (Embich, 2001; Morvant et al., 1995). As Billingsley (2004) explained, this causes role conflict for special education teachers. In Morvant et al.'s study that included 17 special education teachers, many teachers reported frustration over having to spend much of their time coordinating with other adults (parents, administrators, and other teachers), and having less time to work directly with their students. Embich's study of 310 special education teachers who taught students with learning disabilities found that teachers who were assigned to teach in collaborative settings reported greater job dissatisfaction and a higher

likelihood of leaving than their counterparts who taught in their own special education classrooms.

The U.S. has moved into an era of great experimentation and changing service delivery models in education. If schools are to have positive climates, it is imperative that district-level and school site administrators remain aware of the challenges that these changes place on both new and experienced special education teachers, and that careful attention be placed on how to support the needs of their teachers (Billingsley, 2004). It is well documented that when special education teachers feel that their values and beliefs are not considered by district-level or school site administrators, they are at greater risk of leaving in favor of other positions (Billingsley, 2004).

Student caseloads. In George et al.'s (1995) study of 96 special education teachers of students with emotional disturbances, no direct relationship was found between caseload size and decisions to remain in or leave the field. Despite the lack of evidence showing a direct relationship between caseload sizes and special education teacher attrition, several studies have shown a link between caseload sizes and job dissatisfaction (a correlate of attrition) (Billingsley et al., 1995; Brownell et al., 1995; Morvant et al., 1995). This suggests a need for further study in this area to determine how the issue of caseload relates to other burnout factors.

Recent findings show mixed conclusions regarding the relationship between special education teacher attrition and student caseloads. Some researchers found that caseload seems to relate to job burnout (Billingsley et al., 1995; Brownell et al., 1995; McLeskey et al., 2004; Morvant et al., 1995; Sack, as cited in Russ, Chiang, Rylance, &

Bongers, 2001; Thornton et al., 2007), while other findings suggest that no relationship exists (George et al., 1995; Nichols & Sosnowsky, 2002). The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE, 2000) define caseloads as the total number of students for whom a special education teacher holds some form of educational responsibility. Despite the growing nationwide population of students with disabilities, there exists no uniformity regarding caseload limits from state to state. This is due in large part to the fact that caseloads are not addressed in federal law. The issue of caseloads is also at the forefront of many negotiations that take place among school boards, teacher unions, and other bargaining units (NASDE, 2000; Zarghami & Schnellert, 2004).

While several federal initiatives have been developed to reduce the student-to-teacher ratio in the general education setting, caseloads in special education are on the rise (McLeskey et al., 2004; NASDE, 2000). In 1996, McCrea reported that special education caseloads were set at a maximum of 15:1. The 22nd Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, (USDOE, 2000) reported a rise in caseloads to the ratio of 16:1. These data show a trend of increases in caseload sizes.

A study by Nichols and Sosnowsky (2002) investigated the relationship of three independent variables—(a) the amount of disability types, (b) sizes of caseloads, and (c) the ratio of students with emotional disorders to the total number of students in the teachers' classes—to the dependent variable of burnout, including stress and attrition. The results indicate that neither the amount of disability categories nor the caseload size

was significantly related to burnout. The findings did imply, however, a significant relationship between the increase in the ratio of students with emotional disorders and teacher burnout.

Based on a literature review of the impact of caseloads on special education teacher attrition, the majority of special education teachers (61%) cited caseload issues as a major factor influencing their decision to leave the field (Sack, as cited in Russ et al., 2001). The author pointed out that while much research has been done regarding factors related to special education teacher burnout, little research has been done in the area of caseload size and its relationship to burnout. The author also suggested studying the effects of different caseload sizes on student achievement.

Materials, resources, and supplies. Kaufhold, Alvarez, and Arnold (2006) surveyed special education teachers in the South Texas area. Of the 228 respondents, 90% reported that they *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that they lacked sufficient materials, resources, and supplies to perform their duties. Not one respondent reported that they had sufficient supplies; 6% were *neutral* and 4% did not respond.

Kaufhold et al. (2006) investigated the aggravation and anxiety that special education teachers experience given their lack of sufficient resources to perform their jobs. The study employed a survey that included 228 special education teacher participants. None of the respondents reported having ample resources, and 90% of the respondents reported that they *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with the statement that they lacked the resources needed to effectively perform their duties.

Stress. Historically, stress has been linked to job dissatisfaction and intent to leave (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Gersten et al., 2001; Morvant et al., 1995; Schnorr, 1995; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Zabel & Zabel, as cited in Theoharis, 2008). In their study using a questionnaire whose purpose was to identify variables influencing teacher commitment, job satisfaction, and teaching plans, Billingsley and Cross (1992) received 952 responses from general and special education teachers (83% response rate). Data were analyzed by regression. Stressful work conditions were positively correlated to job dissatisfaction. Similarly, Schnorr (1995) investigated 1,500 special education teachers in Alaska. Based on results from a questionnaire, high stress was indicated as one of the primary factors contributing to decisions to leave the field. Nearly 80% of special education teachers who indicated plans to leave experienced stressful workplace conditions on a regular basis (Morvant et al., 1995). Gersten et al. (2001) used the analytic technique of path analysis to investigate specific occupation-related variables and how they affected special education teacher intent to leave or stay in the profession. Participants included 887 special education teachers in three urban school districts. Like the previously mentioned studies, stress was positively correlated with job dissatisfaction and intent to leave the field.

Other studies that examined various independent variables and their relationship to stress levels suggested that stress was related to large amounts of paperwork (Billingsley & Cross, 1992), an unmanageable range of student needs, too many expectations, inconsistent directives from administrators (Morvant et al., 1995), and

general dissatisfaction with administrative support (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Boe, Barkanic & Leow, 1999; Littrell et al., 1994; Morvant et al., 1995).

Stress reduction and support from colleagues. Support from colleagues seems to be related to lower stress levels among special education teachers (Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996; Cooley & Yovanoff, as cited in Barak, Nissly, & Levin, 2001; Eichinger, 2000; Gonzalez, 1995; Kilgore & Griffin, 1998; Menlove, Garnes, and Salzberg, 2003; Plash and Piotrowski, 2006).

Cooley and Yovanoff (as cited in Barak et al., 2001) devised a controlled study that included 92 participants. The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of the following interventions: (a) workshops designed to relieve, cope with, and manage stress; and (b) workshops designed to provide structured time to interact with and receive support from colleagues. The results of the study suggested that programs to help participants manage and deal with stress, as well as programs providing opportunities for peer interaction, reduced the risk of burnout and subsequent attrition in special education teachers who were at risk for leaving the profession. Indeed, in a mixed-methods study of 75 first-year special education teachers in Texas, Gonzalez (1995) found a relationship between assistance and feedback from mentors (more experienced special education teachers) and increased job satisfaction.

Kilgore and Griffin (1998) studied four beginning special education teachers in Florida. They sought to gain insight into the commonly reported job-related problems of special education teachers, and what those teachers felt was needed to overcome the challenges they were facing. Using interviews, the researchers analyzed the data

qualitatively. The researchers' analysis process included: (a) coding the transcripts, (b) analyzing the data sets to identify recurring themes or topics, (c) comparing the data sets for similarities/differences, and (d) analyzing the data to find relationships among the categories. The participants in this study complained that while they were teaching students whom their general education colleagues and administrators perceived as difficult to teach, they received very little support or encouragement for doing so. These new teachers expressed their desire to receive more support for the complex and challenging aspects of teaching in special education. The researchers concluded that colleague support can reverse the effects of burnout and job dissatisfaction.

Cooley and Yovanoff (1996) conducted an experimental study with 46 special education teachers to measure the effects of an introduced peer collaboration program on job satisfaction (a correlate of attrition). Using the MBI survey instrument as a pre/post intervention measure, and the MANOVA to analyze the results over four cycles of analysis, the results suggested that emotional exhaustion and feelings of personal accomplishment improved at the .05 level as a result of the intervention. The researchers concluded that opportunities for collaboration and dialogue between teachers seemed to mitigate feelings of isolation.

In a recent study, Plash and Piotrowski (2006) investigated the connection between job satisfaction and attrition of special educators in Alabama. Study participants included 117 teachers who completed a 63-item survey designed to measure job satisfaction, administrative support, pre-employment preparation, and specific reasons for

leaving the field. Descriptive statistics were calculated and conclusions were drawn in two areas:

1. Attrition—the most frequently indicated reasons cited for attrition were job conditions, job-related stress, paperwork issues, caseload and class size issues; and
2. Retention—the top factors found to help with retention included effective and meaningful professional development and opportunities to network with other teachers.

Eichinger (2000) had 43 males and 89 female special education teachers participate in a study designed to examine the effects of social roles and gender characteristics on job stress and dissatisfaction among special education teachers. Female teachers reported higher levels of stress than males, as shown by the Special Education Stress Index. Among female special education teachers, higher job satisfaction and lower stress levels were indicated among those women who had more frequent interaction with their colleagues.

Menlove et al. (2003) surveyed 812 special education teachers who remained in the field 10 or more years. According to the survey, 91.5% indicated satisfaction with the instructional components of their jobs, while only 44.4% were satisfied with non-instructional aspects (e.g., paperwork). Recommendations were given to increase job satisfaction and decrease stress, which included mentoring and peer coaching, increasing support from administrators, using technology to reduce paperwork, and stress management training.

Difficulties with particular student populations. Many teachers seemed to attribute difficulties with particular student populations as an important factor related to their job satisfaction (Banks & Necco, as cited in Theoharis, 2008; Seery, 1990; Zabel & Zabel, as cited in Theoharis, 2008). Zabel and Zabel's study included a total of 601 Kansas teachers, 100 of which were special education teachers, who completed a questionnaire. The results suggested that teachers of students with emotional disturbances were at greatest risk for burnout due to stress. Banks and Necco compared 181 special education teachers who taught students with different types of disabilities (i.e., emotional disturbances, mental retardation, and learning disabilities). The findings seemed to suggest that teachers of students with emotional disturbances had higher burnout rates than teachers of students with other types of disabilities. Seery surveyed 201 current special education teachers of students with emotional disturbances and 462 former special education teachers of students with emotional disturbances. The results indicated that for those who had experienced burnout or were at risk for burnout, the primary reasons were difficult relationships with students.

External factors. The results of studies pertaining to the relationship of personal issues to burnout can be summarized into the following categories: (a) family issues (e.g., moving due to career changes, pregnancy/childbirth, health issues, retirement.), (b) inter- and intrapersonal skills (e.g., working well with others, the ability to cope with stressful situations), (c) family breadwinner status, and (d) perceptions of the availability of out-of-classroom teaching positions.

Billingsley et al. (1995) conducted a 3-year study with 470 participants that included general and special education teachers aimed at ways to improve retention in Memphis, Tennessee. In the area of personal issues, in-depth interviews revealed the following reasons for leaving the field: (a) family or individual move, (b) pregnancy/child-rearing, and (c) health or retirement.

Brownell et al. (1997) conducted telephone interviews with 93 special education teachers in Florida who had left teaching. Data analysis was conducted by developing codes for the responses and sorting the codes into themes. Teachers who had left cited reasons such as: (a) childbirth, (b) retirement, (c) family move, and (d) issues related to spouse's work.

Based on post-attrition interviews of 17 special education teachers, Morvant et al. (1995) cited personal reasons for leaving, such as: (a) concerns over their own health or the health of a family member, (b) their own or their spouse's retirement, and (c) the search for a better balance in their lives.

Billingsley and Cross (1992), Cross and Billingsley (1994), and Westling and Whitten (1996) investigated the relationship between being the primary income earner in one's family and intent to stay in or leave one's special education teaching position. Using a sample of 158 special education teachers from rural counties across the United States, Westling and Whitten analyzed their data by employing bivariate statistics and logistical regression. The findings suggested that 75% of special education teachers who were the main earners for their families were more likely to remain in the field than those who were not. In contrast, Billingsley and Cross's (1992) study that included 286 special

education teachers, and Cross and Billingsley (1994) did not find any differences between being the primary income earner independent variable and the intent to leave or stay dependent variable. Cross and Billingsley's 1994 study of 412 special education teachers used path analysis to determine the effects of several demographic and employment variables on job satisfaction. The researchers again found no significant differences between being the primary income earner and intent to remain in or leave the teaching profession.

Other studies have found that special education teachers who perceive that they are likely to find non-teaching (out-of-classroom) opportunities within the field of education have plans to teach for smaller amounts of time than teachers who believe there are fewer out-of-classroom opportunities (Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Singh & Billingsley, 1996).

While some external issues can be the cause for attrition, there are various external issues that should not necessarily be perceived as occurring as a result of burnout, because some of these factors may occur for reasons outside of a teacher's control, such as family issues (e.g., pregnancy/childbirth).

The attrition and retention of special education teachers also seem to be related to other external factors, such as economic issues and societal influences, which are reasons completely unrelated to demographic or employment factors (e.g., professional qualifications and workplace conditions). Little research exists on how external factors relate to special education teacher decisions to stay or leave the profession (Billingsley, 1993; Theoharis, 2008).

Economic factors. Based on a comprehensive review of the literature, no articles in the area of economic factors were found other than those pertaining to the effects of teacher salary on job satisfaction and career decisions.

Societal influences. Teachers' perceptions of the way they are viewed by the public, including social status and level of appreciation for what teachers do, are connected to teachers' future teaching plans (Inman & Marlow, 2004). The purpose of Inman and Marlow's study was to examine the attitudes of new teachers to target positive aspects of teaching that could be predictive of teacher decisions to stay in teaching. The researchers asked 500 beginning teachers to complete a survey that measured career stability. One of the items addressed in the survey was designed to compare beginning teachers' actual perceptions of the professional prestige they experienced from the community with what their expectations were regarding community perceptions of teachers prior to entering teaching. Over 40% of the respondents indicated that teaching carries a lower level of prestige than they expected prior to entering the profession. Inman and Marlow surmised that, as a result of the way teachers are presented in the media, combined with the frequency of low levels of support from parents and community members, teachers appear to be more likely than those in other professions to become disillusioned very early in their careers.

In another study aimed at determining the factors contributing to teacher decisions to stay or leave the profession, Tye and O'Brien (2002) sent questionnaires to 551 graduates of a teacher credentialing program at Chapman University in Orange, California. One hundred fourteen people completed the questionnaire. The results were

as follows: (a) among those who already left teaching, *low status of the profession* ranked sixth out of seven reasons; and (b) among those who had not yet left, but would consider leaving the profession, *low status of the profession* ranked fourth out of seven reasons. In the open-ended response section, responses included, “This is an impossible job to get done.” “We are not treated respectfully by anyone.” “I wouldn’t recommend this profession to anybody” (p. 7).

Job satisfaction. “The strongest direct influence on intent to stay in teaching is job satisfaction” (Cross & Billingsley, 1994, p. 414). Job satisfaction seems to be one of the most important predictors for special education teachers’ future career plans (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Teacher demographics and personal factors, including age (Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Gersten et al., 2001; Miller et al., 1998; Morvant et al., 1995; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Stempien & Loeb, 2002) and experience (Coleman, 2000; Gersten et al., 2001; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Stempien & Loeb, 2002), gender (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, et al., 1997; Eichinger, 2000; Miller et al., 1998; Morvant et al., 1995; Singer, 1992), race (Billingsley et al., 1995; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Miller et al., 1998; Singer, 1992), personal issues (Billingsley et al., 1995; Brownell et al., 1997; Morvant et al., 1995), qualifications (Billingsley, 2004; Blanton, Sindelar, & Correa 2006), and certification and preparation (Billingsley, 2004; Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, et al., 1997; Boe, Shin, & Cook, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Miller et al., 1998), have all been linked to job satisfaction.

Many employment factors have been strongly linked to job satisfaction. Support from administrators appears to be one of the strongest factors affecting special education

teacher job satisfaction (Bays, 2004; Billingsley, 2005; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Billingsley et al., 1995; Crocket, 2002; Gehrke & Murri, 2006; George et al., 1995; Gersten et al., 2001; Littrell et al., 1994; McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004; Miller et al., 1998; Otto & Arnold, 2005; Patterson et al., 2000; Thornton et al., 2007; Westling & Whitten, 1996). Other employment factors, such as salary (Billingsley et al., 1995; Boe, Bobbitt, Cook et al., 1997; Miller et al., 1998; Singer, 1992; Starlings et al., 2002; Sultana, 2002), school climate (Billingsley, 2004; Busia, 2009; Liu & Meyer, 2005; Miller et al., 1998; SPeNSE, 2002), support from colleagues (Billingsley, 2004; Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996; Gersten et al., 2001; Kilgore & Griffin, 1998; Miller et al., 1998; Schlichte et al., 2005; Singh & Billingsley, 1996), support through mentoring (Billingsley et al., 2004; Gersten et al., 2001; Holdman & Harris, 2003; Stempien & Loeb, 2002; Whitaker, 2000), role conflict and ambiguity (Billingsley, 2004; Edmonson & Thompson, 2001; Embich, 2001; Gersten et al., 2001), paperwork (Billingsley, 2004; Brownell et al., 1997; DeBettencourt & Howard, 2004; Luckner & Hanks, 2003; Mastropieri, 2001; Whitaker, 2000), service delivery models (Billingsley, 2004; Embich, 2001; Morvant et al., 1995), and student caseloads (Billingsley, 2004; Billingsley et al., 1995; Brownell et al., 1995; George et al., 1995; Morvant et al., 1995; McLeskey et al., 2004; NASDSE, 2000; Russ et al., 2001; Zarghami & Schnellert, 2004) have been linked to special education teacher job satisfaction.

Commitment. According to Mowday, Porter, and Steers (as cited in Billingsley, 2004; Mentor, n.d.; Theoharis, 2008), one's commitment to an organization is defined as the degree to which a worker identifies with and is involved with the organization. Three

factors are included in Mowday et al.'s characterization of commitment: (a) the degree to which the worker believes in and accepts the profession's goals and values; (b) the degree to which the worker is willing to exert effort to further the goals and values espoused by the profession; and (c) the degree to which the worker has a desire to remain within the profession.

When a teacher experiences unfavorable working conditions, he/she is less likely to perceive their experiences as positive, which results in lower job commitment (Billingsley, 1993, 2004). When teachers remain despite a lack of commitment, they put forth little effort, which results in poor outcomes for students (Billingsley, 2004).

Commitment seems to be a strong predictor for the future career decisions of special education teachers. The results of several studies indicate that if special education teachers have strong feelings of commitment, they are more likely to stay in teaching (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Brownell et al., 1995; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Gersten et al., 2001; Littrell et al., 1994; Miller et al., 1998; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Special education teachers who perceive they are receiving adequate support from their administrators are more likely to feel greater job commitment (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Butterfield, 2004; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Gersten et al., 2001; Littrell et al., 1994; Maxie, 2009). Special education teachers who experience role conflict and ambiguity (as previously discussed) are likely to experience lower levels of job commitment (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Gersten et al., 2001; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Researchers have correlated increased job commitment with years of teaching experience; as teachers gain years of experience, their level of commitment

increases (Cross & Billingsley, 1994). Also affecting commitment are issues related to perceived stress levels (Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Gersten et al., 2001; Singh & Billingsley, 1996) and job satisfaction (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Gersten et al., 2001, Littrell et al., 1994).

Summary. This section of the literature review addressed the shortages in the field of special education, as well as the historical, theoretical, and empirical findings related to the effects of personal factors, employment factors, and external factors on special education teachers' stress, job satisfaction, commitment, and future teaching plans. The salient demographic factors related to special education teachers' attrition seem to include age, experience, and teacher certification and preparation. The salient employment factors that relate to special education teachers' decisions to leave the field include salary, poor work environment, role conflict, and lack of administrative support. While external factors do play a role in special education teacher job satisfaction, less research has been conducted regarding the effects of personal/familial, economic, and societal issues, and their impact on special education teachers' future teaching plans.

Looking across the literature in non-teaching fields, general education teaching, and special education, the salient factors related to burnout appear to be: (a) personal/demographic factors (e.g., marital status, age, experience on the job, certification and preparation, and self-concept/self-confidence), (b) employment factors (e.g., mentoring opportunities, administrative support, colleague support, interpersonal relationships, availability of resources, and employee involvement in decision-making), and (c) external factors (e.g., community/societal support for the occupation). Other

personal factors that impact attrition should not be attributed to burnout, such as retirement, promotion, relocating, health, pregnancy, and other family-related issues.

This study will contribute to the existing body of literature by expanding the knowledge base regarding specific factors related to special education teacher job commitment among those in a large school district in Southern California. This research topic is opportune in light of the nationwide need and effort to retain special education teachers (Billingsley, 2004; Boe, 2006; Boe et al., 2006; Boyer & Gillespie, 2000; Brownell et al., 2004; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005; Gerald & Hussar, 2003; Ingersoll, 2001; Nickson et al., 2006; Voke, 2002). The State of California has recognized a significant staffing problem in special education (USDOE, 2010); therefore, the research is important to all California school districts. The results of this study may help policymakers and educational administrators both locally and beyond develop systems and implement practices that will have a positive impact on special education teacher job satisfaction and increase the retention of both special and general education teachers.

Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures

This chapter provides a description of the methods for the study, including the research questions, research design and rationale, sampling and data collection methods, data analysis and interpretation, human subjects considerations, and instrumentation.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. To what extent, if at all, do perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California differ on the basis of those teachers' demographic characteristics?
2. To what extent, if at all, are perceptions of job satisfaction, stress, and career longevity related to perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California?
3. After controlling for demographic characteristics, to what extent, if at all, are perceptions of job satisfaction, stress, and career longevity related to the perceived level of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California?
4. What common reasons/conditions do current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California give for wanting to leave teaching in special education?
5. What do current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California report their career plans to be?

Research Design and Rationale

This study employed a survey design. In survey design, the purpose is to generalize from a sample to the broader population so that inferences may be drawn regarding characteristics, attitudes, or specific behaviors (Babbie, 1990). Advantages of the survey design include the expediency of data collection and its low cost (Creswell, 2009). Survey research also has the advantage of generalizing attributes from a small group of individuals to a larger population (Babbie, 1990; Creswell, 2009; Fowler, 2008). The survey was cross-sectional, with the data representing a snapshot in time. Data collection involved creating a web-based survey. Participants were able to access the survey online for a 4-week period of time. The advantages to the online approach include its low cost to the researcher, the ease with which potential participants can access and complete the survey at their convenience, and the ease with which the investigator can retrieve and analyze the survey data.

Data Collection Methods

Target population. The target population for this study was the over 4,000 special education teachers employed by the district being studied.

Selection procedures. A census was conducted of all special education teachers at elementary, middle, and senior high schools with special education programs in the district. Since the researcher did not have access to the names of the prospective participants, the letters were sent to “Special Education Teacher.”

Participants. The participants in this study were full-time special education teachers (as designated by district criteria) in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California.

Data collection. The specific form of data collection was to administer a web-based survey online using Survey Monkey. The rationale for this is that the use of a web-based survey tool is much more cost efficient, time efficient, and convenient than the traditional paper and pencil survey. Data collection occurred in one phase. On October 18, 2010, the researcher sent the recruitment letters (Appendix A) to all schools with a special education program within the district via U.S. Mail (at the researcher's own expense), which included instructions for accessing the survey, along with a recruitment cover letter (Appendix B), requesting that the principal place the letters in the special education teachers' mailboxes. The survey response window opened at the time the recruitment letters were mailed, and was closed after 4 weeks. The recruitment letters were placed in the same envelope with the recruitment cover letter, Pepperdine IRB approval (Appendix C), and district research approval (Appendix D).

At the bottom of the recruitment letter, participants were provided with the web link to the survey. Once participants opened the web link, they viewed the informed consent information (Appendix E), and then proceeded to the survey (Appendix F) by clicking on a button that stated, "I agree to participate. Take me to the survey."

The researcher has supervisory responsibility over 90 transition teachers in the district under investigation. All of these teachers were excluded from participation and were not recruited to participate in the study.

Instrumentation

Based on an extensive review of the critical factors identified in the literature pertaining to special education teacher attrition and retention, and examination of survey instruments used in previous studies, the researcher chose to adapt a previously developed version of a questionnaire by Billingsley and Cross (1992, as revised by Theoharis, 2008). In addition, two questions pertaining to “Future Teaching Plans” were borrowed from Billingsley et al. (1995). Theoharis’s (2008) questionnaire and the questions from Billingsley et al. (1995) were selected because they are a direct match to measuring the research questions in this study. Consent to use these instruments was obtained through email communication with Billingsley (Appendix G) and Theoharis (Appendix H).

The scales used by Theoharis (2008) were in large part borrowed from Billingsley and Cross’s (1992) study. The instrument developed by Billingsley and Cross is a seven-page instrument that was developed by adopting or modifying existing scales developed by other researchers to measure the influences of teacher perceptions on job commitment. To reduce measurement error, the survey instrument that was used in this study is a slightly modified version of the instrument that was developed by Billingsley and Cross (Theoharis, 2008). The modifications that the researcher made to Theoharis’s instrument for this study are outlined in Appendix I.

To address validity and reliability, Theoharis (2008) used Cronbach’s Alpha to measure how well the survey items measured the constructs they were designed to measure. Alphas above .7 are considered reliable and warrant further analysis. Alpha

scores greater than .9 are considered to be very high (Theoharis, 2008). “Initial data analysis indicated that the data exhibited evidence of construct validity and that all of the scale scores from the questionnaire had a high degree of internal reliability” (Theoharis, 2008, p. 117). On the job satisfaction scale, the Cronbach’s Alpha was .85; on the stress scale, the Cronbach’s Alpha was .92; and on the commitment scale, the Cronbach’s Alpha was .82. In order to demonstrate alignment of the survey instrument with the research questions in this study, the researcher developed Table 3.

Table 3

Research Questions, Survey Questions, and Statistical Approach

Research Questions	Survey Questions	Statistical Approach
1. To what extent, if at all, do perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California differ on the basis of those teachers’ demographic characteristics?	1-13(demographic) 16 (commitment)	Pearson correlation, One-way ANOVA
2. To what extent, if at all, are perceptions of job satisfaction, stress, and career longevity related to perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California?	14 (job satisfaction) 15 (stress) 16 (commitment) 17 (career longevity)	Pearson correlation
3. After controlling for demographic characteristics, to what extent, if at all, are perceptions of job satisfaction, stress, and career longevity related to the perceived level of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California?	1-13(demographic) 14 (job satisfaction) 15 (stress) 16 (commitment) 17 (career longevity)	Multiple regression
4. What common reasons/conditions do current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California give for wanting to leave teaching in special education?	18 (reasons for wanting to leave)	Descriptive statistics
5. What do current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California report their career plans to be?	19 (career plans)	Descriptive statistics

Demographic factors. Survey items 1-13 were used to investigate demographic factors. Like Billingsley and Cross (1992) and Theoharis (2008), this survey requested special education teachers' demographic information, including gender, age, race, marital status, years of teaching experience, formal education completed, and whether they are the primary breadwinners in their families. In alignment with Billingsley and Cross and Theoharis, the survey asked whether each participant is the primary income earner in his or her family, and requested information pertaining to area of certification. Questions included in Theoharis's instrument that pertained to university training were excluded from this survey because they are not relevant to this research.

Employment factors. Survey items 14-16 were used to investigate employment factors. Billingsley and Cross (1992) obtained special education teachers' perspectives on employment through questions regarding job satisfaction, stress, and job commitment. Theoharis (2008) used the exact same wording in her survey. The questions that were reproduced in this survey were worded in the exact same way as in Theoharis's survey.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction (survey item 14) was assessed through questions regarding salary and benefits, workplace conditions, challenge, and opportunities for growth. Like Billingsley and Cross (1992) and Theoharis (2008), this section employed a Likert-type scale that was modified to be a 5-point scale (Appendix I). An alpha coefficient of .85 was derived for this scale, which is considered very reliable (Theoharis, 2008).

Stress. Stress was assessed through survey item 15. This section used the same 10-point scale developed by Parasuraman (as cited in Billingsley & Cross, 1992;

Theoharis, 2008), which Billingsley and Cross (1992) and Theoharis (2008) also used to evaluate stress. In this section, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they feel frustration, nervousness, and tension in relation to their current teaching assignments. A 5-point Likert-type scale was used with a range from 1 (*disagree*) to 5 (*agree*). An alpha coefficient of .92 was derived for this scale, which indicated a strong reliability (Theoharis, 2008).

Job commitment. Commitment to the profession (survey item 16) was assessed using the following scales: (a) a 15-item measure of attitudes that was developed by Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974); and (b) a scale developed by Belasco and Alutto (1972, as cited in Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Theoharis, 2008). Belasco and Alutto's scale included statements regarding preference of job assignment, and the relationship between one's values and the values espoused by the profession. Participants were provided Likert-type response options in this section, with a range from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The alpha coefficient for this scale was .82, which is considered very reliable (Theoharis, 2008).

Career longevity and career plans. Survey items 17 and 19 addressed career longevity and career plans. Survey items 17 and 19 were adapted with permission from Billingsley (Appendix G). Validity and reliability were established by Billingsley et al. (1995). They noted,

[The survey items] were reviewed at various stages of development by OSEP [Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Dept of Ed.] staff and members of

the MCS [Memphis City Schools] advisory/planning panel....They were field tested with a sample of teachers in Virginia and Tennessee. (p. 215)

Survey item 17 pertained to how long special education teachers plan to remain in special education. Survey item 19 asked participants who want to leave teaching special education in the next 3 to 5 years to indicate what they plan to do after leaving.

Reasons for leaving teaching special education. Survey item 18 pertained to the reasons why special education teachers may want to leave teaching special education. The researcher developed survey item 18 for this particular study. Survey item 18 contained a multiple-response checklist (based on recurring themes from the extant theoretical and empirical literature) of potential answers for the respondent to endorse. The open-ended response option allowed participants the opportunity to provide an open-ended response if they wished to express a reason that was not included in the list. To address content validity for the response options included in survey item 18, the researcher developed a two-column table with “Reasons for Leaving” in one column and “Citation in the Literature” in the other column (Table 4).

Improving retention. Finally, although unrelated to the research questions, survey item 20 was added at the request of the district under investigation. This is an open-ended question that was used to discover participants’ perspectives on ways the district might improve to increase special education teachers’ desire to remain in the profession. Data were collected and analyzed only for program improvement purposes rather than as part of the research within this dissertation.

Table 4

Content Validity

Reasons for Leaving	Citation in the Literature
Administrative support	Billingsley (2004)
Career path alternatives	Ouyang and Paprock (2006)
Class size	Billingsley (2004)
Colleague interaction	Bradford and Keshock (2009)
Community issues	Billingsley (2004)
Community support	Inman and Marlow (2004)
Family reasons	Billingsley (2004)
Incentives	Hirsch et al. (2001)
Leadership decision-making	McLeskey et al. (2004)
Paperwork issues	Thornton et al. (2007)
Parent support	Maxfield (2009)
Professional development	Billingsley (2004); Ouyang and Paprock (2006); Thornton (2007)
Pursue non-teaching employment	Singh and Billingsley (1996)
Respect	Theoharis (2008)
Resources	Kaufhold et al. (2006)
Retirement	Billingsley (2004)
Salary	Provasnik and Dorfman (2005)
School climate	Billingsley (2004)
Student discipline issues	Provasnik and Dorfman (2005)
Teacher-student relationships	Chang (2009)
Teacher-teacher relationships	Shann (1998)
Unrealistic expectations	Edmonson and Thompson (2001)
Workload	Miller et al. (1998)

Human Subjects

Informed consent was obtained from all participants in this study. The consent form (Appendix E) was displayed as the first page of the electronic survey. The consent form indicated: (a) that the study involves teacher attitudes regarding job satisfaction, stress, commitment, career plans, and reasons, if any, for wanting to leave teaching special education; and (b) that participants are not required to participate, and that neither participation nor non-participation will negatively affect their standing as an employee with the district. Due to the logistical problem of having to ask prospective participants

to fax or mail back a signed consent form, participants gave informed consent by clicking on a statement at the bottom of the informed consent statement that stated, “I agree to participate. Take me to the survey.” To do this, a Waiver of Documentation of Informed Consent (Appendix J) was used. Participants were informed explicitly that they were providing informed consent if they chose to complete the survey. As part of the informed consent (Appendix E), the researcher shared the purpose of the study and promised the confidential treatment of all responses. Participants in the study were subject to minimal risk. The risks involved with this study included possible boredom or fatigue (Williams & Protheroe, 2008). Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that no compensation would be provided to them based on their participation. After potential participants read the informed consent, they were requested to “click here to be directed to the survey.” Those that agreed to participate then proceeded to the survey (Appendix F). A copy of Pepperdine’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is included (Appendix C).

Confidentiality

The survey was conducted online. Participants’ individual responses were kept confidential, with data reported only in aggregate. Participants were not asked for their names or school names. In addition, Survey Monkey software was set to not automatically gather the respondents’ IP addresses or their email addresses. If the findings of the study are presented to professional audiences or published, no information that identifies any of the participants personally will be released. Per Pepperdine IRB, the data are to be kept in a secure manner for 5 years, as they may be used again by

another investigator. The raw data will be kept secure via password protection on an electronic spreadsheet.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

To prepare the data set for analysis, the researcher conducted a series of pre-analysis data screening procedures. First, the data were screened to ensure the data set was accurate. For quantitative variables, the researcher examined the range of values to ensure there were no entries outside the range of possible values. For categorical variables, the researcher ensured all data entries had coded values that corresponded to the possible categories. Next, the researcher took steps to mitigate the effects of missing data, which occurs when subjects do not respond to all items. To be included as a respondent, participants could have no more than two missing responses. For the continuous variables, missing values were estimated and entered based on the median score; for the categorical variables, missing values were estimated and entered based on the mode. Because categorical variables with more than two levels cannot be entered into a regression model and interpreted meaningfully, the dummy coding process was used to transform categorical variables with more than two levels into dichotomous variables (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005).

After the data set was thoroughly screened, the data set was uploaded into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The next step was to report information about the number of respondents. A table of numbers and percentages that provides a description of the respondents was provided (Creswell, 2009). A summary of the data analysis process can be found in Table 3.

For Research Question 1 (survey items 1-13, and 16) (see Appendix F for the complete survey), the researcher conducted descriptive analysis that included providing tables that show the means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages for all demographic variables in the study. The primary dependent variable is the teacher's commitment scale score (survey item 16). This was compared against each of the demographic variables (survey items 1-13). Pearson product-moment correlations were utilized for comparisons of the commitment scale score with continuous and dichotomous dummy coded transformations of categorical variables, and one-way ANOVA tests were used for comparisons of the commitment scale score with the other nominal/categorical demographic variables (Creswell, 2009).

For Research Question 2 (survey items 14, 15, 16, and 17), the three scale scores (job satisfaction, stress, and commitment) were analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlations (Creswell, 2009).

For Research Question 3 (survey items 1-17), two multiple regression models were constructed. The first model included the job commitment scale score (survey item 16), which was the dependent variable, and the job satisfaction (survey item 14) and stress (survey item 15) scale scores, which were the independent variables. The 13 demographic variables were used in the following ways; the continuous demographic variables (survey items 1, 2, and 9) were entered into the model without any transformation while the nominal/categorical demographic variables (survey items 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 13) were dummy coded as deemed appropriate. Dummy coding is a process for assigning categorical variables in a multiple regression model, and uses

ones or zeros to convey group membership (Creswell, 2009; Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). The second model included survey item 17 (“How long are you planning to remain in special education teaching?”) as the dependent variable, which was compared to the independent variables of demographics (survey items 1-13), stress (survey item 15), and job satisfaction (survey item 14) scores. Pearson product-moment correlations were utilized for comparisons of the “career longevity” variable with continuous demographic variables (survey items 1, 2, and 9), and one-way ANOVA tests were used for comparisons of the commitment scale score with nominal/categorical demographic variables (survey items 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 13).

Research Questions 4 and 5 were analyzed using descriptive statistics based on responses to survey items 18 and 19. A table was created with all of the prevalent themes (see Table 4) relating to special education teacher turnover as cited in the theoretical and empirical literature. The frequency of responses was analyzed.

For those participants who provided open-ended responses in survey item 20, sample illustrative quotations were selected. In addition, survey item 20 was analyzed as follows: (a) the researcher deductively classified the text responses into a coding table with labeled categories that represent the themes in the participant’ responses, using the analytic techniques outlined in Patten (2005), and Trochim and Donnelly (2006); and (b) the table was analyzed for frequencies of themes.

The results were interpreted and displayed in tables. This interpretation involved: (a) reporting whether or not statistical significance was obtained for each statistical test,

(b) reporting how the results answered the research questions, and (c) explaining the findings.

Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

The purposes of this study were to: (a) provide an overview of the extent, if at all, to which perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California differ on the basis of those teachers' demographic characteristics; (b) identify the extent, if at all, to which perceptions of job satisfaction and stress are related to perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California; (c) identify the common reasons/conditions expressed by current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California for wanting to leave teaching special education; and (d) identify the career plans of current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California. A total of 275 special education teachers participated in this study.

Table 5 displays the frequency counts of participant characteristics. The teachers in this study were mainly from regular campuses. One hundred sixteen (42.2%) were from regular secondary campuses, and 112 (40.7%) were from regular elementary campuses. About one-third ($n = 86$, 31.3%) taught the specific learning disabilities (SLD) program, while about one-fourth ($n = 63$, 22.9%) taught the resource specialist program (RSP). The majority of the participants ($n = 172$, 62.5%) earned their certification through a college or university, while 64 (23.3%), earned their certification from a college or university internship program. Nearly all of the participants in this study had the required certification ($n = 268$, 97.5%), and the most frequent types of certification were mild/moderate disabilities ($n = 191$, 69.5%) and moderate/severe

disabilities ($n = 54$, 19.6%). Over 40% of the participants held master's degrees and additional units, and the next most frequent category were teachers who held a bachelor's degree and additional units (37.8%). The majority of participants (73.5%) were female, while males comprised slightly more than one-fourth of the sample (26.5%). Over half of the participants had children (52.5%). The most common racial group was Caucasian (62.9%), with the next largest group being Hispanic/Latino (15.6%), followed by African American/Black (9.5%). The majority of participants were married (61.1%) and 65.8% reported themselves to be the primary breadwinner for their family. The two most frequently occurring responses to the career longevity survey item were "Until I am eligible for retirement" (31.6%), and "As long as I'm able even if that's after retirement age" (30.9%).

Table 5

Frequency Counts for Selected Variables (N =275)

Variable	Category	<i>n</i>	%
Teaching Setting	Elementary – regular campus	112	40.7
	Elementary – special school/center	12	4.4
	Secondary – regular campus	116	42.2
	Secondary – special school/center	35	12.7
Teaching Program	Autism	16	5.8
	Deaf/Hard of Hearing	6	2.2
	Emotional Disturbance	5	1.8
	Intellectual Disabilities (Mental Retardation)	18	6.5
	Itinerant	15	5.5
	Multiple Disabilities	21	7.6
	Orthopedic/Other Health Impairment	4	1.5
	Resource Specialist Program	63	22.9
	Specific Learning Disabilities	86	31.3
	Visually Impaired	1	0.4
Other	40	14.5	

(table continues)

Variable	Category	<i>n</i>	%
Certification Program	College or University	172	62.5
	College or University Internship Program	64	23.3
	District Intern Program	39	14.2
Required Certification	Yes	268	97.5
	No	7	2.5
Type of Certification	Mild/Moderate Disabilities	191	69.5
	Moderate/Severe Disabilities	54	19.6
	Deaf and Hard of Hearing	9	3.3
	Visual Impairments	1	0.4
	Physical and Health Impairments	3	1.1
	Early Childhood Special Education	12	4.4
	No Certification for Current Assignment	5	1.8
Highest Level of Education	Bachelor's Degree	4	1.5
	Bachelor's Degree + Additional Units	104	37.8
	Master's Degree	48	17.5
	Master's Degree + Additional Units	111	40.4
	Doctorate Degree	8	2.9
Gender	Male	73	26.5
	Female	202	73.5
Have Children	Yes	48	47.5
	No	53	52.5
Race/Ethnicity	African American/Black	26	9.5
	Asian American	17	6.2
	Caucasian	173	62.9
	Hispanic/Latino	43	15.6
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2	0.7
	Multi-Racial	14	5.1
Marital Status	Single	107	38.9
	Married	168	61.1
Primary Breadwinner Status	Yes	181	65.8
	No	94	34.2
Career Longevity	"Definitely plan to leave special education as soon as I can"	9	3.3
	"Will probably continue until something better comes along"	41	14.9
	"Until I am eligible for retirement"	87	31.6
	"As long as able even if that's after retirement age"	85	30.9
	Undecided	53	19.3

Table 6 displays descriptive statistics for participant characteristics. These were for the total number of years teaching ($M = 14.59$), the total number of years teaching special education ($M = 12.16$), and age ($M = 45.69$).

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Selected Variables (N = 275)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Low	High
Total number years of teaching experience	14.59	9.76	2	45
Total number years teaching special education	12.16	8.88	0	40
Age	45.69	11.45	24	70

Reliability

Table 7 displays psychometric characteristics for the three summated scale scores. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for job satisfaction ($\alpha = .84$), stress ($\alpha = .94$), and for commitment ($\alpha = .85$) all had acceptable levels of reliability (Creswell, 2009; Isaac & Michael, 1995).

Table 7

Psychometric Characteristics for Summated Scale Scores (N = 275)

Score	Number of Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Low	High	α
Job Satisfaction	11	3.54	0.62	1.82	5.00	.84
Stress	10	4.24	1.41	1.00	7.00	.94
Commitment	15	4.90	0.90	2.33	6.80	.85

Research Question 1

Research question one asked, “To what extent, if at all, do perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California differ on the basis of those teachers’ demographic characteristics?” This question was answered using Pearson product-moment correlations (Table 8), and a series of one-way ANOVA tests (Table 9).

Cohen (1988) suggested some guidelines for interpreting the strength of linear correlations. He suggested that a weak correlation typically has an absolute value of $r = .10$ (about 1% of the variance explained), a moderate correlation typically has an absolute value of $r = .30$ (about 9% of the variance explained) and a strong correlation typically has an absolute value of $r = .50$ (about 25% of the variance explained). For this research question, all of the correlations were weak, yet some were statistically significant. For the sake of parsimony, the researcher will highlight only those correlations that were at least statistically significant at $p < .05$, to minimize the potential of numerous Type I or false positive errors (observing a relationship or difference when none exists) stemming from interpreting and drawing conclusions based on potentially spurious correlations.

In the table of correlations (Table 8), a series of 19 independent variables were correlated against one dependent variable: job commitment. These 19 independent variables were either continuous variables or dummy coded transformations of categorical variables. Inspection of the table found 4 of the 19 correlations to be statistically significant. Specifically, job commitment was higher for teachers in an elementary setting ($r = -.16, p < .01$), teachers who did not work with students with SLDs

($r = -.17, p < .01$), non-Caucasian teachers ($r = -.13, p < .05$), and for Hispanic/Latino teachers ($r = .13, p < .05$; Table 8).

Table 8

Correlations for Selected Variables with the Job Commitment Scale (N = 275)

Variable	Job Commitment
Total number of years teaching	-.01
Number of years teaching special education	-.04
Teaching setting (elementary or secondary) ^a	-.16**
Teaching setting (regular campus or special education center) ^b	-.04
Resource specialist program ^c	.07
Specific learning disabilities ^c	-.17**
University certification ^c	-.01
Mild/moderate program ^c	-.06
Moderate/severe program ^c	-.02
Highest level of education ^c	.01
Education	.00
Has master's degree ^c	.00
Age	.01
Gender ^d	.09
African American ^c	-.03
Caucasian ^c	-.13*
Hispanic ^c	.13*
Marital status ^e	.00
“Breadwinner” status ^f	-.04

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; ^a Setting: 1 = *Elementary*, 2 = *Secondary*; ^b Setting: 1 = *Regular education*, 2 = *Special education*; ^c Coding: 0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*; ^d Gender: 1 = *Male*, 2 = *Female*; ^e Marital Status 1 = *Married*, 2 = *Single*; ^f Breadwinner Status: 1 = *Yes*, 2 = *No*.

Table 9 displays the results for five one-way ANOVA tests conducted with the respondents' job commitment scale score. For four of the five variables, no significant differences were found for the job commitment scale score. Specifically, no job

commitment scale differences were found for type of training program ($p = .58$), type of certification ($p = .21$), and education level ($p = .98$). Type of teaching program, however, had significantly different job commitment scale scores ($p = .02$). Specifically, the SLD program ($M = 4.02$) had lower levels of commitment than the other program types. In addition, race/ethnicity almost reached statistical significance ($p = .07$). Inspection of the results found that Hispanic teachers ($M = 5.18$) tended to have higher levels of commitment than other ethnic groups.

Research Question 2

Research question two asked, “To what extent, if at all, are perceptions of job satisfaction and stress related to perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California?” To answer this question, Pearson product-moment correlations were used to measure the relationship between three independent variables (job satisfaction, stress, and career longevity) and one dependent variable (job commitment). All correlations were significant at $p < .001$. Specifically, job satisfaction was positively correlated with job commitment ($r = .66, p = .001$) and career longevity ($r = .32, p = .001$) but negatively correlated with job stress ($r = -.44, p = .001$). In addition, job stress was negatively correlated with both with job satisfaction ($r = -.44, p = .001$) and career longevity ($r = -.34, p = .001$). Also, job satisfaction and career longevity were positively correlated ($r = .32, p = .001$; Table 10).

Table 9

ANOVA Tests for Selected Variables with the Job Commitment Scale Score (N = 275)

Variable	Category	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	η	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Type of teaching program					.17	3.90	.02
	RSP	63	5.01	0.81			
	SLD	86	4.02	1.13			
	Other	126	5.00	0.97			
Type of training program					.06	0.55	.58
	College or university program	172	4.89	0.91			
	College or university internship program	64	4.84	0.85			
	District intern program	39	5.03	0.94			
Certification					.11	1.57	.21
	Mild	191	4.87	0.84			
	Moderate	54	4.86	1.10			
	Other	30	5.17	0.88			
Education					.01	0.03	.98
	Bachelor's	108	4.9	0.87			
	Master's	48	4.87	0.89			
	More than Master's	119	4.91	0.94			
Race/Ethnicity					.16	2.37	.07
	African American	26	4.81	0.75			
	Caucasian	173	4.81	0.92			
	Hispanic	43	5.18	0.82			
	Other	33	5.07	0.92			

Note. Ratings based on a 7-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

Table 10

Intercorrelations Among the Primary Study Variables (N = 275)

Score	1	2	3	4
1. Commitment ^a	1.00			
2. Satisfaction ^b	.66	1.00		
3. Stress ^a	-.44	-.44	1.00	
4. Career longevity ^c	.42	.32	-.34	1.00

Note. All correlations were significant at $p < .001$. ^a 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*; ^b 1 = *Very dissatisfied* to 5 = *Very satisfied*; ^c 1 = *Definitely plan to leave special education teaching as soon as I can* to 5 = *Stay as long as I'm able even if that's after retirement age*

Research Question 3

Research question 3 asked, “After controlling for demographic characteristics, to what extent, if at all, are perceptions of job satisfaction, stress, and career longevity related to the perceived level of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California?”

When the standard multiple regression model was run, there were 20 independent variables in the model (demographics, scale scores, plus some dummy coding). This model accounted for 54.4% of the variance with only four of the independent variables being significant. In addition, few of the bivariate correlations between the independent variables and the dependent variable were significant. To de-clutter the model, the researcher reran the test using the stepwise regression approach and ended up with a five variable model. This resulted in significant results for all the independent variables, and accounted for 49.4% of the variance. The stepwise regression model was chosen because only 5% of the explained variance was lost while eliminating 15 non-significant predictors, thereby improving the ease of interpretation and presentation.

Table 11 displays the results of the stepwise regression model that predicted job commitment based on the 20 candidate variables. The final five-variable model was statistically significant ($p = .001$) and accounted for 51.4% of the variance in the job commitment. Specifically, job commitment was related to: (a) higher job satisfaction ($\beta = .52, p = .001$), (b) longer desired career longevity ($\beta = .22, p = .001$), (c) less job stress ($\beta = -.16, p = .001$), (d) fewer years teaching special education ($\beta = -.11, p = .02$), and (e) being female ($\beta = .10, p = .02$).

Table 11

Prediction of Job Commitment Based on Selected Variables: Backward Elimination Regression (N = 275)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Intercept	1.79	0.37		.001
Job Satisfaction	0.75	0.07	.52	.001
Career Longevity	0.17	0.04	.22	.001
Stress	-0.10	0.03	-.16	.001
Years Teaching Special Education	-0.01	0.00	-.11	.02
Gender	0.21	0.09	.10	.02

Note. Final Model: $F(5, 269) = 56.98, p = .001. R^2 = .514.$

Note. Prediction Equation = $1.79 + 0.75$ (Job Satisfaction) + 0.17 (Career Longevity) – 0.10 (Stress) – 0.01 (Years Teaching Special Education) + 0.21 (Gender).

Research Question 4

Research question four asked, “What common reasons/conditions do special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California give for wanting to leave teaching in special education?”

Table 12 displays the frequency counts for reasons for wanting to leave sorted in order of decreasing frequency. The frequency counts were based on the number of respondents who endorsed each item. When combined, the frequencies and percentages total more than 100% because respondents were allowed to endorse multiple items. The most frequently selected items were “Lack of administrative support” ($n = 148, 54.2\%$), and “Workload issues” ($n = 120, 43.9\%$). Other frequently selected reasons were: “Salary issues ($n = 113, 41.3\%$),” “Paperwork issues” ($n = 112, 41.0$), “Class size issues” ($n = 108, 39.5\%$), “Lack of parent involvement” ($n = 102, 37.3\%$), “Negative school climate” ($n = 98, 35.8\%$), “Inadequate resources” ($n = 97, 35.5\%$), “Lack of respect or prestige” ($n = 76, 27.8\%$), “Student discipline issues” ($n = 73, 26.7\%$), “Lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making” ($n = 62, 22.7\%$), “Lack of time to interact with colleagues” ($n = 59, 21.6\%$), “Lack of community support” ($n = 55, 20.1\%$), “Negative teacher-teacher relationships” ($n = 48, 17.5\%$), and “Negative teacher-student relationships” ($n = 47, 17.2\%$).

Table 12

Frequency Counts for Reasons for Wanting to Leave Sorted by Highest Frequency
($n = 273$)

Reason	<i>n</i>	%
18e. Lack of administrative support	148	54.2
18t. Workload issues	120	43.9
18s. Salary issues	113	41.3
18n. Paperwork issues	112	41.0
18a. Class size issues	108	39.5

(table continues)

Reason	<i>n</i>	%
18p. Retirement	104	38.0
18g. Lack of parent involvement or support	102	37.3
18j. Negative school climate	98	35.8
18d. Inadequate resources	97	35.5
18i. Lack of respect or prestige	76	27.8
18r. Student discipline issues	73	26.7
18o. Pursue non-teaching employment opportunities in education	63	23.0
18m. Lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making	62	22.7
18c. Family reasons	61	22.3
18f. Lack of community support	55	20.1
18h. Lack of time to interact with colleagues	59	21.6
18b. Community issues	50	18.3
18l. Negative teacher-teacher relationships	48	17.5
18k. Negative teacher-student relationships	47	17.2
18u. Other reason	28	10.2
18q. Return to graduate school	19	6.9

Note. The subsample ($n = 273$) was derived based on including only those respondents who answered this specific question.

Research Question 5

Research question five asked, “What do current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California report their career plans to be?”

Table 13 displays the frequency counts for career plans sorted in order of highest frequency to lowest frequency. The frequency counts were based on the number of respondents who endorsed each item. When combined, the frequencies and percentages total more than 100% because respondents were allowed to endorse multiple items. The most frequently selected item was “Retire” ($n = 68, 30.6\%$). The second most frequently selected item was “Remain in current special education position more than 3 to 5 years”

($n = 67$, 30.1%). The next most frequently selected items were “Obtain promotion within school or district” ($n = 63$, 28.3%), “Seek employment in non-teaching job in education” ($n = 45$, 20.2%), followed by “Teach special education in another district” ($n = 44$, 19.8%), “Other” ($n = 36$, 16.2%), and “Stay at home” ($n = 32$, 14.4%).

Table 13

Frequency Counts for Reasons for Career Plans Sorted by Highest Frequency
($n = 222$)

Reason	<i>n</i>	%
19f. Retire	68	30.6
19e. Remain in current special education position more than 3 to 5 years	67	30.1
19a. Obtain promotion within school or district	63	28.3
19g. Seek employment in non-teaching job in education	45	20.2
19m. Teach special education in another district	44	19.8
19n. Other	36	16.2
19i. Stay at home	32	14.4
19h. Seek employment outside of education	24	10.8
19c. Pursue graduate degree, full time, in special education	16	7.2
19l. Teach general education in the same school in the district	15	6.7
19k. Teach general education in another school in the district	15	6.7
19j. Teach general education in another school district	13	5.8
19d. Pursue graduate degree, full time, not in special education	9	4.0
19b. Pursue graduate degree, full time, in a non-education field	6	2.7

Note. The subsample ($n = 222$) was derived based on including only those respondents who answered this specific question.

Other Findings of Interest

Though not connected to the research questions in this study, survey item 20 was asked at the request of the district (Appendix F). Survey item 20 asked, “As most people

know, there is a high rate of turnover for teachers in special education. What, if anything, could the district do to improve your desire to remain teaching in special education?"

The results of this question are displayed in Table 14. Table 14 displays the frequency counts for career plans sorted in order of highest frequency to lowest frequency. The frequency counts were based on the number of respondents who endorsed each item. When combined, the frequencies and percentages total more than 100% because respondents were allowed to endorse multiple items. The top 11 most frequently offered suggestions for improvement were included in the table.

Table 14

Frequency Counts: Themes for Suggestions for Improvement Sorted by Highest Frequency (n = 248)

Theme	<i>n</i>	%
Administrative support	71	28.6
Class size issues	66	26.6
Salary	63	25.4
Resources	50	20.1
Paperwork	39	15.7
Professional development	21	8.4
Unrealistic expectations	20	8.0
Respect	20	8.0
Student discipline issues	20	8.0
Workload	19	7.6
Colleague interaction (mentoring)	19	7.6

Note. The subsample ($n = 248$) was derived based on including only those respondents who answered this specific question.

The category of most frequently offered suggestions for improvement was “Administrative support” ($n = 71, 28.6\%$). One respondent stated, “When I entered (1989), there were experienced special ed administrators who ‘got it.’ The mini-districts sucked a lot of talent upward, so that school admin slots were filled with the inexperienced and clueless...” (All direct quotes are based on personal communications with participants). Another respondent stated,

See more of our support providers in terms of out of the classroom supporters such as Program Specialists. Make me feel like I am a person not a number that can be erased. Have consistent standard answers for my questions. Support me in being the best teacher that I can be, allow me to meet the needs of the individual student...

Yet another respondent stated,

There is a lot of misunderstanding of what we do on a regular campus, especially on the part of administrators, and we face a lot of roadblocks in implementing programs. I have found this especially to be true for the school-based business and in working to mainstream my kids. I feel that on a regular campus I am often in a double bind and unable to implement my program properly. That is my number one complaint. I worry about my reputation if the new relationships somehow don’t gel. The reality is that special ed teachers are “under the gun” much more than gen ed teachers – from parents, administrators and, in some cases, the district.

Another respondent stated, “Listen when teachers ask for help,” and another participant noted, “Reward teachers more, stop correcting them unnecessarily for the smallest things.” One last respondent stated,

I, as a special education teacher, would like more support from my supervisor in backing up my decisions...Yet, even when I can provide overwhelming evidence to support my argument for exiting, I am not supported. Their reasoning is that my argument will not be supported by the higher echelons in the District and that I am wasting my time. I find this absolutely frustrating since I try to follow the District guidelines...

The next category of most frequently offered suggestions for improvement was “Class size issues” ($n = 66, 26.6\%$). One respondent stated, “Do not impact a classroom with more than a reasonable amount of students for that particular setting/type of disability.” Another respondent stated, “Despite our critical budget constraints, the district must seriously consider the number of children that are being placed in a classroom.” Yet another respondent stated,

The class sizes are way too large in SDC classes. Special Education classes are used by administration as a dumping ground for students with behavioral issues. In addition to 20 or more students per class, most SDC teachers are overburdened with huge caseloads. The district needs to acknowledge the real problems that are going on in SDC classes. I wanted to teach kids with learning disabilities. I wanted to help them. The system is filled with obstacles that prevent me from providing my students with anything but 55 minutes a day of free babysitting.

Another participant noted, “Maintain a smaller adult to student ratio. One can become overwhelmed when there are too many students that require constant one-on-one attention in an SDP [special day program] setting.” Yet another respondent stated,

Class size is a definite issue. Putting 15-20 students in an SDP, or having a grade span of more than two years, shows a blatant lack of respect for teachers and students, ignorance of best practice, or a combination of both.

A final respondent stated, “The district could make a stronger attempt to meet the needs of special education students through supporting smaller class-sizes (not consistently increasing them), by working with teachers to place students in appropriate classes...”

Other categories for suggestions for improvement were “Salary” ($n = 63$, 25.4%), followed by “Resources” ($n = 50$, 20.1%), “Paperwork” ($n = 39$, 15.7%), and “Professional development” ($n = 21$, 8.4%).

Summary

General observations. Based on the responses of the 275 special education teachers in this district, their overall level of job satisfaction is neutral (neither very dissatisfied nor very satisfied), their overall level of stress is neutral (neither very stressed nor not stressed at all), and they have a somewhat high level of job commitment. The majority of special education teachers in this district plan to remain in their current position at least until retirement. For those who planned to leave within the next 3 to 5 years, the most frequently indicated career plan was retirement, obtaining promotion within the school or district, seeking employment in a non-teaching job in education, followed by teaching special education in another district.

Research question 1. Research question one asked, “To what extent, if at all, do perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California differ on the basis of those teachers’ demographic characteristics?” For this research question, all of the correlations were weak, yet some were statistically significant. The results should be interpreted with caution to minimize the potential of numerous Type I errors stemming from interpreting and drawing conclusions based on potentially spurious correlations. Job commitment was higher for: teachers in an elementary setting, teachers who did not work with students with SLDs, non-Caucasian teachers, and Hispanic/Latino teachers. No job commitment scale score differences were found to be related to type of training program, type of certification, and education level. However, type of teaching program had significantly different job commitment scale scores. Specifically, the SLD program had lower commitment than the other program types (Table 8 and Table 9).

Research question 2. Research question two asked, “To what extent, if at all, are perceptions of job satisfaction and stress related to perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California?” Job satisfaction was positively correlated with job commitment and career longevity, but negatively correlated with job stress. In addition, job stress was negatively correlated with both with job satisfaction and career longevity. Also, job satisfaction and career longevity were positively correlated (see Table 10).

Research question 3. Research question three asked, “After controlling for demographic characteristics, to what extent, if at all, are perceptions of job satisfaction,

stress, and career longevity related to the perceived level of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California?” The final five-variable model was significant in accounting for the variance in job commitment. Specifically, job commitment was related to: (a) higher job satisfaction, (b) longer desired career longevity, (c) less job stress, (d) fewer years teaching special education, and (e) being female (see Table 11).

Research question 4. Research question four asked, “What common reasons/conditions do special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California give for wanting to leave teaching in special education?” The most frequently selected item was “Lack of administrative support.” The next most frequently selected reason was “Workload issues.” Other frequently selected reasons were: “Salary issues,” “Paperwork issues,” “Class size issues,” “Lack of parent involvement,” “Negative school climate,” “Inadequate resources,” “Lack of respect or prestige,” “Student discipline issues,” “Lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making,” “Lack of time to interact with colleagues,” “Lack of community support,” “Negative teacher-teacher relationships,” and “Negative teacher-student relationships” (see Table 12).

Research question 5. Research question five asked, “What do current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California report their career plans to be?” The most frequently selected item was “Retire.” The second most frequently selected item was “Remain in current special education position more than 3 to 5 years.” The next most frequently selected items were “Obtain promotion

within school or district,” “Seek employment in non-teaching job in education,” followed by “Teach special education in another district,” “Other,” and “Stay at home” (see Table 13).

Additional findings of interest. The categories of the five most frequently offered suggestions for improvement were: (a) administrative support, (b) class size issues, (c) salary, (d) resources, and (e) paperwork (see Table 14).

Chapter Five: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

In the final chapter of this dissertation, the researcher will present conclusions and a discussion of the study findings in comparison to the extant literature. Next, the researcher will discuss the study strengths, weaknesses, and recommended methodological enhancements, which will be followed by a discussion of implications for policymakers, administrators, special education teachers those in non-education fields. The following section will include recommendations for future research. The researcher will conclude the chapter with a final summary.

Conclusions and Comparison of Study Findings with Extant Literature

Research question 1. The results of this study suggest that various demographic variables seem to be related to job commitment among special education teachers. While statistically significant, none of the correlations were strong, so the results should be interpreted with caution (Cohen, 1988). Specifically, special education teachers in the elementary school setting seem to be more committed than their counterparts at secondary schools, and Hispanic/Latino teachers seem to be more committed than special education teachers of other races/ethnicities. Special education teachers of students with SLD eligibility have lower job commitment compared to teachers who work with students with other types of eligibilities. A comparison of these findings to the literature is presented in the following paragraphs.

This study found that special education teachers in the elementary school setting have higher job commitment. This is similar to the results found by Gates (2007),

McIntyre (1983), and Singer (1992). However, other researchers found different results; for example, Miller et al. (1998), and Mertler (2001), concluded that elementary special education teachers were less satisfied than special education teachers at other levels. Boe et al. (2006) did not find significant differences in job satisfaction between teaching level, but noted that teachers at elementary settings moved to different schools more frequently. One possible explanation for the differences lies in the methodological differences between studies. The significant results reported by Mertler (2001) pertaining to lower job commitment were reported as teacher perceptions of the job commitment of other teachers they knew. Due to the subjective nature of perceiving another person's job commitment, the results of that study should be interpreted with caution.

In this study, teachers of students with SLDs had lower levels of commitment than other program types. This is similar to Embich (2001), who concluded that teachers of students with learning disabilities experienced high levels of emotional exhaustion, and found that teachers of students with learning disabilities who co-taught were less satisfied than those who taught in their own classrooms. This finding was inconsistent with the findings of several other studies, which found that teachers of students with emotional disorders had the lowest levels of job commitment (Banks & Necco, as cited in Theoharis, 2008; George et al., 1995; Seery, 1990; Singer, 1992). Another study found no significant differences between teachers of students with learning disabilities and other eligibilities (Littrell et al., 1994). Further, since many of these studies were conducted, the availability of resources to assist teachers with classroom and behavior

management have vastly increased, which could lead to different results among similar populations.

Based on the results of this study, Hispanic/Latino teachers have greater job commitment than teachers of other races/ethnicities. Table 8 shows the commitment level of the Hispanic/Latino racial/ethnic group compared to all other racial/ethnic groups. The correlation was weak ($r = .13$, $r^2 = .02$), but was significant ($p < .05$). Table 9 compares the commitment level of four racial/ethnic groups (African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic/Latino) to all other racial/ethnic groups. Inspection of the table showed the results to be near statistical significance ($p < .07$). When four groups are compared, it takes a larger difference to result in statistical significance than when comparing only two groups. Given that the correlation only explains 2% of the variance in job commitment, it can be concluded that the ethnic/racial groups had essentially similar levels of job commitment. The Hispanic/Latino group had higher job commitment than other groups; however, the correlation was weak. Most other studies used dichotomous variables (e.g., white, non-white; European, non-European) to describe the characteristic of race, and found significant results (Billingsley et al., 1995; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Miller et al., 1998; Singer, 1992). No other studies were found whose conclusions indicated that Hispanic/Latino teachers have higher job commitment than other racial groups. Many other studies reported no significant differences when comparing race/ethnicity to levels of job satisfaction and job commitment (Boe, Bobbitt, et al., 1996; Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, et al., 1997, Miller et al., 1998; Theoharis, 2008; Singer, 1992). One possible explanation for the difference in findings pertains to the geographic

location and resultant representation of Hispanic/Latino special education teachers in prior studies. Since many of the studies contained a majority of white respondents, those results should be interpreted with caution. Another possible explanation is that job commitment scores may have been higher for Hispanic/Latino teachers in this study due to the fact that many of the students in the district in this study are also Hispanic/Latino (73%; Los Angeles Unified School District [LAUSD], n.d.).

Research question 2. Based on the results of this study, special education teachers who feel less stress have higher job satisfaction, and special education teachers who are satisfied in their jobs feel greater commitment to their work, and they plan to remain teaching in special education for longer periods of time. Furthermore, when special education teachers perceive high amounts of stress related to their work, their perceived level of job satisfaction and desire to remain in the field wane. These conclusions are similar to the conclusions drawn by numerous researchers (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Brownell et al., 1995; Butterfield, 2004; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Gersten et al., 2001; Littrell et al. 1994; Maxie, 2009; Miller et al., 1998; Kaufhold et al., 2006; Plash & Piotrowski, 2006; Singh & Billingsley, 1996).

Research question 3. Many of the conclusions for research question three were the same as those in research question two. For the sake of parsimony, those conclusions are not repeated here; rather, only findings that led to different conclusions are discussed in this section. Based on the results of this study, special education teachers with fewer years teaching special education and female special education teachers seem to have

higher levels of job commitment. A comparison of these conclusions to the literature is presented in the following paragraphs.

Based on the results of this study, special education teachers with fewer years teaching special education have higher levels of perceived job commitment. The correlation was not strong, but was statistically significant; therefore a definitive conclusion cannot be made based on these results. The results are also inconsistent with the literature, with many researchers concluding that newer, less experienced special education teachers more frequently experience lower job commitment in comparison with special education teachers who have more experience (Billingsley, 2004; Boe, Bobbitt, et al., 1996; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Gelman, 2008; Gersten et al., 2001; Miller et al., 1998; Morvant et al., 1995; NEA, n.d.; Singer, 1992; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Further research is warranted in this area to verify the results.

Based on the results of this study, female special education teachers seem to have higher levels of job commitment. These results were similar to conclusions drawn from several studies (McIntyre, 1983; Morvant et al., 1995; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Other researchers found dissimilar results, concluding that females had lower levels of commitment due to higher stress levels (Gonzalez, 1995; Hewitt, 1993; Singer, 1992). Mertler (2001) concluded that male special education teachers were more satisfied, and several others found no significant correlation between gender and job commitment (Boe et al., 1997, Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Miller et al., 1998). One possible explanation for the differences in findings lies in the differences in the study samples and methods used, as well as variations in the workforce population in different time periods. For example,

Singer (1992) used a database with data collected during the 1980s, while Boe et al. (1997), and Miller et al. (1998) used data from the 1990s. As Billingsley (2004) points out, since prior studies were conducted, vast changes in the labor landscape have occurred – women were previously more likely to leave the field due to family issues, while women’s current workforce participation patterns more closely resemble that of males.

Research question 4. Based on the results of this study, special education teachers who want to leave the field provide the following reasons: lack of administrative support, workload issues, salary issues, paperwork issues, class size issues, lack of parent involvement, negative school climate, inadequate resources, lack of respect or prestige, student discipline issues, lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making, lack of time to interact with colleagues, lack of community support, negative teacher-teacher relationships, and negative teacher-student relationships. In the paragraphs that follow, a comparison of these conclusions to the literature is provided.

Researchers outside the field of education who found lack of administrative support to be a primary reason for wanting to leave their field include Ellenbecker (2001) and Maslach et al. (2001). Researchers who found lack of administrative support as a primary reason for wanting to leave teaching in general include Chen and Miller (1997), Farber (2000), Guarino et al. (2006), McLeskey et al., (2004), and Papastylianou et al. (2009). Other researchers have found lack of administrative support as a primary reason for wanting to leave in the context of special education (Billingsley, 1992, 1993, 1995; Butterfield, 2004; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; George et al., 1995; Littrell et al., 1994;

McCleskey et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1998; Theoharis, 2008; Vance et al., 1989; Westling & Whitten, 1996).

Similar to the current study, researchers such as Bradford and Keshock (2009) and Ellenbecker (2004) have found workload issues to be a primary reason for employees wanting to leave non-education fields. Within the field of education in general, researchers who also found workload to be a primary reason for wanting to leave include Chen and Miller (1997), Hewitt (1993), and Provasnik and Dorfman (2005). In special education research, Miller et al. (1998) also found that workload was a primary reason for teacher attrition.

Similar to this study, researchers in non-teaching fields (Ellenbecker, 2004; Maslach et al., 2001), those who examined job commitment among teachers in general (Guarino et al., 2006; Hewitt, 1993; Hock, 1985; Ouyang & Paprock, 2006; Klecker & Loadman, 1996, Perie et al., 1997; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005), and those who researched special education teachers (Billingsley, 1993; Billingsley et al., 1995; Boe Bobbitt, Cook et al., 1997; Lauritzen, 1988; McCleskey et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1998; Thornton et al., 2007; Scott, 2004; Singer, 1992, Starlings et al., 2002; Sultana, 2002), concluded that issues related to salary were frequently given reasons for wanting to leave the field.

Like the current study, researchers across the literature found issues related to paperwork to be important determiners for wanting to leave the field. Researchers in non-teaching fields found that paperwork issues were related to reasons for wanting to leave the field (Maslach et al., 2001). Similar results were found by researchers who examined

job commitment among teachers in general (Luckner & Hanks, 2003; Ouyang & Paprock, 2006) and among special education teachers (Billingsley, 2004; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Brownell et al., 1997, DeBettencourt & Howard, 2004; Chen & Miller, 1997; Hock, 1985; Mastropieri, 2001; McLeskey, 2004; Thornton et al., 2007; Whitaker, 2000).

This study found that special education teachers consider caseload to be an important factor related to perceived level of job commitment. Recent findings from other studies show mixed conclusions regarding the relationship between special education teacher attrition and student caseloads. Some researchers in non-teaching fields (Aiken et al., 2002) found a relationship between caseload and job burnout. Researchers drew similar conclusions in studies of special education teachers (Billingsley et al., 1995; Brownell et al., 1995; McLeskey et al., 2004; Morvant et al., 1995; Sack, as cited in Russ et al., 2001; Thornton et al., 2007). Some researchers suggest there is no significant relationship between these two variables (George et al., 1995; Nichols & Sosnowsky, 2002). These differences may be due to varying policies across districts related to caseload size. Teacher perceptions of the impact of caseload may also be related to the type of clerical, administrative, and paraprofessional support that is available to them.

The results of this study suggest lack of parent involvement is related to lower levels of job commitment. This is similar to findings from several studies that also examined parent involvement involving teachers in general (Inman & Marlow, 2004;

Marlow et al., 1996; Maxfield, 2009; Shann, 1998) and special education teachers in particular (Billingsley, 1993; Hewitt, 1993).

In this study, special education teachers indicated negative workplace climate as a reason for wanting to leave the field. This is similar to other findings across the literature (Maslach et al., 2001). This is also similar to findings from studies that examined teachers in general (Hewitt, 1993; Liu & Meyer, 2005; McCleskey et al., 2004; Ouyang & Paprock, 2006) and special education teachers in particular (Billingsley, 1993; Billingsley, 2004; Miller et al., 1998; Thornton et al., 2007).

In this study, special education teachers indicated having inadequate resources as a reason for wanting to leave the field. This is similar to findings from other studies across the literature (Billingsley, 2004; Bradford & Keshock, 2009; Chen & Miller, 1997; Kaufhold et al., 2006; Maslach et al., 2001; Ouyang & Paprock, 2006; Thornton et al., 2007).

The participants in the current study also indicated external factors, such as lack of respect, and lack of support from parents and the community, as reasons for wanting to leave teaching special education. These results are similar to findings from several other studies (Billingsley, 2004; Billingsley et al., 1995; Hall & Langton, 2006; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Theoharis, 2008; Tye & O'Brien, 2002). Boe, Bobbitt, and Cook (1997) however, posited that some external factors are unavoidable causes for leaving, but are not necessarily related to burnout. For example, teacher retirement is inevitable at the end of one's career; however, the decision to retire is not necessarily preceded by feelings related to burnout.

In this study, issues related to student discipline were given frequently as a reason for wanting to leave special education. This is similar to findings from other studies among teachers in general (Hock, 1985; Marlow et al., 1996; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005) and among special education teachers (Thornton et al., 2007). Oftentimes, teachers may become frustrated when valuable instructional time is lost because they are forced to deal with student discipline issues.

In this study, lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making was frequently provided as a reason for wanting to leave the field. This is similar to findings from other studies across the literature, including non-teaching fields (Black & Gregersen, 1997; Maslach et al., 2001; Rice & Schneider, 1994), teaching in general (Chen & Miller, 1997; Hock, 1985; Klecker & Loadman, 1996; Lambert, 2003; Somech, 2002), and special education (McLeskey et al., 2004). Teachers may feel more valuable if they are included in discussions where decisions are made.

This study found that lack of time to interact with colleagues was frequently given as a reason for wanting to leave the field. This is similar to findings from other studies across the literature, including non-teaching fields (Bradford & Keshock, 2009; Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2010; Leiter & Maslach 2009; Shields & Ward, 2001), teaching in general (Chang, 2009; Hargreaves, 2000; Hewitt 1993; Hock, 1985; Klecker & Loadman, 1996; Maxfield, 2009; Ouyang & Paprock 2006; Scherer, 1999), and among special education teachers (Barak et al., 2001; Billingsley et al., 2004; Gonzalez, 1995; Holdman & Harris, 2003; Schlichte et al., 2005; Thornton et al., 2007; Whitaker, 2000).

Research question 5. For those special education teachers who are planning to leave in the next 3 to 5 years, many are planning to leave in favor of retirement. A smaller number plan to leave in favor of a promotion, with some others planning to seek employment in a non-teaching job in education, or plan to teach special education in another district. The following paragraphs discuss how these findings relate to the literature.

These results were generally similar to those obtained by Billingsley (1993) who found the most frequently indicated career plan among current special education teachers at that time was to remain in special education, followed by switching to general education, obtaining a non-teaching job in education, obtaining employment outside education, retire, pursuing a graduate degree, and staying at home, respectively. One possible reason for some of the differences may have to do with the large number of currently employed teachers who indicated a desire to leave within the next 3 to 5 years in favor of retirement (30.6%).

The results of this study suggest that special education teachers desire promotional opportunities, but do not necessarily want to have to leave the classroom to accept such opportunities. This is similar to the findings of other researchers outside the field of education (Shields & Ward, 2001), as well as researchers in education (Chen & Miller, 1997; Klecker & Loadman, 1996) who have documented the relationship between promotional opportunities and job satisfaction.

Additional findings of interest. According to the participants in this study, the most troublesome aspects of special education teachers' jobs are lack of administrative

support, class size issues, salary, insufficient resources, and paperwork. Connections of these findings to the literature were made previously in this chapter in the discussion of conclusions for research question four.

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Recommended Methodological Enhancements

As is the case in all research, this study had methodological strengths and weaknesses. This section will provide an analysis of the study's strengths and weaknesses, and will provide suggestions for methodological enhancements for future study.

The methodology of this study was strong in many ways. The data collection tool used in this study was a survey that was in large part borrowed from items and scales for which the validity and reliability was established by previous researchers, and then confirmed in the current study. The use of a survey as the data collection tool allowed the researcher the opportunity to collect data from a large sample of the population. Because a survey was used and most of data were analyzed quantitatively, the risk of observer subjectivity was virtually eliminated. The participants were guaranteed confidentiality, which may have led to greater participation and honesty in participant responses. The open-ended questions in the survey allowed the participants the opportunity to share additional information about their perspectives, which enhanced the data. Other strengths in the methods of this study were that it was administered electronically, which allowed for rapid data collection, ease of data analysis, and the opportunity to collect data from a large sample of the population.

There were several noteworthy weaknesses in this study. One weakness that is generally attributed to survey research is the tendency to oversimplify one's lived experiences. The subjective design of questionnaires and multiple-choice questions with predetermined categories may not allow respondents to provide answers that truly reflect their thoughts, feelings, or opinions regarding a particular question (Fowler, 2008). Another common pitfall to survey research that applies in this study is that survey questions may be misunderstood. Surveys are also susceptible to under rater or over rater bias, which is the tendency for respondents to give consistently high or low ratings (Isaac & Michael, 1995). Another limitation in this study is that the respondents were not necessarily representative of the entire population; they were only those who agreed to respond. This might have skewed the results, because the participant responses do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the entire population. Because this survey only included data from participants who chose to respond, the results of this study should be interpreted with some caution (Patten, 2005). It should also be noted that this study was conducted during a time when many teachers are being laid off. Although special education teachers were exempt from these layoffs given their certification, many other district staff members have been laid off, and others continue to receive layoff notices. These layoffs may have indirectly resulted in feelings of stress and/or dissatisfaction, and may have affected the way participants responded to the survey items. Finally, the respondents' familiarity with the use of the Internet and computer technology may have posed challenges in accessing and completing the survey accurately.

Many of the weaknesses of this study could be minimized with more time and additional resources. A larger sample would be ideal. The researcher also recommends that follow up and reminder messages requesting survey participation be sent to prospective participants. That could not be done in this study because the researcher was precluded from sending reminder emails due to ethical issues related to conducting this research within the district where the researcher is employed, and sending reminder letters using U.S. Mail would have been cost-prohibitive.

As Billingsley (2004) stated, “Future studies of attrition need to focus on attrition *behavior* (teachers who actually leave their positions)” (p. 29). This study used “career plans” as a proxy to predict attrition. A methodological improvement would be to design longitudinal studies that include participants who actually leave, and draw comparisons based on their “career plans” and actual behavior. Based on results from prior research, many special education teachers who indicated intent to remain actually did remain (Boe, Bobbitt, & Cook, 1997; Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, et al., 1997), while far fewer of those who indicated plans to leave actually did leave (Boe, Bobbitt, & Cook, 1997; Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, et al., 1997; Gersten et al, 2001). Further, it would be interesting to examine subgroups of those who leave to explore the between-group differences for reasons for leaving (Billingsley, 2004).

Additional methodological enhancements might include conducting some experimental research, such as implementing different sets of in-services or professional development (e.g., stress reduction workshops, other workshops related to various facets of teaching special education, such as effective co-teaching and co-planning models,

designing effective IEPs, using district data systems, analyzing achievement data, and using the problem-solving process to improve instructional decision-making and behavior management strategies), and examining their effects on perceived levels of job commitment or actual behavior related to career longevity. Another enhancement might be to include an additional qualitative component by conducting interviews to get feedback from different groups to learn more about barriers to special education teachers' job commitment.

Implications for Policy

This section will provide recommendations for educational policymakers based on conclusions drawn from this study while considering conclusions drawn by other researchers in similar studies. The researcher will provide the appropriate office in the district that was studied with an executive summary which will include the results, conclusions, and implications.

Communication and collaboration. Priority must be given to ensuring that policymakers in special education and their general education counterparts maintain openness and a commitment to communication and collaboration. The dream of narrowing the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers can become a reality by creating policies that streamline systems of service delivery between schools in the district. By leading the way through modeling collaboration and ensuring effective communication, district-level administrators will influence building-level administrators and their teachers to do the same, which will facilitate stronger relationships between colleagues and an improved school climate.

Funding. Policymakers and district-level administrators are urged to ensure that adequate funding is provided to for special education. Improvements are needed in human resources (adequate building and school level support), instructional resources, and professional development for teachers and administrators. Such improvements could lead to improved morale, lower levels of dissatisfaction, and therefore increased retention.

Salary. Salary continues to remain as a factor that clearly influences special education teacher job commitment (Billingsley, 1993; Billingsley et al., 1995; Boe, Bobbitt, Cook et al., 1997; Lauritzen, 1988; McLeskey et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1998; Scott, 2004; Singer, 1992, Starlings et al., 2002; Sultana, 2002; Thornton et al., 2007). If policymakers truly want to ensure a quality education for students with disabilities, they must consider ways to offer more financial compensation in order to attract and retain effective special education teachers.

Colleague support. This study and other studies identified colleague support as an issue relating to job satisfaction and commitment among teachers in general (Chang, 2009; Hargreaves, 2000; Hewitt 1993; Hock, 1985; Klecker & Loadman, 1996; Maxfield 2009; Ouyang & Paprock 2006), and among special education teachers (Barak et al., 2001; Billingsley et al., 2004; Gonzalez, 1995; Holdman & Harris, 2003; Schlichte et al., 2005; Thornton et al., 2007; Whitaker, 2000). Policymakers should continue to explore ways to support new teachers, as well as experienced teachers. New teacher support programs must continue to be implemented. Currently, many new teachers are supported during the time they are in a teacher preparation program, and are then released from

such support once they earn their teaching credentials. It is recommended that policymakers and district-level administrators develop programs that allow new and experienced teachers to work together. Experienced and effective special education teachers should be given opportunities to meet on a regular basis with new teachers to share exemplary practices in instructional delivery and decision-making, as well as behavior management.

Administrative support. The current study and the existing literature point to the need for improvements in administrative support for special education teachers (Billingsley, 1993; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Billingsley et al., 1995; Butterfield, 2004; Chen & Miller, 1997; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Farber, 2000; George et al., 1995; Guarino et al., 2006; Littrell et al., 1994; McLeskey et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1998; Papastylianou et al., 2009; Theoharis, 2008; Vance et al., 1989, Westling & Whitten, 1996). If special education teachers are expected to remain in their positions, they must receive adequate support from their district and building-level administrators. While many building level administrators have a basic familiarity with special education, most lack the training and experience needed to truly support their teachers with the challenges they face. Policymakers should designate sufficient resources to the training and ongoing professional development of building-level administrators.

Teachers of students with specific learning disabilities. The results of this study suggest that teachers of students with learning disabilities are largely dissatisfied in the district under investigation. This was similar to the findings of Embich (2001), but different from those of Littrell et al. (1994) who found no significant differences in job

satisfaction in teachers of students with learning disabilities and other eligibilities.

Additional support in the form of resources and instructional leadership must be provided to these dissatisfied teachers.

Class size. In this study and in prior studies (Billingsley et al., 1995; Brownell et al., 1995; McLeskey et al., 2004; Morvant et al., 1995; Sack, as cited in Russ et al., 2001; Thornton et al., 2007), class size has been identified as an issue relating to special education teacher job commitment. Policymakers are advised to allocate additional funding to lower the teacher-student ratio. It is not feasible to expect rapid gains in achievement for students who face significant challenges if teachers and students are not afforded sufficient time to work one on one and in small teacher/student ratios.

Parent participation. Policymakers are advised to continue to explore ways for parents to participate meaningfully in the education of their students with disabilities. This study and other studies indicate a need in this area (Hewitt, 1993; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Marlow et al., 1996; Maxfield 2009). More training, education, and workshop opportunities for parents of children with disabilities are recommended. Such activities will improve communication, facilitate openness and collaboration among parents and school staff, which may help mitigate the deleterious effects of many of the costly litigious due process cases.

Student discipline issues. Student discipline issues have been related to job burnout among teachers in general (Hock, 1985; Marlow et al., 1996; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005), and among special education teachers (Thornton et al., 2007) and continue to be identified as factors that contribute to job stress and decreased job

commitment. Policymakers and district-level staff should continue to support schools with developing systems of positive behavior support.

Promotional opportunities. The results of this study and other studies (Chen & Miller, 1997; Klecker & Loadman, 1996) suggest that many special education teachers in this study indicated a desire for promotional opportunities; at the same time, the majority of the participants in this study indicated a desire to remain teaching in special education until retirement age. This suggests that opportunities for career advancement must be provided without compelling special education teachers to leave their classrooms. Exceptional special education teachers should be paid more and be given greater responsibility, while remaining able to continue to teach part-time. Exemplary special education teachers can become mentors for newer or struggling veteran teachers, become involved in leadership decision-making, such as developing curriculum and leading staff development, and be given opportunities as instructors in teacher preparation programs (e.g., District Intern Programs).

Implications for Administrators

This section will provide recommendations for educational administrators based on conclusions drawn in this study, while considering conclusions drawn by other researchers in similar studies.

Colleague interaction. Building-level instructional leaders should continue to facilitate meaningful use of common planning time, during which special education teachers may collaborate with general education teachers around examining student data and making decisions regarding effective instructional strategies. Not only will this

improve collegial relationships, it will also facilitate a positive school culture and climate, which is linked to job commitment.

Planning time. Building-level instructional leaders should continue to provide ample support to all teachers, but should also focus on teachers of students with specific learning disabilities. These teachers need sufficient time to co-plan with their general education counterparts, and should be included in small group discussions (e.g., Small Learning Communities [SLCs], Personalized Learning Environments [PLEs], and Professional Learning Communities [PLCs]).

Opportunities to participate in leadership decision-making. Special education teachers are highly skilled educators who have much to offer to building-level instructional leaders. Providing special education teachers with opportunities to participate in leadership decision-making will bolster their level of job commitment. Many special education teachers seem to desire opportunities to provide input to district and building-level administrators regarding all facets of the instructional program (e.g., selection of instructional materials, design of instructional strategies, and techniques for assessing learning).

Years of experience. While the results of this study suggest that special education teachers with fewer years of experience have higher levels of job commitment, this finding was inconsistent with the literature (Billingsley, 2004; Boe, Bobbitt, et al., 1996; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Gelman, 2008; Gersten et al., 2001; Miller et al., 1998; Morvant et al., 1995; NEA, n.d.; Singer, 1992; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Further investigation is warranted to verify these results; however,

ongoing support and mentoring opportunities should be provided to both new and experienced special education teachers. New special education teachers will blossom under the support of colleagues with experience who can guide and nurture their growth during their formative years in the profession.

Administrative support. The issue of administrative support has been identified in this study as a significant factor impacting special education teacher job commitment and desire to leave the field. The literature confirms this finding (Billingsley, 1992, 1993, 1995; Chen & Miller, 1997; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Farber, 2000; George et al., 1995; Guarino et al., 2006; Littrell et al., 1994; McLeskey et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1998; Papastylianou et al., 2009; Theoharis, 2008; Vance et al., 1989; Westling & Whitten, 1996). Special education teachers remain in their positions when they receive adequate administrative support, and leave when they do not. Building-level administrators must gain a greater understanding of special education law, policy, and procedures. They must also become more familiar with the challenges faced by students with disabilities, and build stronger partnerships with families.

School climate. Building-level administrators must work to make improvements in school climate. This finding is also supported in the non teaching literature (Maslach et al., 2001) and is similar to findings from studies that examined teachers in general (Hewitt, 1993; Liu & Meyer, 2005; McCleskey et al., 2004; Ouyang & Paprock, 2006), and in studies involving special education teachers (Billingsley, 1993; Billingsley, 2004; Miller et al., 1998; Thornton et al., 2007). Special education teachers want to be treated with respect and should be provided with ample tools and resources. Instructional leaders

must transform schools into communal learning environments where teachers, support staff, and parents work together to improve student achievement.

Student discipline issues. Student discipline issues continue to impact special education teacher job commitment and career plans. There were similar findings in the literature (Hock, 1985; Marlow et al., 1996; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005; Thornton et al., 2007). Building-level administrators must continue to establish systems of school-wide positive behavior within a multi-tiered approach.

Implications for Special Education Teachers

This section will provide recommendations for special education teachers based on conclusions drawn in this study, while considering conclusions drawn by other researchers in similar studies.

Colleague interaction. Special education teachers must support each other by providing each other with ongoing guidance and encouragement. As the findings from this study and literature suggest, the importance of colleague support cannot be underestimated (Barak et al., 2001; Billingsley et al., 2004; Chang, 2009; Gonzalez, 1995; Hargreaves, 2000; Hewitt, 1993; Hock, 1985; Holdman & Harris, 2003; Klecker & Loadman, 1996; Maxfield, 2009; Ouyang & Paprock 2006; Scherer, 1999; Schlichte et al., 2005; Thornton et al., 2007; Whitaker, 2000). Effective and experienced special education teachers should share best practices regarding instructional strategies and managing student behavior with teachers who are struggling or less experienced.

Personal awareness. Special education teachers must become aware of the warning signs of decreased job commitment (e.g., irritability, tiredness, lack of

motivation, lack of camaraderie with coworkers), and should feel empowered to seek growth and professional development opportunities without fear of judgment from their peers or negative evaluation from their supervisors.

Pursue professional growth opportunities. Special education teachers should feel empowered to pursue career-enhancing opportunities, such as National Board Certification.

Collaboration. Special education teachers should feel empowered to collaborate with other school staff members to develop, implement, and sustain effective instructional practices.

Problem solving through networking. New special education teachers should not be fearful of being perceived as lacking ability if they need help or advice with a particular problem or situation. By seeking assistance from others, they develop positive relations with their colleagues through networking, which will lessen the risk of burnout.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study and other studies explored special education teacher attrition by identifying teachers' career plan predictions (Billingsley et al., 1995; Boe et al., 1999; Gersten et al., 2001; Westling & Whitten, 1996). One problem with this approach is that it does not measure actual behavior related to staying or leaving one's position (Billingsley, 2004). Future research should explore the relationship between teacher predictions for career plans and actual behavior. Future researchers should consider both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Researchers who select a quantitative approach might employ correlational or comparative methods to gain further insight into career

plans and their relationship to actual behavior. One possible research question might be, “To what extent, if at all, is there a relationship between intent to leave special education and actual behavior?” Researchers who select a qualitative approach might employ retrospective phenomenological methods to explore the lived experience of those who actually left the field.

Nearly two thirds of the special education teachers in this study indicated they plan to remain teaching in special education at least until retirement age. Findings from Billingsley et al. (1995) revealed similar results for some groups of special education teachers. Researchers interested in employing a qualitative design might conduct phenomenological research to explore the specific employment or external factors that lead some special education teachers to indicate intent to remain in or leave the field.

This study found that teachers with fewer years teaching special education felt higher levels of job commitment. These results were inconsistent with many of the findings in the literature (Billingsley, 2004; Boe, Bobbitt, et al., 1996; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Gelman, 2008; Gersten et al., 2001; Miller et al., 1998; Morvant et al., 1995; NEA, n.d.; Singer, 1992; Singh & Billingsley, 1996); therefore, further research in this area is warranted.

This and several other studies suggest that female special education teachers have higher levels of commitment (McIntyre, 1983; Morvant et al., 1995; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Other studies suggest males have higher levels of job commitment (Gonzalez, 1995; Hewitt, 1993; Mertler, 2001; Singer, 1992), while others found no significant differences between males and females (Boe, Cook et al., 1996; Boe, Bobbitt, & Cook,

1997; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Miller et al., 1998). Further research in this area is recommended to verify the results of this study.

Many special education teachers in this study and in the literature (Barak et al., 2001; Billingsley et al., 2004; Gonzalez, 1995; Holdman & Harris, 2003; Schlichte et al., 2005; Thornton et al., 2007; Whitaker, 2000) have indicated that colleague support, and quality interactions with other teachers are very important to their perceptions of job satisfaction. As Billingsley (2004) stated, “Future research should consider the nature and extent of collaboration and its effects on special educators’ affective reactions to work and career plans” (p. 35).

The importance of administrative support as it relates to job satisfaction among special education teachers was identified in this study, and has been a recurring theme in the special education teacher attrition literature for many years (Billingsley, 1992, 1993, 1995; Butterfield, 2004; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; George et al., 1995; Littrell et al., 1994; McCleskey et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1998; Theoharis, 2008; Vance et al., 1989; Westling & Whitten, 1996). Surprisingly, it seems little has changed despite the findings of numerous studies. Clearly, additional research is needed in this area. Future researchers should investigate the nature of support that is being provided by administrators in schools where special education teachers perceive satisfactory levels of support. As Billingsley (2004) stated, “we need to know more about what supportive administrators do and how they promote positive school climates and working conditions in special education” (p. 35).

In this study, a significant relationship between special education teacher job commitment and race (specifically, being Hispanic/Latino) was found. Other studies found significance with regard to the relationship of race and job commitment (Billingsley et al., 1995; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Miller et al., 1998; Singer, 1992), but no other studies were found whose conclusions indicated that Hispanic/Latino teachers have higher job commitment than other racial groups. Many other studies reported no significant differences when comparing race/ethnicity to levels of job satisfaction and job commitment (Boe, Bobbitt et al., 1996; Boe, Bobbitt, Cook et al., 1997, Miller et al., 1998; Singer, 1992; Theoharis, 2008). One possible explanation for these differences is that the majority of the student population in the district in this investigation was Hispanic/Latino, which might explain why Hispanic/Latino teachers feel greater job commitment. As Billingsley (2004) stated, “Future studies should address the relationship of race to different types of districts and the match between teachers’ race and that of their students” (p. 36).

Several of the factors (demographic, employment, and external) that were identified as being related to job commitment in this study were consistent with factors found in studies that examined workers in non-teaching fields, teaching in general, and in special education. Future research should continue to examine the relationship of various demographic, employment, and external factors to job commitment. Furthermore, researchers should examine sectors where job commitment is high, and identify those factors that may be contributing to that high job commitment, then conduct experimental

research by applying those factors to the special education field to draw comparisons and make further recommendations.

Final Summary

Researchers have focused on the issue of special education teacher attrition for many years. While researchers have made many valuable findings, there continues to be a need to swiftly abate the staggering numbers of special education teachers who leave the field prematurely. Districts desiring to retain their teachers must place greater emphasis on the development of evidence-based strategies to reduce teacher attrition (Billingsley, 2004).

The purposes of this study were to: (a) provide an overview of the extent, if at all, to which perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California differ on the basis of those teachers' demographic characteristics; (b) identify the extent, if at all, to which perceptions of job satisfaction and stress are related to perceptions of job commitment among current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California; (c) identify the common reasons/conditions expressed by current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California for wanting to leave teaching special education; and (d) identify what current special education teachers in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California report their career plans to be.

Looking across the literature in non-teaching fields, general education teaching, and special education, and considering the findings from this study, the salient factors

related to burnout appear to be: (a) personal/demographic factors (e.g., marital status, age, gender, race/ethnicity, type of student population, experience on the job, certification and preparation, and self-concept/self-confidence); (b) employment factors (e.g., mentoring opportunities, salary, workload, caseload and class size, administrative support, colleague support, interpersonal relationships, availability of resources, and employee involvement in decision-making, level of parent involvement, school climate, and student discipline issues); and (c) external factors (e.g., lack of respect or prestige, and community/societal support for the occupation). Other personal factors related to decisions to leave the field—such as retirement, promotion, relocating, health, pregnancy, and other family-related issues—should not be attributed to burnout.

This study employed a survey design. The target population for this study was the over 4,000 special education teachers employed by the district. The participants in this study were full-time special education teachers (as designated by district criteria) in a large metropolitan school district in Southern California. The specific form of data collection was the administration of a web-based survey using Survey Monkey. The instrument used was an adapted version of a questionnaire by Billingsley and Cross (1992, as revised by Theoharis, 2008). In addition, two questions pertaining to “Future Teaching Plans” were borrowed from Billingsley et al. (1995). Data analysis included quantitative (descriptive statistics, correlation, ANOVA, and multiple regression) and qualitative techniques (coding and sorting responses into themes).

The findings of this study suggest the following demographic variables are positively related to job commitment: being female, being Hispanic, and teaching

students with eligibilities other than learning disabilities in an elementary setting. Job satisfaction was positively correlated with job commitment and career longevity, but negatively correlated with job stress. In addition, job stress was negatively correlated with both with job satisfaction and career longevity. Also, job satisfaction and career longevity were positively correlated. The most frequently indicated factors related to wanting to leave the field included lack of administrative support, workload issues, salary issues, paperwork issues, class size issues, lack of parent involvement, negative school climate, inadequate resources, lack of respect or prestige, student discipline issues, lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making, lack of time to interact with colleagues, lack of community support, negative teacher-teacher relationships, and negative teacher-student relationships. The majority of the special education teachers who participated in this study indicated that they planned to remain in their job at least until retirement. For those who planned to leave within the next 3 to 5 years, the most frequently indicated reasons (in order of popularity) were retirement, followed by obtaining a promotion within school or district, seeking employment in a non-teaching job in education, and teaching special education in another district.

Future research should examine the relationship between teacher predictions for career plans and actual behavior, and should explore the specific employment or external factors that lead some special education teachers to indicate intent to remain in or leave the field. Further research is recommended to explore the relationship between years teaching special education and job commitment, as well as the nature of colleague interaction and its effect on job satisfaction and intent to remain in or leave the field.

Future research should also examine the nature of support that is being provided by administrators in schools where special education teachers perceive satisfactory levels of support, and further research is needed to investigate the association between race and job satisfaction.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Letter

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY**Graduate School of Education and Psychology**

TO: Special Education Teacher
DATE: October 22, 2010
FROM: Joseph D. Green, Doctoral Candidate
SUBJECT: **SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER JOB COMMITMENT SURVEY—
REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN DOCTORAL DISSERTATION RESEARCH**

Dear Special Education Teacher:

My name is Joseph Green, and I am an employee of the Los Angeles Unified School District (the District) as a Specialist at the Beaudry Building. I am also a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy Program in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. **Please participate in my online survey concerning job satisfaction, commitment, and career plans among special education teachers that will take you approximately 10 minutes to complete.**

Your participation is very important to me and much appreciated. If you are willing to consider participating in my study, please type the link below into your web browser. It will take you to the survey where you will find survey directions.

Although I am an employee of the District, I am collecting this data for my dissertation. The District's Committee for External Research Review has evaluated my research proposal and given me permission to conduct my research within the District and to make contact with special education teachers for my research study.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me using my email address below.

With appreciation,



Joseph D. Green
jdgreen@pepperdine.edu

SURVEY WEB LINK:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/LAUSD_teachersurvey

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Cover Letter

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY**Graduate School of Education and Psychology**

TO: Principal
DATE: October 22, 2010
FROM: Joseph D. Green, Doctoral Candidate, Pepperdine University
**SUBJECT: DISTRIBUTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER SURVEY
FOR DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**

Dear Principal:

For the past three years, I have been studying for my doctorate degree at Pepperdine University. I am now in the final stage of the process—my dissertation research study. The Los Angeles Unified School District's Committee for External Research Review has evaluated my research proposal and given me permission to conduct my research within the District and to make contact with their special education teachers for that purpose.

Enclosed in this envelope are copies of a survey invitation letter to request the voluntary participation of your special education teachers in my research study. If you agree, please have your SAA **place the enclosed survey invitation letter in the mailbox of each of your special education teachers** (except secondary transition [DOTS] teachers, who are to be excluded for administrative reasons) upon receipt of this message. Your help and support mean very much to me. If you have a concern or question, please do not hesitate to contact me at the email address below, and I will respond immediately.

With appreciation,



Joseph D. Green
jdgreen@pepperdine.edu

Enclosures

- District Research Approval Letter
- University Research Approval Letter
- Teacher Survey Recruitment Letter

APPENDIX C

IRB Approval—Pepperdine

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board

October 8, 2010

Joseph Green
10616 Casanes Ave.
Downey, CA 90241

Protocol #: E0910D08**Project Title: *Factors Relating to Special Education Teacher Job*****Commitment: *A Study of One Large Metropolitan School District in Southern California***

Dear Mr. Green:

Thank you for submitting your application, *Factors Relating to Special Education Teacher Job Commitment: A Study of One Large Metropolitan School District in Southern California*, for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB). The IRB appreciates the work you and your faculty advisor, Dr. Chris Lund, have done on the proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations (45 CFR 46 - <http://www.nihtraining.com/ohsrsite/guidelines/45cfr46.html>) that govern the protections of human subjects. Specifically, section 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) states:

(b) Unless otherwise required by Department or Agency heads, research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories are exempt from this policy:

Category (2) of 45 CFR 46.101, research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: a) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and b) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

In addition, your application to waive documentation of consent, as indicated in your

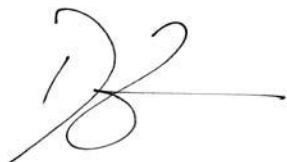
Application for Waiver or Alteration of Informed Consent Procedures form has been **approved**.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit a **Request for Modification Form** to the GPS IRB. Because your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the GPS IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the GPS IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the GPS IRB and the appropriate form to be used to report this information can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* (see link to "policy material" at <http://www.pepperdine.edu/irb/graduate/>).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all further communication or correspondence related to this approval. Should you have additional questions, please contact me. On behalf of the GPS IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,



Doug Leigh, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Education
Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology
6100 Center Dr. 5th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90045
dleigh@pepperdine.edu
(310) 568-2389

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Associate Provost for Research & Assistant Dean of Research,
Seaver College
Ms. Alexandra Roosa, Director Research and Sponsored Programs
Dr. Doug Leigh, Chair, Graduate and Professional Schools IRB
Ms. Jean Kang, Manager, Graduate and Professional Schools IRB
Dr. Chris Lund
Ms. Kristin Bailey

APPENDIX D

IRB Approval—District



Los Angeles Unified School District

Office of Data and Accountability

333 South Beaudry Avenue, 16th Floor, Los Angeles, California 90017

Telephone: (213) 241-2460 Fax: (213) 241-8462

Ramon C. Cortines
Superintendent of Schools

Judy Elliott, PhD
Chief Academic Officer

Cynthia Lim, PhD
Executive Director

October 12, 2010

Joseph Green
10616 Casanes Ave.
Downey, CA 90241

Dear Researcher:

The LAUSD Committee for External Research Review has approved your request to initiate your research study entitled “Factors relating to Special Education Teacher Job Commitment.”

This action by the committee is an approval to conduct research in LAUSD. This letter does *not*:

- Create any obligation for district personnel, students, or parents to participate. All participation must be completely voluntary and the confidentiality of all sources must be maintained; nor
- Create any obligation on the part of the principal to approve research activities that occur during instructional time. If the study, as designed, requires instructional time to be used for research purposes, we presume that approval of the principal will be obtained prior to such activity.

Any archival data must be requested from the Office of Data and Accountability under terms established by that office under the district’s data security policies, and may not be requested from the school.

At the conclusion of your study or within a year of the date of this letter, whichever comes first, please send an executive summary of your findings and copies of any reports to my

attention. I wish you the best of luck in your research endeavors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Katherine Hayes', written in a cursive style.

Katherine Hayes, Ph.D. Coordinator
Chair, Committee for External Research Review

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent

Please understand that your participation in my study is strictly voluntary. The following is a description of what the study participation entails, the terms for participating in the study, and a discussion of your rights as a study participant. Please read this information carefully before deciding whether or not you wish to participate.

If you should decide to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete a survey. It should take approximately 10 minutes to complete the survey. The survey items consist of demographic information, attitudes pertaining to job satisfaction, stress, job commitment, reasons (if any) for wanting to leave teaching special education, and career plans. Please complete the survey alone in a single sitting.

Although minimal, there are potential risks that you should consider before deciding to participate in this study. These risks include possible boredom, fatigue, and/or slight discomfort with considering one's level of job commitment. You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. If you are interested in the results of this study, please contact me and I will provide you with a summary of the findings.

If you should decide to participate and find you are not interested in completing the survey in its entirety, you have the right to discontinue at any point without being questioned about your decision. You also do not have to answer any of the questions on the survey that you prefer not to answer—just leave such items blank. Your standing or job status will not be affected in any way based on your participation or non-participation in this study.

You will not be asked to provide your name or school location, and no IP addresses will be tracked; therefore, your identity will remain completely anonymous. If the findings of the study are presented to professional audiences or published, no information that identifies you personally will be released. The data will be kept in a secure manner for 5 years, as the data may be used by other investigators in the future.

If you have any questions regarding the information that I have provided above, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address and phone number provided below. If you have further questions or do not feel I have adequately addressed your concerns, please contact my dissertation chairperson, Dr. Christopher Lund, at (310) 568-5600. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact Dr. Doug Leigh, IRB Chairperson, at (310) 568-2389.

By completing the survey and returning it to me, you are acknowledging that you have read and understand what your study participation entails and are consenting to participate in the study.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information, and I hope you decide to complete the survey.

Sincerely,

Joseph D. Green
jdgreen@pepperdine.edu

[I agree to participate. Take me to the survey.](#)

[I do not agree to participate.](#)

APPENDIX F

Special Education Teacher Survey

Special Education Teacher Job Commitment* Survey

*COMMITMENT: The degree to which a worker has a desire to stay in the profession.

DEMOGRAPHIC (Participant Background Information)

1. What is your total number of years teaching (general and special education)?
2. What is your number of years teaching special education?
3. What is your teaching setting?
 - a. Elementary – regular campus
 - b. Elementary – special school/center
 - c. Secondary – regular campus
 - d. Secondary – special school/center
4. What type of program are you teaching?
 - a. Autism
 - b. Deaf/Blind
 - c. Deaf/Hard of Hearing
 - d. Emotional Disturbance
 - e. Intellectual Disabilities (Mental Retardation)
 - f. Itinerant (specify) _____
 - g. Multiple Disabilities
 - h. Orthopedic/Other Health Impaired
 - i. Resource Specialist Program
 - j. Specific Learning Disabilities
 - k. Visually Impaired
5. What type of credentialing program did you attend?
 - a. College or University
 - b. College or University Internship Program
 - c. District Intern Program
6. Do you have the required credential for your current position?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
7. Please indicate the certification that you have for your current teaching position.
 - a. Mild/Moderate Disabilities (M/M)
 - b. Moderate/Severe Disabilities (M/S)
 - c. Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH)
 - d. Visual Impairments (VI)
 - e. Physical and Health Impairments (PHI)
 - f. Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)
 - g. I do not have required certification for my current teaching position.
8. What is your highest level of education?
 - a. Bachelor's degree

- b. Bachelor's degree + additional units
 - c. Master's degree
 - d. Master's degree + additional units
 - e. Doctorate degree
9. What is your age?
10. What is your gender?
- a. Male
 - b. Female
11. What is your ethnicity/race? (Indicate all that apply.)
- a. African American/Black
 - b. American Indian or Alaskan
 - c. Asian American
 - d. Caucasian
 - e. Hispanic/Latino
 - f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - g. Other (please specify) _____
12. What is your marital status?
- a. Single
 - b. Married and living with spouse
 - c. Other (please specify) _____
13. Are you the primary "breadwinner" for your family?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

JOB SATISFACTION

14. Please consider how satisfied you are with various aspects of your job.

1—Very Dissatisfied 2—Dissatisfied 3—Neutral 4—Satisfied 5—Very Satisfied

- a. Salary
- b. Importance and challenge
- c. Working conditions
- d. Opportunity for promotion and advancement
- e. Opportunity to use past training and education
- f. Security and permanence
- g. Supervisor(s)
- h. Opportunity for developing new skills
- i. The pride and respect I receive from my family and friends for being in this profession
- j. Relationships with colleagues
- k. Job as a whole

STRESS

15. The following statements express various "feelings" that people experience concerning their jobs. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

1—Strongly Disagree 2—Disagree 3—Tend to Disagree 4—Neutral
 5—Tend to Agree 6—Agree 7—Strongly Agree

- a. You carry problems with your work home with you.
- b. Your work makes you upset.
- a. Your work makes you frustrated.
- b. You are under strain in your work.
- c. Your work makes you tense.
- d. The amount of work you have to get done interferes with how well it is done.
- e. Your work places you under a great deal of stress.
- f. Your work makes you jumpy and nervous.
- g. Your work puts you under a lot of pressure.
- h. You would like to quit your current job.

COMMITMENT (the degree to which a worker has a desire to stay in the profession)

16. Please indicate the degree to which each of the following statements reflects your views about the teaching profession.

- | | | | |
|---------------------|------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 1—Strongly Disagree | 2—Disagree | 3—Tend to Disagree | 4—Neutral |
| 5—Tend to Agree | 6—Agree | 7—Strongly Agree | |

- a. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this profession be successful.
- b. I talk up this profession to my friends as a great profession in which to work
- c. I feel very little loyalty to this profession.
- d. I would accept almost any type of job assignment in this profession.
- e. I find that my values and the profession's values are very similar.
- f. I am proud to tell others that I am part of this profession.
- g. I would be just as happy working in a different profession as long as the type of work was similar.
- h. This profession really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.
- i. It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this profession.
- j. I am extremely glad that I chose this profession to work in over others I was considering at the time I joined.
- k. There is not much to be gained by sticking with this profession indefinitely.
- l. Often, I find it difficult to agree with this profession's policies on important matters.
- m. I really care about the fate of this profession.
- n. For me, this is the best of all possible professions in which to work.
- o. Deciding to work in this profession was a definite mistake on my part.

CAREER LONGEVITY

17. How long are you planning to remain in special education teaching?

- a. As long as I am able, even if that's after retirement age
- b. Until I am eligible for retirement
- c. Undecided
- d. Will probably continue unless something better comes along
- e. Definitely plan to leave special education teaching as soon as I can

REASONS FOR WANTING TO LEAVE

18. Below is a list of possible reasons that might be true for you for wanting to leave special education. Please check all of the reasons that apply to you.

- Class size issues
- Community issues (e.g., teaching in an undesirable or violent community)
- Family reasons (e.g., homemaking, child rearing, spouse or partner relocating for new job)
- Inadequate resources (e.g., lack of necessary supplies, textbooks, etc.)
- Lack of administrative support
- Lack of community support
- Lack of parent involvement or support
- Lack of time to interact with colleagues

- Lack of respect or prestige
- Negative school climate
- Negative teacher-student relationships
- Negative teacher-teacher relationships
- Opportunities to participate in decision-making
- Paperwork issues
- Pursue nonteaching employment opportunities in the field of education
- Retirement
- Return to graduate school
- Student discipline issues
- Salary issues
- Workload issues
- Other

CAREER PLANS

19. If you are planning to leave within the next 3 to 5 years, indicate what you hope to be doing after leaving your current special education position. Check all that apply.

I plan to:

- Obtain a promotion within the school or District
- Pursue a graduate degree full time, in a non-education field
- Pursue a graduate degree, full time, in special education
- Pursue a graduate degree full time, not in special education
- Remain in my current special education position more than 3 to 5 years
- Retire
- Seek employment in a nonteaching job in education
- Seek employment outside of education
- Stay at home (e.g., child rearing, providing elder care, homemaking)
- Teach general education in another school district
- Teach general education in another school in the District
- Teach general education in the same school in the District
- Teach special education in another school district
- Other

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

20. As most people know, there is a high rate of turnover for teachers in special education. What, if anything, could the District do to improve your desire to remain teaching in special education?

APPENDIX G

Consent From Billingsley

From: Billingsley, Bonnie [mailto:bbilling@vt.edu]
Sent: Thu 4/15/2010 12:12 PM
To: Green, Joseph (student)
Subject:RE: Request for Permission

Joseph,

Yes you have permission to use a modified scale. I wish you the best on your project.

Best,
 Bonnie

From: jdgreen@pepperdine.edu
Sent: Thursday, April 15, 2010 2:33 PM
To: Billingsley, Bonnie
Subject:FW: Request for Permission

Hello Bonnie,

Please see below. My university will accept an email from you to me, indicating that you are granting me permission to modify Raschelle Theoharis's instrument, which was a modified version of your instrument.

As I stated previously, I will cite appropriately and will write a description of this whole process in the "Instrumentation" section of my dissertation.

Warm regards,
 Joseph

From: Green, Joseph (student)
Sent: Mon 1/12/2009 6:45 PM
To: Billingsley, Bonnie
Subject:RE: RTI Project—Improving the Retention of Special Education Teachers

Dr. Billingsley,

THANK YOU so much for the OK. I'm still working through all the planning and the form the study takes will probably evolve many times over before I actually begin the study. However, I feel pretty certain at this point that I'd like to use the instruments you used for the "Screening Study" (the survey) and the open-ended interview questions from the "Influencing Factors Study". I will keep you posted! Thank you.

From: Billingsley, Bonnie [mailto:bbilling@vt.edu]
Sent: Sun 1/11/2009 9:47 PM
To: Green, Joseph (student)
Subject:RE: RTI Project—Improving the Retention of Special Education Teachers

Dear Joseph,

Thank you for your interest in my work. Yes, I have no problem with your interest in replicating the study. I also recommend that you look at the SPeNSE project at spense.org to see their instruments as well.

Please let me know if you have further questions and I'd love to hear more about your work.

Bonnie

From: Green, Joseph (student)
Sent: Fri 2009-01-09 6:38 PM
To: Billingsley, Bonnie
Subject: RTI Project—Improving the Retention of Special Education Teachers

Greetings Dr. Billingsley,

I am writing to you from class at Pepperdine University. I am beginning my 2nd term of my doctoral program. I would like to start by telling you how much I appreciate the work you have done in the area of special education teacher burnout. I have read everything I could find that you have published in the area of special education teacher retention/burnout, etc.

I currently serve in an administrative capacity with Los Angeles Unified School District. I work in the Division of Special Education. Over the past 8 years, I have taught and served as a special education coordinator at the middle and high school levels.

Let me tell you why your work has interested me. When I first began teaching special education 7 years ago, my mentor told me that I would not last more than 5 years—that all special education teachers burn out within 3–5 years. I told him it would never happen to me. Well, as it turned out, he was right. During my 4th year, I became quite disillusioned. I went from being the most enthusiastic teacher on campus to someone who had lost hope. I became fascinated by teacher burnout. As you probably know, Los Angeles Unified School District is a district fraught with problems. One of the most pressing issues is that of teacher turnover. I decided to pursue doctoral study so I could research teacher burnout. I want to study this process as it is occurring within LAUSD. In my dissertation, I hope to be able to document the trends and range of reasons for special education teacher attrition with LAUSD. Once I complete my doctoral program, I plan to continue doing research in this area. I would like to put together an action plan for my district to use to help retain our special education teachers.

Now, why am I writing to you? I would like to replicate parts of your 1995 study. I believe I can make a valuable contribution by repeating parts of your study. I believe the methodology and instrumentation you and your team designed for the 1995 study would be of tremendous value to a similar study with a different geographic area and a different population. It would also be interesting to see how things have changed (or stayed the same) since 14 years ago. I may adapt the research instrument (your surveys), but I would like to get your permission to use your exact instrument if my chair and other committee members feel it would be appropriate for my study. Of course, I would acknowledge the replication and compare the findings of my study with those of your prior study.

Please let me know your thoughts. I very much hope you will consider my request. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Joseph D. Green, Doctoral Student
Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy
Graduate School of Education and Psychology
Pepperdine University

From: "Kang, Jean" <Jean.Kang@pepperdine.edu>
Date: Thu, 15 Apr 2010 11:10:34 -0700
To: Green, Joseph (student)<Joseph.D.Green@pepperdine.edu>
Subject:FW: Request for Permission

From: Kang, Jean
Sent: Thursday, April 15, 2010 11:10 AM
To: Purrington, Linda
Cc: joseph.green@pepperdine.edu
Subject:RE: Request for Permission

Hi Linda,

There is no specific form. He can just submit the email approval with his application.

Thanks,
Jean

From: Purrington, Linda
Sent: Wednesday, April 14, 2010 9:11 PM
To: Kang, Jean
Cc: joseph.green@pepperdine.edu
Subject:Request for Permission

Hello Jean,

Joseph Green is one of our ELAP students. He would like to use an instrument that was developed by another dissertation student from another university for his dissertation study. He contacted the individual and received permission via email exchange. Is there a specific form that he needs to have signed or will copy of email granting permission to use instrument suffice?

Thanks in advance for your response!

Linda Purrington, Ed.D, Academic Chair
ELAP Doctoral Program
Pepperdine University
lpurring@pepperdine.edu<mailto:lpurring@pepperdine.edu>
949 223-2568

APPENDIX H

Consent From Theoharis

From: Raschelle Theoharis [mailto:nenatheoharis@gallaudet.edu]
Sent: Mon 4/12/2010 7:49 PM
To: Green, Joseph (student)
Subject: Re: I Am A Doctoral Student Requesting Your Permission

I was just wondering—totally curiosity :). You are welcome to use my survey, please you citations where ever needed as the entire document is not mine. If you are in need of other information, let me know and I will try to find it for you.

On Mon, Apr 12, 2010 at 10:14 PM, Green, Joseph (student)
<Joseph.D.Green@pepperdine.edu> wrote:

Hello,
I will be using a lot of it, but will also be adding some items, taking some away, and slightly modifying others. Attached are two documents: the first attachment shows the adjustments I am going to make to the original survey (your survey); the second shows what the revised survey will probably look like. I will also include a table that shows specifically what changes I made and why I made them.

Joseph

From: Raschelle Theoharis
Sent: Mon 4/12/2010 6:56 PM
To: Green, Joseph (student)
Subject: Re: I Am A Doctoral Student Requesting Your Permission

Will you be using my exact survey or changing or adding some items and taking some items away? I am just wondering.

On Mon, Apr 12, 2010 at 9:42 PM, <jdgreen@pepperdine.edu> wrote:

Hello Dr. Theoharis,

For clarification, I have already contacted Dr. Billingsley via email and she gave me permission to use her instrument.

What I'd like to know is if I can also have your permission to use and modify your instrument as your instrument contains some items not contained in Billingsley's (e.g., external factors items, and the administrative support item). Would this be alright with you?

From: Raschelle Theoharis [mailto:nena.theoharis@gallaudet.edu]
Date: Mon, 12 Apr 2010 20:45:57
To: Green, Joseph (student)<Joseph.D.Green@pepperdine.edu>
Subject: Re: I Am A Doctoral Student Requesting Your Permission

I have information regarding my dissertation in my office. I will be going in tomorrow and will check on these questions for you and see what information I can gather for you. I will say, there is not a lot of information regarding external factors in the literature. And while I had a few questions, I should have developed more specific questions. I will be in touch tomorrow.

Raschelle

On Mon, Apr 12, 2010 at 8:38 PM, Green, Joseph (student)
 Joseph.D.Green@pepperdine.edu> wrote:

I'm sorry to bother you again. It also appears as though you adapted the "Administrative Support" section from the source below. I cannot find this source anywhere. My university is telling me I will need expressed written permission to use this survey item. Can you give me written permission to use your "modified" version or can you forward me a copy of any letter or statement that you received from Mr. Dansereau giving permission?

Dansereau, F. (1972). The invisible organization. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

From: Green, Joseph (student)
Sent: Mon 4/12/2010 3:08 PM
To: Raschelle Theoharis
Subject: RE: I Am A Doctoral Student Requesting Your Permission

Are there any items on the survey that you developed? It looks like you may have developed the questions in "External Factors." If so, can I have permission to use those?

From: Raschelle Theoharis
Sent: Mon 4/12/2010 1:58 PM
To: Green, Joseph (student)
Subject: Re: I Am A Doctoral Student Requesting Your Permission

I have heard from several today you have been trying to reach me. I have been in meetings all day, so was unable to respond until now. I did not create the survey, but requested the survey and permission to use it from Dr. Bonnie Billingsley. I suggest you do the same—as I can not give permission for someone else. Best of luck with your studies and dissertation.

Sincerely,
 Raschelle Theoharis

On Sun, Apr 11, 2010 at 8:45 PM, Green, Joseph (student)
<Joseph.D.Green@pepperdine.edu> wrote:

Dear Dr. Theoharis,

I am a doctoral student at Pepperdine University in Los Angeles, CA. I am interested in using the survey instrument that you used in your 2008 dissertation. I realize that your instrument was borrowed in large part from the one used by Billingsley and Cross (1992). I have reviewed that article and I was only able to find a description of the items that they used in their survey. I know that Billingsley and Cross also borrowed many of their items from several other previous studies. I assume that you went to the original sources to obtain the questions that were not made available in the Billingsley and Cross study. Because of this, I would be very grateful to you if I could obtain your permission to use the exact wording from the instrument you used in your dissertation.

Please let me know if this may be possible. If you would like to speak with me further about my study, feel free to reply to this email. You may also reach me by telephone at xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Warm regards,

Joseph Green
Pepperdine University

APPENDIX I

Table I1

Adjustments Made to Theoharis' (2008) "Special Education Questionnaire"

Item Number	Original Wording	Changes Made	Rationale
3.	N/A	Question added.	This is an important demographic variable that appears to be related to teacher job commitment.
4.	What is your current position?	Question changed to: What type of program are you teaching? Original question was open-ended; response options included.	This adjustment provides data on the teacher's position and their setting.
5.	N/A	Question added.	Type of training is a variable that appears to be related to teacher retention.
6.	N/A	Question added.	Not all who are in positions have appropriate certification, and certification appears to relate to commitment.

(table continues)

Item Number	Original Wording	Changes Made	Rationale
7.	<p>Please indicate the certification that you have for your current teaching assignment.</p> <p>___ Mild/Moderate ___ Moderate/Severe ___ Visually Impaired ___ Deaf or Hard of Hearing ___ Adaptive Physical Education</p>	<p>Response options changed to:</p> <p>Please indicate the certification that you have for your current teaching assignment.</p> <p>(a) ___ Mild/Moderate Disabilities (M/M) (b) ___ Moderate/Severe Disabilities (M/S) (c) ___ Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) (d) ___ Visual Impairments (VI) (e) ___ Physical and Health Impairments (PHI) (f) ___ Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)</p>	<p>Need to match credentials available in California.</p>
8.	<p>What is your highest level of education?</p> <p>a. Bachelors b. Masters c. Specialist d. Doctorate</p>	<p>What is your highest level of education?</p> <p>(a) ___ Bachelor's degree (b) ___ Bachelor's degree + additional units (c) ___ Master's degree (d) ___ Master's degree + additional units (e) ___ Doctorate degree</p>	<p>The responses needed to be expanded to account for those who have completed further education beyond the highest degree completed.</p>

(table continues)

Item Number	Original Wording	Changes Made	Rationale
11.	Ethnicity/Race (Indicate all that apply.) a. African American b. American Indian or Alaskan c. Asian d. Caucasian e. Latino f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander g. Other (please specify)	Changed “African American” to “African American/Black,” changed “Latino” to “Hispanic/Latino, and changed “Asian” to “Asian American.”	Allow for other options, as people within these groups have different preferences for descriptive terminology
14.	In this section please consider how satisfied you are with various aspects of your job. Very Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Satisfied Very Satisfied	“Neutral” response option added.	Included a choice of “Neutral” because some respondents may not fall into either area of the spectrum.
18.	N/A	Question added.	Necessary to address Research Question 4.
19.	N/A	Question added.	Necessary to address Research Question 5.
20.	N/A	Question added.	Question added at the request of the District.

APPENDIX J

Waiver of Documentation of Informed Consent

Pepperdine IRB
Application for Waiver or Alteration of Informed Consent Procedures

Date: 9/24/10

IRB Application/Protocol #: **E0910D08****Principal Investigator: Joseph Green**

School/Unit: Faculty Staff Student Other
 GSBM GSEP Seaver SOL
SPP Administration Other:

Street Address: 10616 Casanes Ave.

City: Downey

State: CA

Zip Code: 90241

Telephone (work): (213) 537-9427

Telephone (home): (213) 537-9427

Email Address: jdgreen@pepperdine.edu

Faculty Supervisor: **Dr. Chris Lund** (*if applicable*)

School/Unit: GSBM GSEP Seaver SOL
SPP Administration Other:

Telephone (work): (213) 537-9427

Email Address: jdgreen@pepperdine.edu

Is the Faculty Supervisor Review Form Attached? Yes No
N/A

Project Title: Special Education Teacher Job Commitment: A Study of One Large Metropolitan School District in Southern California

Type of Project (Check all that apply):

Dissertation Thesis
 Undergraduate Research Independent
Study Faculty
 Classroom Project
Research
 Other:

Has the investigator completed education on research with human subjects?

Yes No N/A

If applicable, attach certification forms to this application.

Informed consent of the subject is one of the fundamental principles of ethical research for human subjects. Informed consent also is mandated by Federal regulations ([45 CFR 46](#)) and

University policy for research with human subjects. An investigator should seek a waiver of written or verbal informed consent, or required elements thereof, only under compelling circumstances.

SECTION A

Check the appropriate boxes regarding your application for waiver or alteration of informed consent procedures.

- Requesting Waiver or Alteration of the Informed Consent Process
 Requesting Waiver of Documentation of Informed Consent

If you are requesting a waiver or alteration of the informed consent process, complete Section B of the application.

If you are requesting a waiver of documentation of informed consent, complete Section C of the application.

SECTION B

Request for Waiver or Alteration of the Informed Consent Process - 45 CFR 46.116(c) & 45 CFR 46.111(d)

Under certain circumstances, the IRB may approve a consent procedure which does not include, or which alters, some or all of the elements of informed consent, or the IRB may waive the requirements to obtain informed consent. The following questions are designed to guide the decision making of the investigator and the IRB. Check your answer to each question.

- YES NO B.1. Will the proposed research or demonstration project be conducted by or subject to the approval of state or local government officials. **{45 CFR 46.116(c)(1)}**

Comments:

If you answered no to question B.1, skip to question B.3.

- YES NO B.2. Is the proposed project designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine:
 (i) public benefit or service programs;
 (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or (iv) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs **{45**

CFR 46.116(c)(1)}

Comments:

If you answered yes to questions B.1 and B.2, skip to question B.6.

- YES NO B.3. Will the proposed research involve greater than minimal risk?
(Minimal risk is defined as the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research which 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 46.116(d)(1)}

Comments:

- YES NO B.4. Will waiving or altering the informed consent process adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects?***{45 CFR 46.116(d)(2)}***

Comments:

- YES NO B.5. Will pertinent information regarding the research be provided to the subjects later, if appropriate?***{45 CFR 46.116(d)(4)}***

Comments:

- YES NO B.6. Is it practicable to conduct the research without the waiver or alteration? (*"Practicable" is not an inconvenience or increase in time or expense to the investigator or investigation, rather it is for instances in which the additional cost would make the research prohibitively expensive or where the identification and contact of thousands of potential subjects, while not impossible, may not be feasible for the anticipated results of the study.*) ***{45 CFR 46.116(d)(3)}***

Comments:

Waiver or alteration of the informed consent process is only allowable if:

- ***The answer to questions B.1 and B.2 are yes and the answer to question B.6 is no, OR***
- ***The answers to question B.1 is no, B.3 is no, B.4 is no, B.5 is yes, and B.6 is no.***

If your application meets the conditions for waiver or alteration of the informed consent process, provide the following information for IRB review.

- A brief explanation of your experimental protocol in support of your answers to questions B.1 - B.6.
- Identify which elements of consent will be altered or omitted, and provide justification for the alteration.
- The risks involved in the proposed research and why the research presents no more than minimal risk to the subject.

- Describe how the waiver or alteration of consent will not adversely affect the rights, including the privacy rights, and the welfare of the individual.
- Define the plan, where appropriate, to provide individuals with additional pertinent information after participation.
- Explain why the research could not practicably be conducted without the waiver or alteration.
- Other information, as required, in support of your answers to questions B.1 - B.6.

SECTION C

Request for Waiver of Documentation of Informed Consent - 45 CFR 46.117(c)

An IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all of the subjects. The following questions are designed to guide the decision making of the investigator and the IRB regarding this topic. Circle your answer to each question.

YES NO C.1. Was informed consent waived in Section B of this application? If yes, skip Section C, documentation of informed consent if not applicable.

YES NO C.2. Does the proposed research project qualify for alteration of the informed consent process under Section B of this application?
Comments:

YES NO C.3. The consent document is the only record linking the subject and the research, and the principal risk is potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. **{45 CFR 46.117(c)(1)}**
Comments:

YES NO C.4. The research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside the research context. **{45 CFR 46.117(c)(2)}** (*Minimal risk is defined as the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research which 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.*)
Comments:

Waiver of documentation of the informed consent is only allowable if:

- **The answer to question C.1 is yes, OR**

- *The answer to questions C.1 is no and the answer to either question C.3 or C.4 is yes.*

If your application meets the conditions for waiver of documentation of informed consent, provide the following additional information, supplementing the material provided in Part B of this application, for IRB review.

- How the consent document is the only record linking the subject to the research.
- How the principal risk to the subject is the potential harm from a breach of confidentiality.
- Why, if performed outside the research context, written consent is not normally required for the proposed experimental procedures.

If the IRB approves a Waiver of Documentation of Informed Consent, the investigator must:

- Ask each participant if he or she wants documentation linking the participant with the research (i.e., wishes to complete an informed consent form). The participant's wishes will govern whether informed consent is documented.
{45 CFR 46.117(c)(1)}

AND

- At the direction of the IRB, provide participants with a written statement regarding the research.
{45 CFR 46.117(c)}