FACING ATTRITION: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF EMERGING ADULT TEACHERS

IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

By

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Abstract

This multiple case study was conducted for the purpose of exploring the developmental readiness of emerging adult teachers in relation to teacher attrition. Introduction to the notion of development in relation to teacher readiness was explored specifically in response to the rate of attrition among emerging adult teachers and the overall decline in student achievement and the perpetuations of America's achievement and opportunity gaps. Consideration of readiness in respect to cognitive and psychological development were explored using the tenets of Jeffrey Arnett's theory of Emerging Adulthood with a total of six study participants.

Specifically, this study examined the impact of life decisions in relation to identity formation occurring between the ages of 18 and 29. With emerging adults being precariously and metaphorically affixed in a position of having one foot in adulthood and the other in adolescence, this study sought to reveal relevant factors that attributed to both the professional and personal identity of emerging adult teachers who had left the teaching profession. With the focus of this study providing a perspective for attrition- from a developmental perspective, it is hoped that the knowledge gained from this study will add to the further research and dialogue on attrition, and lead to further studies in the future focusing specifically in the area of developmental psychology.

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CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

A damaging trend plaguing the United States' Public Education System in the twenty-first century is teacher attrition. Teacher attrition is defined as "the percentage of teachers at a given level of education leaving the profession in a given school year" (Teacher attrition rate, 2017, para 1). It is an urgent challenge that exacerbates the decline of student achievement as well as quality instruction (Ingersoll, 2001). With educational leaders, policy makers, and statisticians estimating that approximately 44% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching (Ingersoll, Merrill, Stuckey, & Collins, 2018), this problematic trend presents a potentially relevant and immediate challenge to student learning.

With the level of teacher quality, competence, and knowledge among the highest of influences on a child's learning (Hattie, 2012), the argument for continued study of teacher attrition continues to be an important matter for scholars. The "revolving door" metaphor, referring to the annual influx of entering and departing teachers continues to lead researchers to examine organizational structures of education, pre-service training, policy, and staffing within the educational community. (Ingersoll, 2003). Education researchers pursue data to connect university level preparation programs and policy initiatives to uncover a defining source for retention of new teachers, specifically teachers who fall into the age bracket of twenty-two to twenty-nine years, emerging adulthood. The prevailing response of America's policy makers to this crisis, however, is to simply increase the supply of teachers through integrated policy and programming (Ingersoll, 2003). For example, the United States Department of Education's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was an initiative to bring highly-qualified teachers into U. S. classrooms. "If society seeks to strengthen school systems, they must begin by examining the issues that influence educators, as student outcomes are directly linked to teacher retention"

(Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003, p. 3). The research suggests that a closer examination of teacher needs for support is necessary for a holistic approach in regard to not only student achievement, but staff retention as well.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher attrition currently costs America 2.2 billion dollars annually (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). With approximately 500,000 teachers moving within or leaving the profession each year, the more pressing concern derived from statistical research is access to educational opportunities for America's elementary and secondary students (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2014), those students who are impacted the greatest by attrition are among the lowest socio-economic status (SES). With higher attrition rates of occurrence in low SES districts reported, opportunity gaps within these school districts only stand to perpetuate America's achievement gap. Furthermore, research indicates that schools with higher teacher attrition yield lower standardized achievement scores (Ingersoll, 2003).

Currently, students most affected by poor quality education, and specifically attrition, are those of racial minority groups, English language learners (ELL), students with disabilities, and students from low SES homes (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 1999). The achievement gaps are indicated through statewide testing data, lack of access to advanced educational programs within school curriculum, and failure rates in attaining high school diplomas and advanced degrees (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). Considering how teacher attrition impacts students, it is equally important to consider the impact it has within organizations and how organizations function when teachers leave.

The current study examined the root cause of attrition and the specific population of young adult teachers leaving the profession within the first five years of teaching. Emerging adults, those teachers in their early and mid-twenties, are the primary cohort of "leavers" in our education system (Lindqvist, Nordänger, & Carlsson, 2014). Arnett (2014) noted, "It is hard to choose a direction in work until you know yourself well enough to decide what you really want to do, and it takes many emerging adults until their mid-twenties to develop a clear identity" (p. 151). This study examined the impact of life decisions such as career and identity formation that occur during this time. With emerging adults in a developmental place between adolescence and adulthood, this age group remains affixed in a status of anticipation of what is to come in respect to both professional and personal fulfillment (Arnett, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived experiences of emerging adult teachers in conjunction with their psychosocial development as it relates to teacher attrition. Furthermore, this study sought to examine the developmental readiness of emerging adult teachers and their perceptions of maturity as it relates to their experiences with work, autonomy, and perceptions of efficacy.

Numerous factors affect a teacher's decision to stay or leave employment—high work demands, low salary, lack of administrative support, poor school culture, inadequate resources, and the broad range of student behavior (Sass, Flores, Claeys, & Pérez, 2012). This study sought to reveal the psychosocial developmental factors that couple with the phenomenon of teacher attrition. Specific focus was on those emerging adult teachers leaving within the first five years of their teaching careers. In addition, since little research considers the developmental readiness of the young teacher, specifically in consideration of social and cognitive development, this

study also sought to illuminate the perceptions of young adults in emerging adulthood who have made the decision to teach and subsequently left the profession (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

Young adulthood is categorized as the age range between nineteen and thirty-five years old, according to Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 1998). This is a period of substantial growth defined by significant transitions that provide constructs that support the foundation of a person's life. Closer examination of this developmental shift leads to the notion that "there is now a longer road to adulthood" (Arnett, 2014, p. 1). Despite leaving home in their late teens, many young adults do not establish or ground themselves in their adult lives until they are as old as twenty-nine. This theory, in the face of obligatory and institutional duties charged to teachers, suggests that despite perceptions of maturation of the college graduate teacher candidates, levels of psychological development and autonomy may be lacking in the face of professional realities and expectations for classroom management, efficacy, and level of commitment (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

Self-efficacy and values are being established and strengthened during this growth period. It is an intensely self-reflective period where one's moral compass is finding a direction, while divergent paths are being pondered in regard to life, love, and work (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016). Thus, role identification and sense of self is often obscured in relation to self-discovery and building of efficacy. Albert Bandura (1994) defines "Perceived self-efficacy as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave" (p. 71). In relation to the current study, this concept bridges the idea of one's capacity to implement behaviors necessary for successful completion given a task or goal to one's level of motivation (Bandura, Adams, & Beyer, 1977).

Actualization of self-efficacy permits one to self-actualize or commit to goal-oriented tasks. Development of efficacy determines one's level of educational attainment and success professional and personally (Öztaş & Dilmac, 2009).

Implications of the theories presented by both Arnett and Bandura drove this study to examine the elements associated with attrition rates of emerging adult teachers. With the idea of self-efficacy in relation to perceptions of ability, Bandura's theory of self-efficacy is embedded within Arnett's framework. For this study, data was discerned using Arnett's tenets of emerging adulthood: identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling-in-between, and optimism (Arnett, 2014).

Research Questions

Primary Question:

What are the perceptions of lived experiences of emerging adult teachers who leave teaching within five years?

Sub-questions:

- What is the connection between developmental maturation and teacher attrition in emerging adult teachers?
- What attributes are associated with teacher readiness?
- What attributes impact developmental maturation in emerging adult teachers?

Significance of Study

Arnett (2000, 2013, 2014, 2016) describes emerging adulthood to be a time of identity seeking directly associating with work identity. Different from previous generations, Arnett suggests (Figure 1) emerging adults are not motivated by monetary compensation, but rather by work that is an expansion of themselves, to fit well with their interests and abilities, to be

something they find satisfying and enjoyable, while doing some good in the world (Arnett, 2014). Arguably, this developmental time is a time of immense hope coupled with hard realities, leading to significant feelings of instability (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016). Emerging adults engaging in their identity explorations from the ages of eighteen to roughly twenty-nine years of age "know that they are supposed to have a plan with a capital 'P', but quickly come to realize that their plans need revisions" (Arnett, 2014, p. 11). With such significant expectations for fulfilling professional experiences and arbitrary goals of professional or monetary success being placed upon emerging adults through personal, socio-cultural, or familial influences, often times ideals fall short of envisioned expectations.
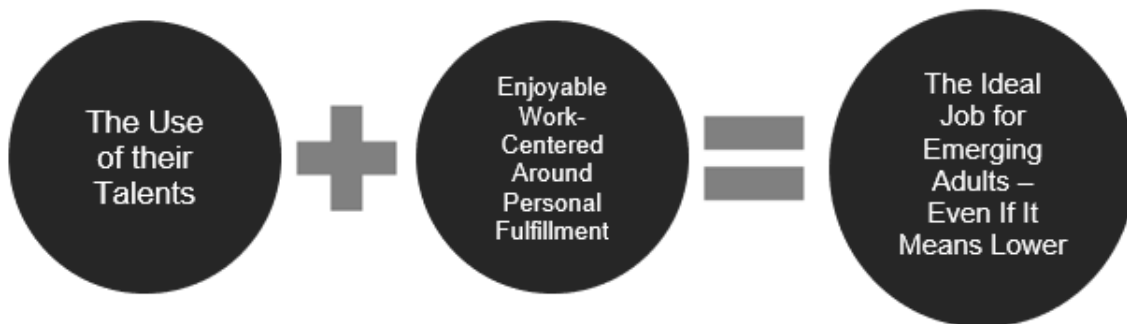
Figure 1. Equation of emerging adult motivation.

Arnett's research supports the analysis that emerging adults seek, above all, to find meaning and fulfillment (Clark University, 2015). Implications of psychological development coupled with the pursuit to find meaning and satisfaction, along with one's perceptions of adulthood quantifiers, often compound this period significantly in a young adult's life. Although traditional markers such as financial independence, autonomy in decision-making as well as social and career status are strong indicators that lead one to feel "adult," perception of self and comparison to others play an intricate role in establishing one's identity (Bandura et al., 1977).

"Traditional markers of adulthood, including marriage, parenthood, financial independence, and home ownership have become increasingly elusive to many young adults in the United States" (Lowe, Dillon, Rhodes, & Zwiebach, 2013, p.31). During this stage in which there is a gradual gaining of autonomy, emerging adults perceive themselves as feeling lost between adolescence and adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016). Although Arnett (2000) has rejected the premise of emerging adulthood to be a transitional period, this demarcated time embraces self-exploration. Arnett contends that this time in one's life is a distinct developmental period of psychosocial growth. He suggests that his theory has evolved from the historical and societal shifts of the past few decades. Emerging adults are seeking to find meaning and purpose, delaying settling down in favor of educational and professional exploration. Arnett's theory of emerging adulthood is tied to a larger societal movement, specifically in reference to trends in marriage, family planning, and work preferences. With the median age of marriage climbing to twenty-eight years of age for women and thirty years old for men, statistics show that marriage, in general, is occurring four to six years later on average for Americans since the year 2000 (US Census, 2020). Society's shifting perspective of role-relations, perceptions, and even the subjective meaning of adulthood in flux all have a great impact on emerging adults; the current study explored each of these elements in an effort to understand their potential impact on teacher attrition (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009).

Development from adolescence to adulthood highlights changes in roles and identification that are not only behavioral, but emotional, hormonal, and cognitive in nature. Brain development during one's twenties, during emerging adulthood, is an ongoing process, that primarily take place in the frontal lobe (Lebel & Beaulieu, 2011). Transition into young adulthood intensifies in a person's late twenties as the prefrontal cortex—the part of the brain

responsible for rational judgement and long-term consequences—matures fully ("Understanding the Teen Brain," n.d.).

Researchers have demonstrated "that adult and teen brains work differently. Adults think with the prefrontal cortex, the brain's rational part which responds to situations with sound judgment and an awareness of long-term consequences. Teens process information with the amygdala. This is the emotional part" ("Understanding the Teen Brain,"n.d.). Such understanding of neuroscience in relation to development further lends context to Arnett's theory. Emerging adults are developmentally situated in a place where decision making is derived from a less rational perspective, with an inability to fully consider implications of long-term consequences. Additionally, studies in neuroscience have produced neuroimaging results that indicate brain development occurs well into a person's twenties. Research further indicates that an individual's brain development is unique and has thus "prompted intense interest in linking neuromaturation to maturity of judgment" (Johnson, Blum, & Giedd, 2009, para.1). Connections between neuroscience and developmental maturation remain sparse in research however. "Ultimately, the goal is to be able to articulate the conditions under which adolescents' competence, or demonstrated maturity, is most vulnerable and most resilient" (Johnson et al., 2009, para. 31) . Such findings could uncover implications for further theory development as it pertains to emerging adults and their quest toward maturation.

With consideration of such research provided in regard to brain development and role identification, attaining a direction or purpose in one's early twenties can leave emerging adults feeling lost with a sense of floundering. "It is hard to choose a direction in work until you know yourself well enough to decide what you really want to do, and it takes many emerging adults until their mid-twenties to develop their clear identity" (Arnett, 2014, p.179). More so, college —

a preparatory "safe haven" for identity exploration — provides emerging adults with an

environment where one can transform themselves. Transformation comes through varied social

experiences, classroom learning, and living more autonomous lifestyles (Arnett, 2016).

Arnett's research further contends that "more than one in four emerging adults say their

jobs are unrelated to the fields in which they received education or training, while

simultaneously feeling that their educational backgrounds have helped them hone soft skills,

while leaving them not as well-prepared for specific career skills" (Clark University, 2015).

Additionally significant to the current study, Arnett's work determined that "Emerging adults

across the board feel well-prepared for understanding their relationships and responsibilities in

the world, but feel less confident about the technical aspects of life—like personal finances and

civic duties" (Clark University, 2015). With inconsistency in education preparation in relation to

job practice, data highlights perceptions of emerging adults who feel disappointed in regard to

opportunities provided during collegiate pre-service opportunities (Figure 2).
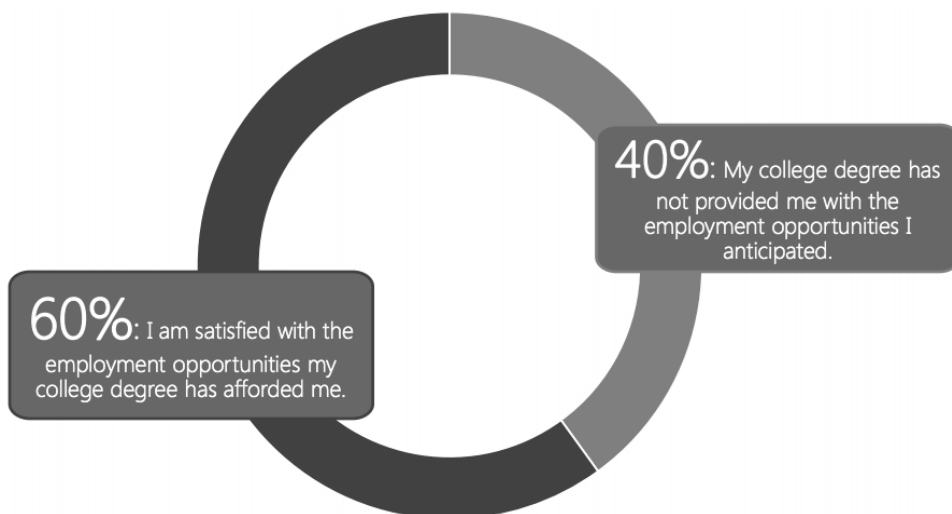
Figure 2. Pre-service opportunities.

Theoretical Perspective

This study was informed by the literature and theories related to the understanding of psychosocial development through the frame of Arnett's emerging adulthood theory. Emerging adulthood is a stage of development consisting of five main tenets, each of which were reviewed in the course of this study to evaluate the perceptions of participants. The five main tenets are:

- Identity exploration

- Instability

- Self-focus

- Feeling in-between

- Optimism (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

Individuals in emerging adulthood demonstrate each of these factors to some extent. With one foot metaphorically in adolescence and the other in adulthood, feelings of instability ensue for emerging adults. Emerging adults are exploring varying possibilities for work and love. Moreover, the rate of residential moves for emerging adults is significantly higher than any other period in life (Arnett 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016). While some emerging adults are moving away from their family home for the first time for college, others are moving out in search of feelings of independence (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). Exploration persists throughout emerging adulthood with a myriad of decisions. The intense self-focus of this time is normative and healthy, enabling the development of skills for adaptability and daily living while simultaneously gaining an understanding of who one is, who they want to be, and what they want out of life (Arnett 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

Emerging adults examine themselves during this developmental time and optimistically envision futures that could include well-paying jobs, happiness, strong relationships, life-long

marriages, and children. Despite harsh realities that will come to affect many of them: divorce, disappointing careers, and failure, remain elusive from thought. Emerging adulthood is a time of optimism, where one's stories have yet to be written. Despite feelings of apprehension and normative anxiety, it is an exploratory time (Arnett 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

Arnett's emerging adulthood theory exists under cultural construction of developed countries, in part by the rise in age at marriage and parenthood since the mid-twentieth century. Further discernment of data suggests "that for the average college graduate, it will take four years to find a job that will last five years or more" (Arnett, 2014, p. 173). Additionally, "the average American holds eight different jobs between the ages of 18 and 29" (US Department of Labor, 2012). Such data highlights the instability factor, as well as identity exploration that Arnett's emerging adulthood theory designates to emerging adults. Emerging adulthood is discriminated as a time of relationship and professional exploration, when struggles with uncertainty persist in response to the full weight of adult responsibilities (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

For the purpose of this study, Arnett's theoretical lens was employed as a means to evaluate the perspective, perceptions, and lived experiences of the study participants who have left teaching during the stage of emerging adulthood.

Research Design Overview

The research approach utilized for this study was a qualitative analysis using the case study method. Case study is used to "Investigate a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and its real-world context" (Yin, 2018, p. 286). A case study is appropriate for this study because it is a way of illustrating relevant experiences of a population of people while exploring the concept of meaning construction to impart understanding of lived experiences. Although case study research

is not quantitative in nature —to apply definitive connections to theory—use of this design allowed for focus and possible further contexts of study in which a hypothesis may be developed. Subsequently, the crux of this methodology is "an all-encompassing methodology" (Yin, 2014, p. 17), designed to enhance understanding of context within a phenomenon, supported by contextual perceptions and lived experiences (Yin, 2014).

Definition of Key Terms

Teacher readiness:

According to Baker (2005), teacher readiness is defined as a combination of one's ability and willingness to participate in doing a job. Teachers, can be considered "more-ready" or competent at classroom instruction when able to effectively create a supportive environment for all students with confidence in their engagement with students.

Teacher Attrition:

Teacher attrition refers to the percentage of teachers that leave the teaching profession ("Teacher attrition rate," 2017).

Teacher Retention:

1. Ability to reduce teacher mobility and provide a more stable learning conditions in schools

2. Teachers remaining in the field of education

3. The rate at which new teachers remain in the profession.

(IGI Global, n.d..)

Student Achievement:

Student achievement refers to the performance outcomes as exemplified through various academic indicators such as grades and standardized test scores. "Academic achievement represents performance outcomes that indicate the extent to which a person has accomplished

specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environments, specifically in school, college, and university" (Steinmayr, Meibner, Weidinger, & Wirthein, 2017).

Achievement Gap:

The achievement gap refers to the ongoing and persistent discrepancy or gap that exists between groups of students and their performance outcomes as indicated on standardized achievement tests. The achievement gap is a term given to the disproportionate disparity among groups of learners differentiated by socio-economic status, race, and overall access to quality educational opportunities (Partnership, 2013).

Phenomenon:

For the purpose of this study, the phenomena being studied is teacher attrition in emerging adult teachers. A phenomenon is an observable event that occurs in science, nature, and in social contexts that causes attention for study to disclose meaning (LDOCE, n.d.).

Socio-economic Status (SES):

Socioeconomic status refers to the class of an individual or group. It can be determined by a combination of education, income and occupation. The study of socio-economic status among varying classes often reveals inequitable access to educational opportunities and community resources ("Socioeconomic Status," n.d.).

English Language Learners (ELL):

English language learners (ELLs) are students who come from non-English speaking homes, who are not able to communicate fluently in the English language at school. ELLs require specialized instruction to accommodate language barriers as to not hinder their academic instruction or academic growth (Partnership, 2013).

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB):

This legislation enacted by Congress in 2002, was the primary law for grades kindergarten through twelfth in public education in the United States from 2002–2015. The intent of this law was to hold schools accountable for how kids learned and achieved. Those schools unable to show improvement in learning measured by standardized testing scores, were penalized. The goal of this law was to make education more equitable for all American students. It was an attempt to close the achievement gap (Lee, n.d.)

Self-Efficacy

The idea of self-efficacy refers to how one perceives their own capabilities in regard to performing a task. People's beliefs about their efficacy directly relate to their level of motivation and accomplishment (Bandura, 1994).

Self-Actualize

The achievement of one's full potential. One becomes self- actualized when they have met their full potential ("The definition of self-actualization," n.d.)

CHAPTER TWO. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this review of literature is to better understand the psychosocial development of the emerging adult new teacher and teacher attrition in the United States. The literature presented in this chapter explores not only the complex and dynamic facets that influence teacher attrition, but also investigates a relatively untapped area of study relating to the cognitive and psychological development of new teachers who are in the emerging adult stage of development. Research has historically identified reasons for attrition of new teachers, including the contributing variables of age, gender, race, teacher assignment, teacher preparation, and framework for pre-service teachers (Ingersoll, 2001). Focal perspective for this study however examined the developmental readiness of emerging adults entering the teaching profession using Jeffrey Arnett's Emerging Adulthood Theory as an analytic framework. This study sought to unveil the perceptions of young teachers in regard to their lived experiences as they pertain to their classroom experience, their perceived level of self-efficacy, and most importantly their perceptions of developmental readiness.

Attrition

History

In the 1980's the problem of teacher attrition was brought to the forefront of the educational community as a valid topic of concern for contemporary educational theorists and researchers. Ingersoll (2001), suggests that with a lens directed to our country's failure to provide adequate staffing in both elementary and secondary classrooms, the cost of attrition is pronounced. Empirical analysis provides evidence that not only teacher characteristics and disposition are factors in the phenomenon of attrition, but age is strongly related to attrition as well (Ingersoll, 2001).

The United States Department of Education asserts that among those teachers leaving the profession, forty-six percent leave within the first five years of teaching, while in urban districts, more than fifty percent of beginning teachers quit in less than three years (Gray & Taie, 2015). Currently, ninety percent of teacher shortages in the United States are not attributed to retirement, but rather two-thirds of these leavers are doing so in favor of another profession due to a level a dissatisfaction in teaching. This statistic is nearly two times the level of attrition that "high-achieving jurisdictions such as Finland, Singapore, and Ontario, Canada" (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

To confound this phenomenon, data shows that new teachers who scored in a higher percentage on college entrance exams are twice as likely to quit in comparison to their peers who scored in a lower range (Hanushek et al. 2016). These figures also exhibit that attrition rates, presented on a continuum, follow a "u-shaped curve" with young teachers and those approaching retirement among the most susceptible to attrition (Ingersoll, 2001). Further data presented in a longitudinal study from the U.S. Department of Education of beginning teachers in 2007–08 provide the following findings: "10 percent of starting teachers in 2007-2008 did not teach in 2008–09, 12 percent of the 2007-2008 cohort did not teach in 2009–10, 15 percent did not teach in 2010–11, and 17 percent of the cohort did not teach in 2011–12" (Gray & Taie, 2015).

Notwithstanding the educational cost of attrition, the financial implications of attrition are quite extensive, "costing districts of upwards of 2.2 billion dollars a year" (Phillips, 2015). With roughly six to ten teachers on average each year replacing their departing colleagues, and urban districts reporting expenditures upwards of $20,000 to supply new hires, it is clear that attrition is taxing both our nation's access to quality education as well as costing us financially. Struyven & Vanthournouts' (2014) investigative study into the reasons why newly qualified teachers fail to

enter the teaching profession, or why those that enter leave within a short time, reports findings

that indicate that teacher attrition is not only high for newly certified teachers, but is also

increasing for those teachers approaching retirement. Furthermore, with the nearly fifty percent

departure rate of new teachers annually, policy makers have turned focus to this educational

phenomenon in respect to its effects on the growth of our nation's youngest minds, with

additional implications in regard to participation in our global markets ("What's the Cost of

Teacher Turnover?," 2017).

Research suggests a myriad of elucidations for attrition among teachers, with much focus

of research being based on young, new teachers in their first five years of teaching. Such

research presented is commonly grounded in rational choice, self-efficacy, or organizational

theories, with additional research examining labor markets, qualifications, overall job

satisfaction, feelings of competence and efficacy, and fit between teachers and their placements

to explain why teachers leave (Vagi & Pivovarova, 2016). While the highest rates of attrition

come within the first two years of being in the classroom, the period coined as the "survival

period" (Day & Gu, 2010), attrition is becoming more prevalent among more experienced

teachers as well (Vagi & Pivovarova, 2017). Attrition rates in the U.S. have currently amplified

to the point where more teachers choose to leave the profession, than remain in the classroom

until retirement age (Glazer, 2018).

Research further presents a negative impact on students who are considered high risk, as

well as schools classified as low performing, typically in urban settings, that serve low-income

students (Borland & Howsen, 1999; Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Felsher, (2010).

Among these students are those who are poor and are considered a minority due to their racial

and economic status. Teacher attrition not only impacts the continuity of learning and quality of

instruction provided to these students, but attrition negatively affects many collegial aspects of teaching; professional development, curriculum planning and development, and professional collaboration among staff (Guin, 2004). "Having an effective teacher can dramatically alter students' educational and economic outcomes" (Adnot, Dee, Katz, & Wyckoff, 2017). This growing phenomenon distinguishes a significant correlation between attrition and the socio-cultural achievement gap.

In consideration of such a causal factor to student success, "chronic turnover also negatively impacts a school's culture increasing student disciplinary problems and principal turnover" ("Teacher Turnover Impact," 2019). In addition, the varying costs and negativity that have become synonymous with this trend—such as loss of colleagues, decline in morale, and fiscal expenditures afforded to professional development of new teachers—attrition has continued to afflict the public education system over the past 30 years (Latifoglu, 2016). Systematic evaluative studies have examined the phenomenon, and have led researchers to review the following areas as they relate to attrition: age, gender, race, teacher assignment, school level, and school type (Sass, Flores, Claeys, & Pérez, 2012).

In the search for strategies to retain good teachers, researchers have explored the personal attributes of new teachers to seek to define the problem facing the U.S. system and level of attrition. Through a two-fold quantitative study by Sass, Flores, Claeys, & Pérez (2012), coded data was utilized to determine common trends associated with teacher attrition in relation to personal attributes and school related variables. Consequently, data retrieved was processed using survival analysis in an endeavor to determine the qualities indicative of teacher retention. Results determined that a person's age is a definitive predictor of attrition in the public-school system. Higher attrition rates are attributed to both new teachers in their twenties, those teachers

with less than five years of experience, and older teachers. Retirement in older teachers accounts

for twelve percent of attrition, whereas thirty-seven percent of new teachers leave within the first

five years on the job.

Sass, Flores, Claeys, and Perez's (2012) quantitative work sought to identify the personal

and contextual factors that contribute to attrition rates. Specifically, their study searched to

ascertain those teachers and school characteristics that are influential in teacher attrition.

Utilizing the Texas Education Agency database records from 1988 to 2010, Sass et al. (2012)

considered variables of their study such as gender, ethnicity, age, tenure, base salary, and

teaching assignment. Coded data was linked to school district characteristics, which included

content area, school district, school type, and testing. Among their research on age, results

suggest that female teachers, who outnumber their male counterparts, are more likely to leave the

profession. Males are more likely to stay within the profession only to move into a leadership

role or role of authority (Sass et al., 2012).

Age

A closer look at the cause for new teacher departure as it relates to age draws light on the

reality that like other occupations involving the care of others, teachings falls into the realm of

being an "emotional labor" (Latifoglu, 2016). In this qualitative work, Latifoglu focused research

on participants' perceptions, comprehension, and explanations of the experienced discernments

of the world and their immersion in it. Through structured, open-ended interview questions,

given to forty-one beginning teachers—all with under three years of experience—Latifoglu

examined results using a maximum variation sampling strategy. Data yielded that unexpected

responsibilities associated to behavior management, personal safety, and heavy workload,

coupled with a varying degree of administrative duties being thrust upon a new teacher, all while

working to effectively impact and form connections to their students, can be crippling to sustainability and endurance. Although initial expectations from new teachers involved significant responsibilities and workload, errant student behavior coupled with the aforementioned are often reported as greatly affecting the work–life balance (Latifoglu, 2016).

Gender

In regard to the study of gender, and its impact on attrition, teaching has been and continues to be, a female dominated career. Traditional historiography presents the schoolmarm as the ever-present figurehead in American classrooms. Today, one-fourth of all new teachers in American classrooms are male (Haberman, 2012). Teaching has long been regarded as a temporary or interim career, especially in consideration of gender. It was a career that came before motherhood for women, and for men it was a stepping stone to administrative leadership roles (Sass et al., 2012). Recent demographics show that of the teachers in the United States, 76.3% are female, and 23.7% are male. The median age of teachers in practice is forty-one years of age, while 15.3% of teachers are under the age of thirty years old ("Schools and Staffing Survey [SASS]," 2016).

The 2015-2016 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) from the U.S. Department of Education estimates that there are 3.8 million public school teachers currently in practice in the U.S. Of the teachers, about 3.6 million presently work in a traditional public school setting, while approximately 218,500—six percent—teach in charter schools (Loewus, 2017). Table 1 presents an amalgamation of data, arranged by state outlining teacher age, experience, and gender ("Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)," 2016).

Table 1

Distribution Table

State	Average age of teachers	Median age of teachers	Age category				Sex	
			Less than 30 years	30–49 years	50–54 years	55 years or more	Male	Female
United States	42.4	41.0	15.3	54.0	11.9	18.8	23.7	76.3
Alabama	41.9	40.6	15.6	56.1	11.5	16.7	16.6	83.4
Alaska	43.2	42.8	15.7	50.3	12.4 !	21.7	26.5	73.5
Arizona	41.8	39.9	19.5	49.1	11.3	20.1	21.1	78.9
Arkansas	42.7	41.7	17.9	47.2	15.3	19.6	22.0	78.0
California	44.5	43.1	9.1	54.5	12.6	23.7	27.4	72.6
Colorado	41.1	39.4	15.5	59.8	9.1	15.7	23.7	76.3
Connecticut	43.4	41.5	13.7	52.5	10.7	23.1	22.1	77.9
Delaware	40.3	39.6	22.5	53.3	11.4	12.8	24.4	75.6
District of Columbia	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡
Florida	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡
Georgia	42.1	40.6	11.5	60.9	11.5	16.1	23.3	76.7
Hawaii	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡
Idaho	43.8	42.6	14.4	48.0	14.1	23.5	25.4	74.6
Illinois	40.8	38.7	19.0	53.8	10.4	16.9	26.2	73.8
Indiana	42.6	40.8	17.8	46.7	12.2	23.4	22.8	77.2
Iowa	42.0	41.1	15.2	53.4	13.9	17.5	25.9	74.1
Kansas	41.6	40.3	21.3	48.9	10.5	19.3	23.3	76.7
Kentucky	41.0	39.2	16.2	60.3	9.3	14.2	22.2	77.8
Louisiana	42.4	41.3	15.4	54.3	10.1	20.2	19.3	80.7
Maine	45.7	45.7	10.8	47.5	14.6	27.1	24.6	75.4
Maryland	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡
Massachusetts	42.4	40.8	17.5	50.7	9.5	22.2	22.8	77.2
Michigan	41.8	40.2	12.6	61.6	12.5	13.3	26.5	73.5
Minnesota	42.5	41.3	14.7	54.8	11.9	18.5	29.6	70.4
Mississippi	41.0	38.9	19.8	52.5	8.4	19.3	15.5	84.5
Missouri	40.0	37.9	21.1	55.8	10.1	13.0	21.9	78.1
Montana	43.9	42.8	12.9	50.6	13.0	23.5	25.6	74.4
Nebraska	42.1	41.6	17.7	51.7	16.2	14.4	23.8	76.2
Nevada	43.2	41.8	10.8 !	57.4	15.9	15.9	28.5	71.5
New Hampshire	45.7	46.0	13.5	45.7	12.9	27.9	24.4	75.6
New Jersey	41.7	40.1	17.7	51.8	13.2	17.3	21.8	78.2
New Mexico	45.6	45.3	5.6 !	53.9	16.3	24.2	20.8	79.2
New York	42.5	41.2	14.4	56.8	11.9	16.9	23.3	76.7
North Carolina	41.7	40.3	19.3	52.2	11.4	17.0	21.1	78.9
North Dakota	43.4	43.4	18.6	44.7	12.6	24.1	27.3	72.7
Ohio	42.0	40.7	14.9	56.4	9.9	18.9	26.5	73.5
Oklahoma	43.0	40.9	13.6	53.7	11.6	21.2	22.0	78.0
Oregon	43.5	41.8	10.3	56.4	13.1	20.3	27.5	72.5
Pennsylvania	41.3	40.1	16.3	57.7	10.8	15.3	28.5	71.5
Rhode Island	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡
South Carolina	42.2	40.7	16.8	52.3	12.1	18.8	17.5	82.5
South Dakota	43.1	41.8	16.3	49.7	12.8	21.3	23.0	77.0
Tennessee	42.2	40.1	17.7	49.1	15.0	18.3	20.6	79.4
Texas	42.3	40.9	15.0	55.1	11.2	18.8	22.4	77.6
Utah	42.0	41.5	24.5	41.0	16.0	18.6	25.4	74.6
Vermont	46.3	46.9	10.7	44.6	16.1	28.6	23.7	76.3
Virginia	43.6	43.2	13.8	50.4	15.0	20.8	21.0	79.0
Washington	45.1	44.1	9.7	50.8	13.5	26.0	27.5	72.5
West Virginia	43.5	43.8	16.1	46.1	15.2	22.6	25.4	74.6
Wisconsin	41.6	41.3	17.6	55.5	13.8	13.1	23.5	76.5
Wyoming	44.7	43.2	11.4	50.7	12.6	25.3	31.1	68.9

! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 percent and 50 percent (i.e., the standard error is at least 30 percent and less than 50 percent of the estimate).
‡ Reporting standards not met. The response rate is below 50 percent.
NOTE: Teachers include both full-time and part-time teachers. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

Race

A look at race in relation to teaching in the United States paints a muted picture

demographically. Aside from being a predominantly female profession, the face of education is

predominantly White (Sass et al., 2012); such homogeneity of education is depicted in Figure 3.
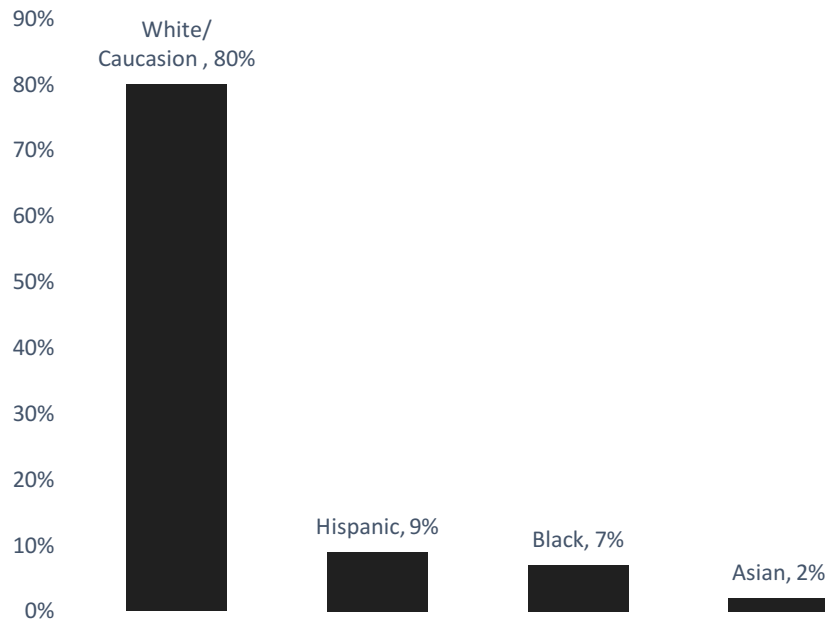
Figure 3. Race demographics of teachers in the United States.

Correspondingly, through deeper ethnological study, race and diversity among new

teachers play a statistically significant consequence on education survival in professional

practice. Data indicates that "White teachers are at the greatest risk of leaving the profession"

(Sass et al., p.17, 2012). Furthermore, studies have shown that Hispanic and African-American

teachers have lower attrition rates than their White counterparts. Moreover, the correlational

scrutinization of data further indicates that young, White teachers are leaving those schools most

in need. Those schools that fell at higher risk of not reaching their Annual Yearly Progress

(AYP) saw higher attrition rates than higher performing schools (Sass et al., 2012).

Research supports the notion that White teachers gravitate toward higher-performing school districts, as opposed to African-American and Hispanic teachers, who tend to work in lower-performing school districts (Sass et al., 2012). The rate of attrition of young, White teachers notably affects employment, recruitment, and staff culture, but attrition in lower performing school districts—most often in urban poverty sectors—has also been found to hold implications for the continuity of education for students themselves (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015).

Research suggests that considerable social and cultural competency training in U.S. pre-service programs would benefit the educational training received by pre-service teachers (Howard, 2016). "Acknowledging the reality of White racism in individual, institutional, and cultural manifestations, in congruence with the act of rejecting racism, and development of positive, anti-racist authentic connections to racial identities would lend itself to benefit not only pre-service teachers, but the students they serve" (pp.93-94). By fostering the disintegration of preconceived racial identities and coaching teacher candidates in a transformationalist approach to race, university institutions can work on dismantling racism within America's White-dominant education system (Howard, 2016).

Attrition rates in the U.S. has currently amplified to the point where more teachers choose to leave the profession, than remain in the classroom until retirement age (Glazer, 2018). While the highest rates of attrition come within the first two years of being in the classroom, the period coined as the "survival period" (Day & Gu, para. 6, 2010), attrition is becoming more prevalent among more experienced teachers as well (Vagi & Pivovarova, 2017).

Research submits a myriad of elucidations for attrition among teachers. Much focus of said work is based on those young new teachers in their survival periods, with a majority of

research grounded in "rational choice, self-efficacy, or organizational theories, examining labor markets, qualifications, overall job satisfaction, feelings of competence and efficacy, and fit between teachers and their placements to explain why teachers leave"(Vagi & Pivovarova, 2016).

Teacher Assignment, School Level, and School Type

In a mixed methods study, by Sutherland, Howard, and Markauskaite (2010), where the aim was to study the transition of pre-service teachers into their role of lead classroom teacher, results were evaluated from qualitative and quantitative input provided by participants. Reflections were based on perceptions of their self as teachers as well as their level of comfort with pedagogy, school climate, and professional identity. A focused coding scheme was utilized to investigate the development of teacher voice in candidates as they navigate through the process of pre-service teaching.

With the transition from pre-service to classroom teacher, the aforementioned study highlighted the complexity of such a transformative process, underscoring the significance of development of teacher voice and efficacy of the new teacher. Those teachers whose primary focus is mathematics, science, and special education were prone to higher likelihood of attrition. In addition, those teachers in the cited areas of practice, and those who teach at the secondary school level are more susceptible to attrition than their colleagues. Within elementary schools, however, young, White teachers represent the primary attrition group (Sutherland, et al., 2010).

The school context and environment play a dynamic indicator of attrition in the United States. From teacher assignment to school type, a significant area of consideration is how all factors, when calculated and amalgamated, affect the overall system of education (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). With lack of sustained, committed, and quality new teachers, the U.S. system is

falling prey to a lower quality of education and in turn lower academic achievement (Sass et al., 2012).

Teacher Preparation Programs

In Deborah Britzman's (2003) *Practice makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning How to Teach,* Britzman states that "the education of teachers has become one of the greatest anxieties of the Twentieth Century" (p.2). The study of teacher education continues to remain in the forefront of the scholarly discussion of education in America and the attrition rate of its teachers. With a renewed focus on the practice of teaching as a means to prepare teachers, the college preparatory system and teacher preparation programs are placing emphasis on more practitioner models for pre-service teacher preparation. University systems are reorganizing their respective teacher preparatory programs to include teacher candidate participation in organizational structuring and policies, content and curriculum, and the pedagogy of their programming (Britzman, 2003).

Framework Pre-service Teacher

University systems such as the University of Washington have strived to develop a level of coherence between the structural and conceptual modalities of their programming. The implementation of a pre-service curriculum based in theoretical and reflective practice, with practical or experiential learning opportunities, remains a fledgling goal in the preparation of twenty-first century teachers. With a push toward a teaching to learn model, scholars at the University of Washington are in turn restructuring their program pedagogy to accommodate core practice for K-12 teaching. It is not without a fundamental shift in mindset, however. The pre-service teachers are now becoming the drivers of learning in the college classroom (Britzman, 2003). With this shift, it is the hope that the "revolving door" of new teachers in the workplace

will progressively decline. Broadly spoken and resonated through the classrooms, universities, and policy makers' offices in America is that "there is an urgent need to be able to supply teachers ready for the demands of educating [the] nation's youth" (Loewenberg Ball & Forzani, 2009).

Amid the idea and implementation of practical and reflective learning opportunities being granted to pre-service teachers, the suggestion of resiliency as a teaching tool is being merited and promoted within the education community (Greenfield, 2015). With an average of 50,000 teachers leaving the profession each year, a young teacher's level of resiliency must be considered as it directly pertains to one's ability to commit to the profession and deal with the stressors of their work (Glazer, 2018). Resiliency, perseverance, and reflective practice are not unattainable qualities to instill in the new, young teacher, but attainment of these characteristics must be nurtured through significant support systems for new teachers, administrative encouragement, as well as development of professional relationships designed to mentor and sponsor new teacher efficacy (Greenfield, 2015). Personal and general efficacy are strong indicative factors that influence teacher attrition. Using this as a basis for argument, the need for pre-service support and training, must address the development of adequate support systems (Coladarci, 1992).

Development

When considering the idea of teacher readiness, it is logical to deliberate the developmental growth and age of the teacher candidate. Adult development and developmental success are influential factors when considering predictors of attrition in teaching. The characteristics of young adulthood, have been described by developmental psychologist Erikson as a point of psychological crisis where one faces a conflict of intimacy versus isolation.

Preceding this conflict, one battles and evaluates their sense of self and identity. This stage is

known as identity versus identity confusion. It is a developmental time where morality is formed

through reflection of personal values, beliefs, ethical commitments, and goals (Erikson, 1968;

Sacco, 2013).

Additional consideration provided through Erikson's theory of development (Table 2)

places young adulthood at the crux of identity development where one cultivates their evaluation

of their personal racial identity (Erikson's Psychosocial Stages Summary," n.d.). "It is important

for each of us to understand our own position and level of development as well as level of

awareness of race" (Howard, p. 90, 2016). Race itself is a derivative of the constructs of social

interaction and learned behavior that can be communicated through our actions (Howard, 2016).

Table 2

Erikson's Stages of Development

Stage	Basic Conflict	Important Events	Key Questions to be answered	Outcome
Infancy (0 to 18 months)	Trust vs. Mistrust	Feeding/ Comfort	Is my world safe?	Children develop a sense of trust when caregivers provide reliability, care and affection. A lack of this will lead to mistrust.
Early Childhood (2 to 3)	Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt	Toilet Training/ Dressing	Can I do things by myself or need I always rely on others?	Children need to develop a sense of personal control over physical skills and a sense of independence. Success leads to feeling of autonomy, failure results in feelings of shame and doubt.
Preschool (3 to 5)	Initiative vs. Guilt	Exploration/ Play	Am I good or bad?	Children need to begin asserting control and power over the environment. Success in this state leads to a sense of purpose. Children who try to exert too much power experience disapproval, resulting in a sense of guilt.
School Age (6 to 11)	Industry vs. Inferiority	School/ Activities	How can I be good?	Children need to cope with new social and academic demands. Success leads to a sense of competence, while failure results in feeling of inferiority.
Adolescence (12 to 18)	Identity vs. Role Confusion	Social Relationships/ Identity	Who am I and where am I going?	Teens need to develop a sense of self and personal identity. Success leads to an ability to stay true to yourself, while failure leads to role confusion and a weak sense of self.
Young Adult (19 to 40)	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Intimate Relationships	Am I loved and wanted?	Young adults need to form intimate, loving relationships with other people. Success leads to strong relationships, while failure results in loneliness and isolation.
Middle Adulthood (40 to 65)	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Work and Parenthood	Will I provide something of real value?	Adults need to create or nurture things that will outlast them, often by having children or creating a positive change that benefits other people. Success leads to feelings of usefulness and accomplishment, while failure results in shallow involvement in the world.
Maturity (65 to death)	Ego Identity vs. Despair	Reflection on life	Have I lived a full life?	Older adults need to look back on life and feel a sense of fulfillment. Success at this state leads to a feeling of wisdom, while failure results in regret, bitterness, and despair.

Arnett, who builds upon Erikson's theory of young adulthood through his research of teens and young adults, categorizes this subgroup of those in their late teens to mid- and late twenties as "emerging adults" (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016). Conclusion of his research in regard to culture and perspective of this developmental group suggests that socialization and cultural beliefs provide foundation for all decision making, essentially what builds a person's moral compass (Arnett, 2013).

In the assessment of adult-development, it is essential to investigate empirical and theoretical literature to devise an understanding of the developmental traits of a young adult entering the teaching profession and not to dismiss the foundational developmental philosophies and works as such notable theorists as Erikson, Piaget, and Freud. It is also vital to distinguish that age ranges of development do not necessarily signify the literal or concrete shift in the developmental growth of an individual, but rather serve as a guide or frame to outline a particular time period in a person's life (Scales, Bensen, Oesterle, Hill, Hawkins, & Pashak, 2016).

It is valuable to note in relation to this study that ninety percent of new teachers are trained during the period of emerging adulthood, a time noted by sociologists and theorists as a period of intense self-reflection and self- absorption, amidst yearning for freedom and exploration (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016; Haberman, 2012). Through Haberman's exploratory qualitative study designed to examine the reflective perceptions of new teachers in their roles, two hundred seventy first-year teachers responded through a computer mediated communication study to contemplate their perceptions of their identities as teachers. Results of Haberman's work were coded through a developed cognitive process and professional coding scheme to determine young teachers' observations. Results revealed complications that

compound a false sense of maturation that is determined through graduation and entrance into the workforce. Young educators face a dichotomy in their transition from student to authority figure when entering the profession. Although eighteen years-of-age signifies legal adulthood, social and cognitive development has yet to reach maturation. From "perpetrators to enforcers," young teachers face a significant shift in relation to their social and cognitive development (Haberman, 2012).

Emerging Adulthood

Identity Exploration

Arnett (2000, 2013, 2014, 2016) categorizes emerging adulthood as a stage of development consisting of five main features (Figure 4). First and notable of stages, is identity exploration. In this "Who Am I?" juncture, people are considering their character and person in consideration to their idea of self, love, and role in society. With varying options at this time in life, young people are often driven by desires for love and work, and seek meaning beyond themselves. With emerging independence from parental control and exposure to varying life options presented to them, this time in a young person's life holds a tremendous amount of hope and undiscovered mysteries (Arnett, 2000, 2013). Although Erikson's previous research in identity development came about in one's adolescent stage (Erikson, 1968), Arnett's theory, suggests that identity achievement is not found until well past adolescence. Rather the realization of one's identity is seldom reached by graduation from secondary school, but continues to manifest itself through exploration into a person's twenties (Arnett, 2014, 2016).
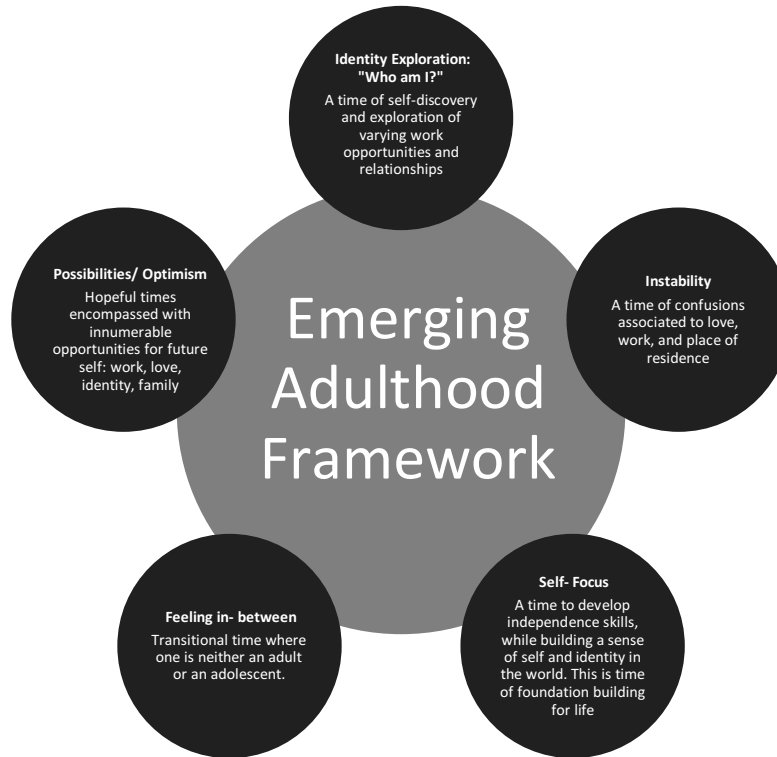
Figure 4. Emerging adulthood framework

Emerging adulthood, although demarcated mostly by a person's age, is not defined concretely, by a particular demographic target. It is a space in time, sandwiched by adolescence and adulthood. For each young person navigating this time, between the ages of eighteen and their late twenties, they distinctively follow their own path.

Continuing on the path of self-identification, a most important principle on this road to fulfillment is attainment of meaningful employment. As young teachers emerge through early adulthood, developing not only a personal, but also a professional identity, it is important to recognize a phenomenon known as "teacher voice" (Sutherland, et al., 2010). During formal collegiate education and pre-service education, student teachers develop attributes that support the complex ethical and developmental decisions that will be made in their classrooms as they pertain to their students. Young adults constructing their professional identity, in congruence

with their developmental journey into adulthood, have significant individual social and community role identification processes to manage (Walkington, 2005). Combining theoretical knowledge derived from coursework while attaining to contextual and multifaceted situations that require personal practice and assessment can result in feelings of stress, difficulty with workload, and a poor self-efficacy (Torres, 2012).

Instability

A second distinct feature of emerging adulthood, is the stage of instability. In light of dramatic changes in work and relationship statuses during this period of time, the average emerging adult is expected to experience a significant degree of flux emotionally and socially. It is a time wrought with hopes and plans for the future. College majors often divert and change; there is fluidity in life plans and destinations, as well as prospective career goals (Arnett, 2014).

The U.S. Census Bureau indicates that emerging adults, starting at the age of eighteen, show a significant spike in moving residences. During the ages of eighteen to twenty-five in particular, upwards of thirty-five percent of young adults move residences on a regular basis, leaving many in this cohort to not know where they will be living year-to-year. Data shows this incursion to peak at the age of twenty-five and steadily decline throughout a person's later twenties. For roughly forty percent of Americans, between the ages of eighteen to twenty-five, at least one of their moves, is back home to live with their parents (Clark University, 2015).

A Pew Research examination of adults age twenty-five to thirty-five, highlighting a span of fifty years, illustrates the phenomenon of adults optimally choosing to live at home with their parents. Figure 5 identifies generational cohorts and their respective propensities to live at home with parents as young adults. Millennials, those born between 1980 and 1994, led in being the generation most likely to live at home with parents into adulthood. Figure 6 represents the living

arrangements of cohorts by decade in regard to their longevity of residency in their parent's

home into adulthood. The 2016 Millennial cohort reported that ninety-one percent of those adults

who choose to live at home with parents, have done so for more than a year's time ("More

Adults Living at Home, for Longer Stretches," 2019). Of those inhabitants, Figure 7 provides a

demographic map to visualize such occurrences across the United States (Frye, 2017).

Millennials are the generation most likely to live at home

% of 25- to 35-year-olds living in parent(s)' home

Millennials in 2016	15%
Gen Xers in 2000	10
Late Boomers in 1990	11
Early Boomers in 1981	8
Silents in 1964	8

Note: "Living in parent(s)' home" means residing in a household headed by a parent.

Figure 5. Live at home

Living at home is a longer-term arrangement for Millennials than previous generations

Among 25- to 35-year-olds living in parent(s)' home, % at same address one year earlier

Millennials in 2016	91%
Gen Xers in 2000	86
Late Boomers in 1990	86
Early Boomers in 1981	82
Silents in 1964	83

Note: "Living in parent(s)' home" means residing in a household headed by a parent.

Figure 6. Comparison living at home

In what states are young adults most likely to live with their parents?
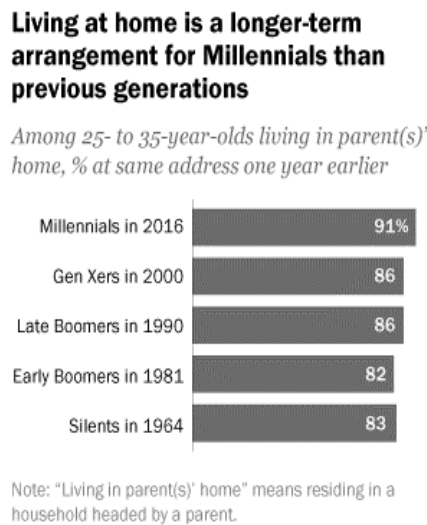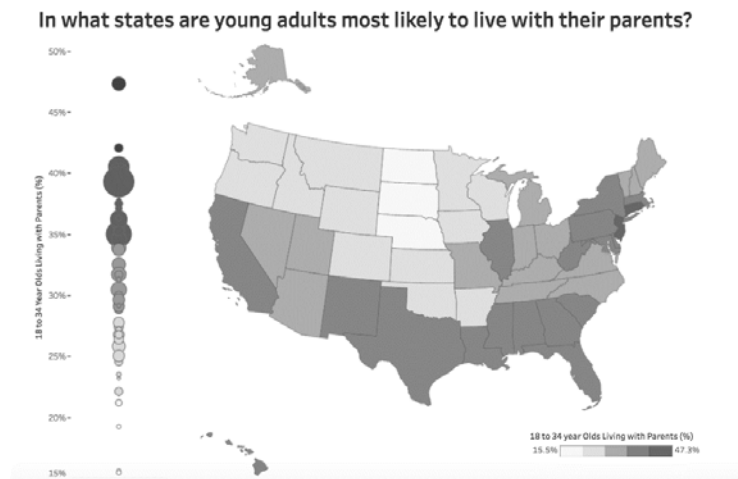
Figure 7: Emerging Adult Map

Figure 7. Emerging adult map   (Frye, 2017)

Self-Focus

Children and adolescents are naturally self-focused individuals, but exist under the

guidance of parents, family members, teachers, and adults in their lives. Structures in place that

provide rules, schedules, and consequences monitor and guide decision-making processes.

During these developmental stages, examination of self in the world in relation to others' and

one's own beliefs, but with the caveat that guidance and protection are provided by those

aforementioned nurturers. During emerging adulthood, however, young adults are in a

heightened self-focused time, accompanied by a myriad of life decisions. Notably, it is during

this developmental stage that supports gradually release individuals toward independence in the

world, and consequences become owned by the individual. During this self-focused time,

emerging adults are working to critically develop their paths towards successful adulthood.

Although this goal is individualistic, it is nonetheless a rite of passage necessary in the pursuit to

attained adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

Feeling in-between

Emerging adults can often feel like they are in an in-between stage, having one foot stuck in adolescence, while the other is planted in adulthood. Young adults are choosing to stay in school longer, delaying marriage and family, and are choosing to stay in the parental home longer than prior generations. "Their transition patterns also demonstrate greater variability, with fewer following dominant pathways"(Johnson, 2013, para 5).

With arbitrary goal markers of adulthood bestowed upon individuals' idealized perceptions of adulthood, Arnett worked to discern what attributes ultimately determined criteria worthy of being deemed an adult. Results of Arnett's qualitative research devised three criteria for reaching adulthood: "Accept responsibility for yourself, make independent decisions, and become financially independent"(Arnett, 2014, p.15).

Arnett (2014) notes that with each attainment or benchmark toward "the Big Three," young adults must go through an incremental transitional growth period between the age of eighteen into the late twenties. Financial independence is most often the irrevocable gauge, or perception, of maturation and attained adulthood (Arnett, 2014). Arguably, societal and economic factors play a pressing role on achieving this feature of adulthood.

Possibilities and Optimism

Emerging adulthood is a time of great hope and optimism. It is a period of time when many idealize their future career path, their successful marriage, and their beautiful home and family. Their American dream has yet to be tried and tested. For a distinct window of time, regardless of their family background or circumstance in life, hope and ambition for their designed future reigns supreme. This time of detachment from one's primary family and social network, in pursuit of educational, career, and relationship attainment, provides emerging adults with broad scope of canvases available for their futures (Arnett, 2014).

Self -Efficacy

The perceptions of achieved adulthood noted through Arnett's work and specifically his five tenets of emerging adulthood, complement Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. "Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events affecting one's life. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave" (Bandura, 1994). This intrinsic belief pertains to emerging adult theory specifically in regard to identity development, stability, and self-focus. With emerging adults also feeling like they are in an in-between stage of development, consideration of the role of self-efficacy is warranted in consideration of this research.

There are four major cognitive processes associated with attaining self-efficacy that pertain to a person's level of functioning: cognitive processes, motivational processes, affective processes, and selection processes (Bandura, 1994).

Cognitive

How one thinks of themselves greatly impacts levels of success or failure. Optimistic perceptions lead to more positive outcomes. Continuity of said perceptions, equally enhances optimal personal goal-setting and perseverance through challenging (Tugsbaata, 2016).

Motivational

Possessing a level of self-efficacy means believing in the value of motivation to influence an outcome (Tugsbaata, 2016). With a positive mindset in congruence with a strong resolution, one is more apt to address challenges more confidently, thus increasing the likelihood of continued resolve and dedication to one's original goal (Bandura, 1994).

Emotional

Looking through the affective lens of emotions, it is necessary to consider the impact of moods and feelings. One who possesses a strong sense of self-efficacy is more apt to show resilience in handling difficult situations. One who is emotionally aware, as well as cognitively perceptive of their psychological state of mind, possesses a strong level of emotional intelligence and are thus more capable of navigating emotional times (Tugsbaata,, 2016).

Decisional

In the selection processes, one with a higher level of self-efficacy, is better suited or equipped to employ thoughtful decision-making processes. One who tempers their decision making with opportunities to embrace challenges and desired growth is better suited for generative growth and development (Tugsbaata, 2016).

In relation to teaching, "the perceived self-efficacy of teachers involves belief in the ability to achieve desired results of student participation and learning, even among unmotivated students" (Öztaş & Dilmac, 2009). When a person feels a level of satisfaction and competence in their work, confidence and self-efficacy improve, along with a sense of job satisfaction. Bandura further maintained that developmental readiness can be taught through social and cognitive development of self-efficacy (Tugsbaata, 2016). Through one's ability to think metacognitively, with goal-oriented objectives, one can develop a sense of self-clarity (Nohria & Khurana, 2010).

Chapter Summary

As the review of literature presents, there are complex facets that influence teacher attrition in the United States. Noted factors such as age, gender, race, teaching assignment, and pre-service training have all been evaluated through both qualitative and quantitative means of study. Further research indicates a level of self-efficacy fosters perceptions of competence and satisfaction in work. Thus, the idea of identity development and efficacy have also been

examined in relation to this phenomenon. This study sought to gain perspective of the emerging

adult teachers, currently among the largest demographic of teachers choosing to leave the

profession with under five years of experience, in order to attain understanding of this

phenomenon. The gap in literature presents opportunity for future research to be conducted from

a developmental and psychological perspective as it pertains to teacher attrition.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the perceptions of emerging adults who have left the teaching profession within the first five years of teaching. This study used a multiple-case approach to gain information on the factors that influence emerging adult teachers that leave the field of teaching within the first five years of their professional experience. By facilitating semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to gather evidence from selected research participants for the purpose of examination of experiences and perceptions as they relate to attrition (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). This chapter outlines the research questions being studied, the qualitative research design selected for this study, a description of methodology used, as well as highlight participant selection criteria and data analysis. Also disclosed in this chapter are ethical considerations, limitations of the proposed study, and researcher identity.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of teacher attrition through the lens of Arnett's emerging adulthood theory. Use of the qualitative method in this study served to uncover the lived experiences of teachers who have left teaching. The following questions were used to uncover the perceptions and experiences of emerging adult teachers who have left the teaching profession within the first five years of teaching:

Main Question

What are the perceptions of lived experiences of emerging adult teachers who leave teaching within five years?

Sub-questions

- What is the connection between developmental maturation and teacher attrition in

  emerging adult teachers?

- What attributes are associated with teacher readiness?

- What attributes impact developmental maturation in emerging adult teachers?

Qualitative Research Design

The design of this qualitative study was based on the proposed research questions

pertaining to the perceptions of Emerging Adult teachers who leave teaching within the first five

years of professional service. Use of qualitative design in this study sought to unveil perceptions,

dispositions, and experiences of participants. Within this qualitative study, the researcher's

collection of data through interviews served to connect participants' experiences to the

phenomenon of study. With teacher attrition among emerging adults being a current

phenomenon affecting public education in America, this study examined the contributing factors

associated with such a sizable exodus of educators and give voice to the participants who have

lived a shared experience (Gray & Taie, 2015).

By applying Arnett's framework, the researcher was further able to explore data as it

relates to the tenets of the emerging adulthood theory. Subsequently, this qualitative study

allowed for rich data to be collected. "The subjective lenses that *both* the researcher and the

research participants together bring to a qualitative study from the context of the findings" serve

to address the phenomenon (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 41). By using the interview method,

the researcher gained a sizable amount of perspective and understanding of the participants'

lived experiences. The researcher sought to discern patterns and themes through analysis. If

common patterns and themes occur, the researcher had qualitative support to support the research.

Participants and Sampling

For this study, the researcher utilized purposeful sampling to find participants. The participants in this study were carefully selected to include emerging adult teachers who have left teaching within five years of professional service. "Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest" (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015, para 1). From this initial sampling, a snowball sampling was further employed, as needed, by asking participants to identify other emerging adults who have left the teaching profession (Coleman, 1958). All selected educators for the study were chosen based on the following criteria:

1. Participant had graduated from a University possessing an accredited teacher preparation program.

2. Participant was within the emerging adulthood developmental stage of life, ages 23 to 29.

3. Participant had exited a teaching position in a public education setting within their first five years of teaching.

During the research and exploration process Creswell (2013) recommended that a heterogeneous group be selected for participation. For this study, a sample size of six participants was selected. While the sample size selected was based on the identified criteria, diversity was sought among participants in regard to gender, background, grade level taught, and professional placement.

Identified potential participants were contacted via email with a formal invitation to participate (Appendix A). A subsequent printed copy was presented in person by the researcher

upon first meeting for Interview One to be reviewed, signed, and dated by the participant. Upon this initial meeting, an Informed Consent Agreement (Appendix B) was shared outlining the purpose of the study, what the researcher would do with all information, participant time commitment, risks and benefits, and confidentiality. Participants were also made aware that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, free from issue. Finally, an Interview Protocol (Appendix C) was presented and reviewed for participant signature and date.

Data Collection

The researcher's main protocol for data collection involved the interview method. Seidman (2013), underscores the sociological significance that affords researchers access to the perceptions of lived experiences and self, derived from the participant's response to questions. In this study, Seidman's Three-Interview Series, a well-established protocol of in-depth interviews, provided context for fully understanding the perceptions of participants (Seidman, 2013). Specifically, the researcher sought to obtain information pertaining to feelings, emotions, and reflections of experiences associated with the participants' time in the classroom and circumstances focused around their departure. Semi-structured interviews allowed for participant freedom of expression and reflection.

Following Seidman's protocol for interviewing, the researcher was able to create the most accurate picture of a lived experience and nurture and foster a rapport between researcher and participant. Designation of Seidman's protocol for this study is specifically intended to go beyond the singular interview experience that can inhibit one's expression (Seidman, 2013).

This protocol involved three separate distinct interactions between researcher and participants (Seidman, 2013). According to Seidman (2006), "Interviewing provides access to

the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior" (p.10). Through the interview method, the researcher was

able to put the participant's perceptions of behaviors and experiences in context. "It is a powerful way to gain insight into educational and other important social issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives reflect those issues" (Seidman, 2013, p.13). For this study, the interview method was an exploratory means to bring meaning to the phenomenological event of teacher attrition.

Interview One (Appendix C) of Seidman's Three-Interview Series delved into the life history of participants, seeking to gain an exposure to lived experiences that are cumulative and relevant in respect to the problem of practice presented in this study. In this initial contextual building experience between researcher and participant, open ended questions examined participants' past lived experiences prior to becoming teachers. The researcher utilized this opportunity to gather formative-narrative data that provided contextual evidence relative to, and in respect to, the development of events that have occurred in participants' lives. Use of this collection method allowed the researcher to foster a sense of engagement between the researcher and the participant, while guiding participants to share a detailed focused life history, centered around their constructed experiences (Seidman, 2013). This first interview within this three-step model served not only to detail contextual events and experiences that may have led participants to join the teaching profession but also to build a sense of trust and rapport between the researcher and participants. In order to obtain this data, the researcher set aside a time period of up to ninety minutes for this initial face to face interview to establish a rapport with participants.

The second interview, according to Seidman's protocol, allowed participants to share more concrete details of their experiences as they pertain to the participants' lived experiences in

relation to the problem of practice. During this second interview, with an allotment of up to

ninety minutes provided, the researcher used open-ended questions to allow participants to

reconstruct their thoughts and feelings centered around their perception of their teaching

experiences. Specifically, the researcher sought to probe details of experiences within the context

of participants' work and social settings, with specific guidance of questioning to provide data

that is devoid of opinions (Seidman, 2013). During this second interview, the researcher asked

participants reconstruct their personal and professional experiences, while reflecting on their

thoughts, feelings, and overall perception of events. In this section, the researcher strove to elicit

participant data that is relative to the proposed research questions reflective of Arnett's

development theory and teacher attrition.

Interview Three of this study focused on reflection of meaning. This guided reflective

experience between researcher and participant served to explore the experiences shared from

Interview Two. Seidman (2013) states that, "Exploring meaning requires a sense of attentiveness

on the part of the interviewer to what the research participants presented in the early interviews"

(p.23). This crafted opportunity provides participants with the opportunity to reflect and make

meaning of their experiences, specifically how those experiences led them to leave the teaching

profession.

Designation of time for this third interview remained subject to participants' abilities to

reflect on their experiences (Seidman, 2013). This third interview was designed to encourage

reflective participatory engagement from participants and encourage meaning making in relation

to the formative factors lived and expressed by participants as they relate to the problem of

practice as well as their own personal meaning.

Data Analysis

The analytic sequence for this study incorporated three rounds of coding. The first cycle of analysis of the semi-structured interviews used *in vivo* coding in order to establish trends and themes derived from participants' ontological beliefs (Saldaña, 2013). Use of *in vivo* coding in qualitative studies allows the audience to hear the voices of those whom experience a shared phenomenon. Use of this analysis allowed the researcher to grasp what is meaningful and significant to the participant as *in vivo* coding is "rooted in the participant's language" (Saldaña, 2013, p.8). Codes derived from obtained data strive to deepen understanding and perspective of perceptions of lived experiences and were utilized for the purpose of grouping attained codes into categories and themes. Both process and descriptive coding methods were used within this analytic round. Process coding discerned words or phrases that capture an action while descriptive coding was used to formulate topics (Saldaña, 2013). The researcher remained open to additional coding as needed in response to the data that is generated.

Second cycle coding utilizing an *a priori* method allowed the researcher to "take meaning to the next level" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 212). Deeper analysis of data allowed the researcher to "construct categories from the classification of codes, drawing preliminary models of the primary actions at work in the data; while reorganizing and reassembling the transformed data to better focus the data of the study" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 212). *A priori* coding established categories for codes based on the research framework. The goal of this research was to find commonalities among participants in order to examine participant experiences as they relate to Arnett's emerging adulthood theory. By utilizing a within-case analysis to determine themes, followed by an across-case analysis method, the researcher compared commonalities among cases. This method enabled the researcher to examine and delineate factors that contribute to the

problem of practice while determining what concepts and unique findings become present. Use of this method aides the researcher in developing themes within the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2013, p101).

A third cycle of coding utilized a narrative coding approach. Narrative coding provided a more in-depth understanding of the participants' intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences (Saldaña, 2013). Interpretation of narrative coding further supported the idea of meaning creation in relation to participants' perceptions of identity exploration, feelings of instability, aptitude of self-focus, feelings related to being in-between, and feeling associated with optimism, relating specifically to Arnett's theoretical framework (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016). This coding process allowed for a deeper cross-case analysis of each of the participant interviews collected. As common patterns and themes occur, the researcher developed naturalistic generalizations to have qualitative support for research (Creswell & Creswell, 2013, p.200).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical Framework that was utilized as a lens for this qualitative data analysis was be Jeffrey Arnett's theory of Emerging Adulthood. During this developmental stage, consisting of young people ages eighteen to twenty-nine, the emerging adult is on a path of self-identification looking for fulfillment and attainment of meaningful experiences, relationships, and employment. Utilization of Arnett's framework by the researcher fostered discernment of data in five areas including identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and feelings associated with possibility (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

1. Identity Exploration: Arnett's first tenet of emerging adulthood proposes that, developmentally, this stage is a time of identity exploration and self-discovery. In relation to this

study, the researcher examined data relating to exploration of work and relationship

opportunities (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

2. Feelings of Instability: The second area of discernment examined data in relation to feelings

of instability. Coding of data sought to obtain information in relation to participant feelings as

they relate to confusion or unease. Specifically, identifying data associated to unease concerning

love, work, or place of residence (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

3. Self-focus: The researcher examined participant data in terms of perceptions of self-focusing

behaviors. As emerging adulthood is defined as a developmental time synonymous with the

development of self-identity, participant data in relation to skill building and autonomy were

relevant to this study as it is viewed by Arnett to be a foundational building block for adulthood

(Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

4. Feeling in-between: Additionally, Arnett's propositions concerning this "emerging"

developmental period in one's life further filtered participant data to be examined in relation to

expressed feelings of being in-between adulthood and adolescence (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014,

2016). During this period of development, emerging adults gain a sense of independence and

responsibility for themselves, while, in many cases, still relying on the social and financial

support of their parents and family (Arnett, 2013).

5. Possibility and Optimism: The final lens to be utilized in the disaggregation of data

incorporated the tenet of possibility and optimism. With innumerable opportunities for future

possibilities, hopes, and successes on the brink for those in the emerging adulthood stage,

analysis of data examined perceptions regarding prospects for self-gratifying work, meaningful

relationships, and identity formation (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Establishment of trustworthiness for this study sought to determine themes through the use of thick descriptions that offer dependability as well as confirmability (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). The researcher, acting as the instrument in this study remained adaptive, while employing skills of empathy and responsiveness to participants. The researcher recognized that meaning and perceptions derived from the interview process can be influenced by the interaction with participants. Specifically, the participants reconstruction of events can become skewed, making it important for the researcher to recognize that a degree of one's epistemological beliefs can influence data.

By incorporating data from multiple participants, using Seidman's protocol, the researcher provided a rigorous methodology for practice to ensure trustworthiness (Seidman, 2013). Furthermore, Seidman (2013) suggests that "by interviewing a number of participants, we can connect their experiences and check the comments of one participant against those of another" (p.29). This cross-case analysis allowed the researcher to accumulate case knowledge from different participant cases in order to not only compare and contrast themes across data, but to develop new knowledge.

Herriot and Firestone (1983) suggest that evidence from multiple cases presented is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is regarded as being more robust. "The ability to conduct 6 to 10 case studies, effectively, with a multiple case design is analogous to the ability to conduct 6 to 10 experiments on related topics" (Yin, 2018, p.57).

To ensure ethical practice, the researcher conducted herself accordingly with a "do no harm" philosophy (Miles et al., 2014a). Participants were made aware that all data were reported

and published upon completion, though their identity remained confidential including their

name, university of origin, school of practice, or any other discernible identifiers.

In accordance with the Southern New Hampshire University Institutional Review Board

(IRB), participants were informed of research practices through a consent agreement, while

following all policies and expectations. The researcher employed the following procedural

safeguards as a means of ensuring trustworthiness and ethical practice:

- Obtain and maintain accurate field notes

- Secure all data and notes in a password-protected environment

- Provide voluntary and informed consent

- Safeguard participant identity through the use of pseudonyms

- Provide understanding of participant right to withdraw from the study at any time
  without penalty.

There were no explicit benefits, monetary or otherwise, for participation. All data was

stored as private records and, after analyses, this information was destroyed. All research

obtained through this study were conducted and handled in an ethical manner with respect to the

integrity of the study and the participants (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014b). The researcher

ensured measures are taken in consideration of all phases in the research process as "they are

ever expanding in scope as inquirers become more sensitive to the needs of the participants,

sites, stakeholders, and publishers of research" (Creswell & Creswell, 2013, p.56).

Limitations

A researcher must remain cognizant that potential limitations exist within all studies,

despite a strongly developed methodology. The very nature of qualitative research relies heavily

on the participants' ability to accurately reflect on past, self, and experiences. Another limitation

however lies in the researcher's ability to interpret data. It is of equal significance to

acknowledge their own personal experience and knowledge and how it may influence meaning

making, due to their own reflections of past, self, and experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2013).

An additional limitation of this study is that it is not generalizable to the whole

population based on the smaller sample size. Results specifically pertained to the individuals in

this study comprised of six to ten participants (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, in regard to participants

and perceptions of maturity and development, because there are limited measures, instruments,

finite tools or accurate clinical measures to evaluate maturity, data obtained from this research

only utilized Arnett's theoretical criteria for maturation (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

Finally, as a former fourth-grade teacher, the researcher's personal and professional bias

in regard to this study must remain at the forefront of consideration in regard to ethical practice.

Having left the teaching profession after five years of practice, this lens affords the researcher a

degree of familiarity to contextual situations and norms of practice. Although removal of

personal and professional biases during the research process is a non-viable option, it is

important for the researcher to document and disclose personal and professional deliberations

throughout the process. The researcher surfaced and monitored her identity through journaling.

For this purpose of accountability, a journal was created and utilized during the research process

to help account for instances of biases and may further serve as a tool for reflection (Creswell &

Creswell, 2013).

Researcher Identity

My ever-evolving identity as a researcher and scholar are grounded in pragmatic belief

and non-committal skepticism of absolute certainties. Although the navigation of this delineation

of thought could metaphorically be compared to peeling back the layers of an onion, this exercise

in reflection does in fact generate the need for precise reflection, that progressively leads to the classification of my own identity. The following philosophical assumptions and interpretive beliefs are deeply ingrained in my being, and provide identity to my scholarship and credibility as a researcher. As primary researcher, to allow transparency of my biases, I outlined potential sources for bias as it relates to my research and the problem of practice.

In regard to my philosophical assumptions, or beliefs that may inform my research, I began by evaluating my ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions, thus unfolding my interpretive framework or theoretical lens that guides my interest in research (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). Through a constructivist epistemological lens, I strongly believe that the knowledge in the world and from which we derive from it is developed through our own construction and value attribution. With a social science lens, focused on developing meaning from phenomenology, my scholarship view is dependent upon participant knowledge and experience to inform social and historical construction of understanding. Furthermore, it is the social construction that generates meaning, and thus fascinates me in that such scholarship is dependent upon the personal, cultural, and historical experiences of not only the research participants, but the researcher as well (Creswell & Creswell, 2013).

With the idea in mind that knowledge is constructed through interaction and experience, and that intelligence is ever expanding and developing, Yilmaz (p.162) states that, "Learners are intellectually generative individuals rather than empty vessels waiting to be filled" (2008). People have an innate capacity for independent thought that can lead to questioning, problem-solving, and the construction of theory (Yilmaz, 2008). It is because of this premise that I am seeking this research. Utilizing the methodological approach to data collection in particular for this study, the rigorous approach of three separate interviews allowed me to facilitate reflective

understanding on the part of the participant to evaluate their lived experiences specifically dealing with their exodus from teaching.

The phenomenon of teacher attrition has been a topic of scholarly research and discussion for decades. Personally, it had been a topic of consideration in the later years of my professional teaching life. Contemplation and reflection ultimately led me to leave teaching and to further explore what is influencing my colleagues as they leave the profession.

An additional focus that I bring to my scholarship is the strong belief in the social cognitive theory and developmental growth suggested by both Erikson and Arnett. It is the inclination of both biases and reflection upon my beliefs, that have led to this focus of research.

Further consciousness of my ontological beliefs align to a relativist approach to matters of research. In respect to my predictive, causal, and paradigmatic assumptions, I outwardly consider and state that I have a relativist approach to decision-making and theoretical practice. My personal narrative, however, outside the walls of academia has historically been that of someone operating as a rule follower or as having an absolutist approach. I am comfortable within the rules and norms afforded to me through my professional experience and expectations. Having guidelines to operate under, provides me with opportunities to feel intrinsic motivation through accomplishment of expected tasks and goals established through the norms of my profession. With this dichotomy in mind, as a scholar and professional, often my predictive assumptions interfere with processing information without preconceived bias or opinion. With such an inharmonious contradiction at play, thus a vast bias is posed for consideration of scholarship (Brookfield, 1995).

My interpretive framework aligns to that of social constructivism, in particular with the axiological belief that individual values "must be honored and negotiated among individuals"

(Creswell & Creswell, 2013, p.36). Furthermore, my axiology within this study is to determine if the developmental readiness of the new young teacher is a contributing factor of attrition. It is my belief that development plays a significant role and in both teacher preparation and consequently teacher attrition of emerging adults (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008).

Chapter Summary

Use of a qualitative methodology for this study sought to illuminate the perceptions of emerging adult teachers' perspectives on why they left teaching. Special focus was given to themes specific to the developmental process, as outlined through Arnett's Emerging Adulthood Theory. Methodology provided insight to participants' perception of identity exploration, feelings of instability, aptitude of self-focus, feelings related to being in-between, and feelings associated with optimism (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

Data collection methods of participants provided useful data in addressing the research questions. This researcher ensured rigorous, ethical, and valid data gathering and analysis procedures (Seidman, 2013).

CHAPTER FOUR. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter provides an analysis of the data collected from the six participants of this multiple case study. Each of the participants were investigated and analyzed separately to provide an in-depth scrutinization of data followed by a cross-case analysis to determine commonalities and themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). Using the established criteria, the participants selected for this study were former teachers who; had graduated from a University possessing an accredited teacher preparation program, were within the emerging adulthood developmental stage of life-ages 23 to 29, and had exited a teaching position in a public education setting within their first five years of teaching. The research questions for this study are:

- What are the perceptions of lived experiences of Emerging Adult teachers who leave teaching within five years?

- What is the connection between developmental maturation and teacher attrition in emerging adult teachers?

- What attributes are associated with teacher readiness?

- What attributes impact developmental maturation in emerging adult teachers?

Participants

There are six participants for this study who met criteria for participation. A total of 18 interviews among the six participants were conducted between January 13, 2020, and February 11, 2020. All interviews were conducted in person, aligned with Seidman's protocol. This rigorous methodology was used to ensure trustworthiness and most importantly establish a rapport with participants to better ensure forthcoming reflections of lived experiences (Seidman,

2013). By interviewing six participants, the researcher was able to connect participants'

experiences and check the comments of one participant against those of another" (p.29). This

cross-case analysis allowed the researcher to accumulate case knowledge from different

participant cases in order to not only compare and contrast themes across data, but to develop

new knowledge.

Table 3 provides a summary of descriptive data from the participants of this study.

Included are the interview participants' identifier, dates of interviews, grade level taught, urban

or rural district, years of teaching experience, and level of educational attainment. Table 4

delineates the ages of participants at the time of this study, the ages at graduation, financial

support from family, and whether the participants had moved back home at some point after

graduation from college.

Table 3
Participant Summary

	Participant Identifier	Dates of Interviews	Grade Level Taught	Urban or Rural District	Years of Teaching	Level of Degree
P1.	Jane	1/13/2020 1/14/2020 1/17/2020	8th grade English (2 locations)	Urban	4	Masters
P2.	Kate	2/11/2020 2/12/2020	4th grade Reading & Math	Rural	2	Bachelors
P3.	Christine	1/17/2020 1/21/2020	High School English	Rural	4	Bachelors/ Some Masters
P4.	Daniel	1/17/2020 1/23/2020	High School Social Studies (2 locations)	Rural	2	Masters
P5.	Heather	1/24/2020 1/31/2020	Middle School Social Studies	Rural	4	Bachelors/Some Masters
P6.	Christopher	1/30/2020 2/4/2020 2/5/2020	Sixth Grade Social Studies	Rural	1 year +2months	Masters

Table 4

Participant Summary Part 2

	Participant Identifier	Age at Graduation	Age at Interview	Family Financial Support	Moved Back Home after Graduation
1.	Jane	22	29	N	Y
2.	Kate	22	24	Y	Y
3.	Christine	22	29	Y	Y
4.	Daniel	22	26	Y	Y
5.	Heather	22	28	Y	Y
6.	Christopher	22	29	Y	Y

Interview Coding Method

All data was coded using the same analytic sequence. The three cycles of coding utilized to retrieve data from the semi-structured interviews involved the use of *in-vivo* coding, process and descriptive coding, *a priori* coding, and narrative coding.

Starting with *in vivo* coding, the researcher read each of the participants' interview transcripts three times before beginning to code line by line to discern data. The following *in vivo* codes are examples that were obtained from the six participants of the study and directly relate to the perceptions of the emerging adult participants in regard to their attrition from teaching:

- "I cannot torture myself to the extent that I have."

- "Emotionally more taxing than I anticipated."

- "This is not something that's sustainable and I don't want to be a part of it."

- "I was set up for failure."

- "I really don't know how I did it."

- "Even when you're not working, you're thinking about working, you're paranoid about it…it's just all consuming."

Use of this analytic sequence was purposefully designed for the researcher to determine what was meaningful and significant to the participants, starting with *in-vivo* coding that is "rooted in the participant's language" (Saldaña, 2013, p.8). Both process and descriptive coding methods were additionally used within this analytic round. To discern words or phrases that captured an action, process codes were utilized, while descriptive coding was used to formulate topics (Saldaña, 2013). Process coding in this analysis further highlighted the actions of participants. These codes define what people do (Saldaña, 2016). The following are examples of process codes derived from data:

- EXPLORING JOBS/INTERESTS

- PLANNING FUTURE

- FEELING ANXIOUS AND STRESSED

- LACKING AUTONOMY

- TRANSITIONING

- SEEKING ACCEPTANCE

Next, the researcher analyzed the *in vivo* codes and process codes to create descriptive codes to thematically develop topics. This was done to better understand and develop an appreciation of the participants' reflections of experiences. Through the use of descriptive coding within the analytic sequence, the researcher, according to Saldana (2016), is able to identify basic themes and develop topics for data. Use of descriptive coding in this analysis led to the

categorization of data, "establishing the groundwork for second-cycle coding" (Saldana, 2016, p. 104).

During the descriptive coding process, the researcher categorized similar *in vivo* codes from the six study participants in order to develop descriptors to delineate themes and topics. The following are examples of descriptive codes obtained from data:

- PARENTAL INFLUENCE

- EXPECTATIONS

- WORK-LIFE BALANCE

- ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

- PERCEPTIONS

- SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

The second cycle of coding utilized was an *a priori* method allowing the researcher to "take meaning to the next level" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 212). Deeper analysis of data allowed the researcher to use Jeffrey Arnett's Emerging Adulthood Framework tenets. The *a priori* codes used were established categories for codes based on the research framework. The *a priori* codes included:

- Identity exploration

- Feelings of instability

- Self-focus

- Feeling in-between

- Possibility and optimism

The third cycle of coding utilized for analysis was a narrative coding approach. Narrative coding provided a more in-depth understanding of the participants' intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences (Saldaña, 2013). This coding supported the researcher in identifying meaning along with sociological and psychological constructs relating to perceptions of identity exploration, feelings of instability, aptitude of self-focus, feelings related to being in-between, and feelings associated with optimism (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016, Saldaña, 2013, p.145). This coding process allowed for a deeper cross-case analysis of each of the participant interviews collected as it was utilized to holistically examine the phenomenon of teacher attrition in emerging adults. Used as a method for this study, narrative coding was beneficial in examining the developmental perspective of this study that examines participants' growth over a period of time (Saldaña, 2013). As common patterns and themes emerged through analysis, the researcher was able to develop generalizations to have qualitative support of research (Creswell & Creswell, 2013, p.200).

The goal of this research was to examine participant experiences as they relate to Arnett's emerging adulthood theory and teacher attrition. By utilizing a within-case analysis to determine themes followed by an across-case analysis method, the researcher compared commonalities among cases. The analytic sequence was used for each interview and participant data. This method enabled the researcher to examine and delineate factors that contribute to the problem of teacher attrition in emerging adults. Use of this method aided the researcher in developing themes within the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2013).

Codes and Themes

Dominant codes and themes derived from the first cycle of coding were determined based on frequency of use in analysis. If a code emerged from more than 50% or more of interview

participants, it was noted and is depicted in Table 5. Table 6 breaks down themes by participants which is noted with a Y, signifying theme was discussed, and N, signifying theme was not discussed. Although a number of codes could have been utilized and attributed to data, all sub-codes attained, were subsumed in the designated dominant codes and themes (Saldana, 2013). Upon completion of the first cycle of coding, a total of 24 process and descriptive codes were determined with significant frequency reported across all participants.

Table 5

Dominant Codes

Frequency	Process Coding	Frequency	Descriptive Coding
100%	TRANSITIONING	100%	LOVED SCHOOL
83.3%	WANTING TO PLEASE	100%	GOOD STUDENT
100%	EXPLORING	100%	ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A TEACHER
100%	PLANNING	100%	NOT PREPARED
83.3%	MAKING DECISIONS	100%	HIGH EXPECTATIONS
66.6%	BLAMING OTHERS	100%	PERCEPTIONS
100%	FEELING STRESSED	100%	ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION
100%	LACKING AUTONOMY	100%	FINANCES
100%	BALANCING WORK-LIFE	100%	PARENTAL INFLUENCE
100%	WANTING TO HELP OTHERS	66.6%	DISAPPOINTMENT
100%	PAYING BILLS	100%	CHANGE
100%	SEARCHING IDENTITY	83.3%	LOW SELF-ESTEEM

Table 6

Themes by Participant

	Jane	Kate	Christine	Daniel	Heather	Christopher
Loved school	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Good student	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Always wanted to be teacher	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Not prepared	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
High expectations	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Perceptions	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Anxiety and depression	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Finances	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Parental influence	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Disappointment	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Change	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Low self-esteem	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

After interviews were initially coded, a second round of *a priori* coding was conducted. This deeper analysis incorporated Arnett's framework to evaluate the impact of development on teacher attrition among emerging adults. Use of *a priori* divided data into the following codes that are reflected in Table 7. Coding results, based on participant reflection highlighted "feelings of instability" to be among the highest noted from analysis of data, with "identity exploration" reported as the second most common code.

Table 7

A Priori Codes

	Identity Exploration	Feelings of Instability	Self- Focus	Feeling In-between	Possibility and Optimism
Process Codes	EXPLORING PLANNING MAKING DECISIONS WANTING TO HELP OTHERS SEARCHING IDENTITY	WANTING TO PLEASE MAKING DECISIONS BLAMING OTHERS FEELING STRESSED BALANCING WORK-LIFE PAYING BILLS SEARCHING IDENTITY	EXPLORING PLANNING BLAMING OTHERS SEARCHING IDENTITY	TRANSITIONING LACKING AUTONOMY PAYING BILLS SEARCHING IDENTITY	EXPLORING PLANNING SEARCHING IDENTITY WANTING TO HELP OTHERS
Descriptive Codes	LOVED SCHOOL GOOD STUDENT ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A TEACHER PERCEPTIONS PARENTAL INFLUENCE	NOT PREPARED HIGH EXPECTATIONS PERCEPTIONS ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION FINANCES DISAPOINTMENT LOW SELF ESTEEM	HIGH EXPECTATIONS PERCEPTIONS	NOT PREPARED PERCEPTIONS FINANCES PARENTAL INFLUENCE CHANGE	ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A TEACHER
TOTAL OF CODES ATTRIBUTED	10	14	6	9	5

The third cycle of coding in the analytic sequence was narrative coding. For this study,

narrative coding was beneficial in examining the developmental perspective of participants'

growth over a period of time through their stories and shared experiences (Saldaña, 2013).

Specifically, in regard to identity development, as supported through Arnett's framework, this

third cycle of deductive coding established a strong and collective sense of identity that can be

holistically applied to all six participants in this study as they pertain to Arnett's tenets of

emerging adulthood. The following narrative codes in Table 8, were determined by evaluating

what the overall perceptions of participants were about, what occurred in the "stories" of the

participants' lives, and the *how and why* as they apply to identity exploration, feelings of

instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and possibility and optimism (Arnett, 2000, 2013,

2014, 2016; Saldana, 2013).

Table 8

Narrative Codes

	Identity Exploration	Feelings of Instability	Self- Focus	Feeling In-between	Possibility and Optimism
Process Codes	EXPLORING PLANNING MAKING DECISIONS WANTING TO HELP OTHERS SEARCHING IDENTITY	WANTING TO PLEASE MAKING DECISIONS BLAMING OTHERS FEELING STRESSED BALANCING WORK-LIFE PAYING BILLS SEARCHING IDENTITY	EXPLORING PLANNING BLAMING OTHERS SEARCHING IDENTITY	TRANSITIONING LACKING AUTONOMY PAYING BILLS SEARCHING IDENTITY	EXPLORING PLANNING SEARCHING IDENTITY WANTING TO HELP OTHERS
Descriptive Codes	LOVED SCHOOL GOOD STUDENT ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A TEACHER PERCEPTIONS PARENTAL INFLUENCE	NOT PREPARED HIGH EXPECTATIONS PERCEPTIONS ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION FINANCES DISAPOINTMENT LOW SELF ESTEEM	HIGH EXPECTATIONS PERCEPTIONS	NOT PREPARED PERCEPTIONS FINANCES PARENTAL INFLUENCE CHANGE	ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A TEACHER
Narrative Codes Derived from a-priori	UNCERTAIN SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS VALUES	SOCIETAL INFLUENCE EXPECTATIONS	DEVELOPMENT RESILIENCY GROWING UP	LEARNING EXPERIENCE	GAINING PERSPECTIVE

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

The research presented was ground in sound ethical practices ensure that the researcher

conducted herself accordingly with a "do no harm" philosophy (Miles et al., 2014a). The

researcher, acting as the instrument for this study, remained adaptive while employing skills of empathy and responsiveness to participants. The researcher further recognized that the perceptions derived from interviews could be influenced by the interactions with participants as well as degrees of epistemological beliefs that can influence data (Seidman, 2013).

The researcher further ensured ethical practice and sound methodology through the use of Seidman's protocol "by interviewing a number of participants, in order to connect their experiences and check the comments of one participant against those of another" (p.29). The cross-case analysis allowed the researcher to accumulate case knowledge from different participant cases and perspectives in order to not only compare and contrast themes across interview data but aggregate new knowledge (Seidman, 2013).

Participants were informed that all data would be reported and published upon completion, though their identity would remain confidential. In accordance with the Southern New Hampshire University Institutional Review Board (IRB), participants were informed of these research practices through a consent agreement.

The researcher additionally employed the use of field notes and journaling to follow procedural safeguards as a means of ensuring trustworthiness and ethical practice. The researcher surfaced and monitored her identity through journaling for the purpose of maintaining accountability. The researcher utilized this tool to notate preconceptions, partiality, and personal emotions to the topic of teaching and attrition. This journal was specifically used to help account for instances of biases, to account for the researchers epistemological and ontological beliefs in relation to data obtained, and to reflect on analysis of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2013).

As a method of ensuring accuracy, upon participants' completion of interviews, participant validation was conducted by providing participants with transcripts of each of their

respected interviews. According to Creswell (2013), participant validation is a tool used to provide credibility to research results. At the conclusion of the study, and after the composition of participants' data, accuracy was further validated by participants confirming the accuracy of information as they pertain to Table 3 and Table 4. A final draft copy of this study was presented to participants as well and participants were asked to review coding themes for further reflection of accuracy.

Study Outline

Throughout the analysis of the multiple cases, reoccurring and cross-cutting themes emerged. The following section provides references to data as they pertain to the research questions:

- What are the perceptions of lived experiences of Emerging Adult teachers who leave teaching within five years?

- What is the connection between developmental maturation and teacher attrition in emerging adult teachers?

- What attributes are associated with teacher readiness?

- What attributes impact developmental maturation in emerging adult teachers?

The design of research questions and the subsequent data obtained through participant reflections were intended to explore the perceived experiences of emerging adult teachers in conjunction with their psychosocial development as it relates to teacher attrition. It was the intent to uncover the social construct and meaning as they relate to formative experiences leading up to participants' decisions to become teachers, working as teachers, and leaving the teaching profession. Evidence reflected through the obtained data further sought to examine the

developmental readiness of emerging adult teachers and their perceptions of maturity as those

perceptions relate to their experiences with work, autonomy, and perceptions of efficacy.

The aim of this study sought to expand the focus of attrition studies to reveal the

psychosocial developmental factors that couple with the phenomenon of teacher attrition, with a

specific focus on emerging adult teachers leaving within the first five years of their teaching

careers. With limited research contemplating the notion of developmental readiness of the young

teacher, this study sought to highlight the perceptions of young adults in emerging adulthood---

specifically, in consideration of social and cognitive development, who have made the decision

to teach and subsequently leave the profession (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

Research Question 1:

What are the perceptions of lived experiences of Emerging Adult teachers who leave

teaching within five years?

Data collection provided evidence to support that there is a unanimous feeling of

instability during one's journey through emerging adulthood, followed closely by participant

codes relating to identity exploration as reflected in Table 7. Such themes are broken down

further to highlight reflections that provide a holistic outlook of participants. Among the codes

derived, participant evidence suggests that this time of development is marked by a significant

feeling associated to wanting to please. Coupled with their decisions to leave the teaching

profession, all participants expressed opinions of low self-worth in regard to their capacity to

perform as educators as well as navigate decision making. Specifically, the need to please

parents, and fulfill expectations bestowed upon them by family, self, and even society, weighed

heavily upon participants as reflected holistically by the participant group. Such perceptions of

what should be fulfilled by emerging adults in this stage reportedly left participants feeling

stressed, affecting their overall self-esteem, leading to feelings of disappointment, and inability to balance their work-life responsibilities.

Stress

Interview participants reflected varying degrees of stress experienced in relation to their time teaching and their subsequent departure. Their descriptions divulged perceptions of teaching and expectations set forth in their pre-service experiences, enhanced feelings of instability and stress when in the classroom. All six participants reported experiencing stress during their time teaching. Interviews revealed the complexities of navigating a new professional period in participants' lives, while balancing expectations in regard to not only professional practice, but the nuances of life upon entering a new stage of responsibility. As Daniel noted, "I always felt uncomfortable because I was such a young person in the field and I was new to it" (Personal Communication, January 23, 2020). Such sentiments were discussed at great length in each of the participants respective interviews. All participants reflected that age and their own perceptions of maturity, as well as students'parent perceptions, weighed heavily on their levels of self- efficacy.

Daniel further noted that in talking with parents of students, "you have this 21year-old kid fresh out of college, like grading your kid's papers and like, you know… I was only three years older than some seniors, so it was very bizarre. It still felt like I was kind of a child" (Personal Communication, January 23, 2020). Another participant, Christine, expressed a similar experience in that "there were a lot of times I'd be in a parent teacher conference and I'd have parents make derogatory comments about age like; does you guardian know you're out this late?" (Personal Communication, January 21, 2020).

For the study, not only did all participants reflect on the degree of stress associated to this time in their lives, but six out of the six reported experiencing anxiety and depression during their time teaching. Such intense feelings were further reported by four out of the six participants in which depression and anxiety in relation to their experiences remained relevant and present in their daily lives today. Christine noted, "I was burnt out. It was too much of my life. Like it was all of my life. I thought I would be one of those teachers that, you know, they're 20-30 years in" (Personal Communication, January 21, 2020). Such feelings of disappointment were echoed in unison across all participant interviews. Christopher noted, "I was having mental breakdowns every day at home because I just couldn't do it anymore" (Personal Communication, February 4, 2020). Another participant remarked, "Living it was rough. I thought that I would be a teacher forever" (Jane, Personal Communication, January 14, 2020).

The significance of participants' reflections associated to their attrition from teaching have left almost a haunting effect on four of the six participants. Such remarks pertaining to their departures from teaching still resonate in their perceptions of worth and capacity to make a difference in the world. Heather noted, "It doesn't always feel like it's okay. I felt like I wasn't valuable anymore" (Personal Communication, January 21, 2020). Despite Heather's ability to move on to other employment opportunities, her thoughts on this period of her life are met with a degree of unsettled belief and judgement in regard to her capacity and direction for her future. Daniel noted further, "I know that I'm an adult, but it's more so like I don't feel like I'm an adult. It's like a weird tweener stage. I am getting there…I would say sooner than later (Personal Communication, January 23, 2020). In regard to teaching, he notes, "I felt that there was just so much pressure to be doing, like above and beyond. You always feel like you're not doing well enough (Daniel, Personal Communication, January 23, 2020).

Expectations

Expectations of success further contributed to participants' reflections of instability during this time. Whether stemming from themselves, from parents, or even perceived from society, expectations became a relevant topic in regard to participants' perceptions and meaning making during their time in the teaching profession. Such anticipation of professional success further contributed to feelings associated to negative self-worth and poor self-identity.

Despite the fact that 100% of participants reported upon entering the profession that they expected teaching to be a life-long career and commitment, participant data highlights unforeseen difficulties in managing a healthy work-life balance. Reflections submit that the combination of expectations integrated with identity-seeking weighed heavily upon decision making, communication, and management of emotions during this time.

Heather reflected, that despite the perception that she felt like a failure during her time as a teacher, she did feel that at one point in time that "teaching was the end game" (Personal Communication, January 31, 2020). It was however the continued barrage of professional and parental interactions coupled with her navigation of new responsibilities that ultimately led Heather to question her level of competence in the classroom. She noted in her interviews ongoing insecurities relating to her age. In particular, perceptions by parents on her ability to perform her job. On one particular occasion, "Parents questioned… I am trusting you with my child, but you're wearing flip flops to school in November?" (Heather, Personal Communication, January 31, 2020).

All six of the participants expressed having difficulties in communication with either students, staff, or parents because of their age. All participants reported that because they were perceived as young, their job responsibilities were met with more difficulty. Participants reported

taking extra measures to look older or more professional, also noting that in doing so, and putting extra efforts into appearances and preparation, the work itself became an encompassing entity in their lives. Christine noted, "I was not warned of some of what should be expected…how you would be looked at and spoken to" (Personal Communication, January 21, 2020). A common reflection from all study participants was that roles were not easily defined and that despite formal collegiate experiences, as well as student teaching experiences, navigating the intricacies of classroom management proved to be highly complex. Christine noted, "You were asked more and more to be a parent role, but then also would be reprimanded for overstepping as well. It was just really hard" (Personal Communication, January 21, 2020).

The balance of work expectations, far outreached those professional responsibilities delineated to participants during their college experiences. Heather noted, "I was like a caricature of myself. It was demoralizing" (Personal Communication, January 31, 2020). On par with the expectations for performance, was the pressure felt by all of the participants to commit their lives to their careers. Christine noted, "It was all of my life at the time" (Personal Communication, January 21, 2020). Kate provided a similar response noting that "Many people in my district-teaching was their identity" (Personal Communication, February 12, 2020). Such reflections of identity were present among all participants in regard to their expectations for work and the fruition of said expectations. Jane noted, "Living it was rough. I thought that I would be a teacher forever. I don't think that I could ever go back to the classroom" (Personal Communication, January 14, 2020).

Despite all participants deciding to leave the teaching profession, all participants reported emotional connections to their experiences in the classroom. In fact, it was notated in the

researchers notes, that six out of six participants showed visible signs of emotion and sadness when speaking of their time in the classroom. In particular, Heather noted:

> I'm going to cry. It's like one of the biggest heartbreaks, but like the biggest triumphs. I had a dream the other night that I had some students who put together a performance, like from past experience, like true real students of mine… And it was like I felt high in the dream of like seeing them accomplish… and just being successful, independent, wonderful (Personal Communication, January 31, 2020).

It was the encompassing nature of the job, coupled with the significant developmental shift in participants lives at the time of their early teaching careers that led participants to share feelings associated to seeking a clear identity of self and self-worth. Feelings of instability were reflected among all participants to be in direct relation to perceptions of age and expectations of both professional and social roles.

Always Wanted to be a Teacher

Further analysis of the qualitative interviews supported the notion that of the six participants interviewed, a commonality of "always wanting to be a teacher" or "always loving kids," coupled with positive elementary and high school experiences were influential factors for choosing college majors and ultimately choosing the teaching profession. A cross-analysis sub-theme determined six out of six participants expressed positive feelings in regard to their pre-college experiences within school settings. Teachers provided a grounded support for all, and school, as an institution, provided both academically and socially, with all participants reflecting fondly on their early experiences. School was viewed by participants as a place where their self-efficacy could thrive. For all participants, school provided comfort and an opportunity to

experience success. Some participants even expressed an idyllic and fond sense of remembrance in regard to their early school experiences. Jane noted:

> My third-grade teacher… I still think of her as Miss Honey from the story Matilda. She was fabulous and very kind.
>
> My homelife was unstable. I liked school. I really liked school because it took away from home. It was where I felt so safe (Jane, Personal Communication, January 13, 2020).

Jane, was not unique in her regard of school and the feelings of safety and stability that it invoked. In fact, half of the participants used the term "safe place" in regard to their reflections of school. School was additionally distinguished to be a place for nurture, support, friendship, and solace. It was a place to succeed and do well, where expectations were understood, and where self-efficacy could grow. Such positive interactions for participants in regard to their early experiences with school elicited all six participants to determine that teaching was a decided career path before entering college.

Research Question 2:

What is the connection between developmental maturation and teacher attrition in emerging adult teachers?

Data from this study suggests that there is a clear connection between developmental maturation and teacher attrition in emerging adults. Participants reflected a common theme during their interviews in which they all expressed not feeling like a fully matured adult while equally wrestling with the notion that they too were once students just a short time before entering the field of teaching. Participant themes revealed that in both this professional and developmental juncture, participants were simultaneously navigating new professional

responsibilities while balancing their individual quests for identity and expectations. Perceptions

of others in regard to age and experience further shaped participants feelings of self-efficacy.

Qualitative analysis and reflections from this study in regard to participants' perceptions

of maturity were discussed within each of the case studies presented. The researcher then

performed a cross-case analysis to find that a common theme of participants feeling in between

adolescence and adulthood was reflected in each of the participants' interviews. Arnett's theory

notes that during this period of development, between the ages of 18 and 29, emerging adults

begin to gain a sense of independence and responsibility for themselves, while simultaneously, in

many cases, remain dependent on the social and financial support of their parents and family

(Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016). Participants in this study expressed strong feelings of

insecurity and confusion relating to feelings associated to being in-between adolescence and

adulthood. Such feelings were enhanced due to perceptions that participants had of themselves in

relation to their levels of autonomy. Due to the noted perceptions and expectations for

independence, this data not only lends to Arnett's tenet of identity exploration but feelings of

instability as well as outlined in the Emerging Adulthood framework (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014,

2016).

Perceptions of Self

Perceptions of self, relative to participants' perceptions of maturity and adulthood, were

most strongly linked to participants' sense of financial independence. In 100% of participant

responses, participants exposed negative feelings of self-worth due to their inability to

financially support themselves in some capacity or at some time during their twenties. Five out

of six participants received monetary support for their college expenses and tuition costs, while

all six participants expressed varying degrees of financial hardships that required them to accept

financial support from relatives. It is also significant to note, that of this study's participants, 100% reported having to move back home with family at varying times in their twenties due to financial issues. Such lack of financial freedom reportedly compounded the notion of adulthood on the part of participants. As Christopher stated, "I still don't feel like an adult because my mom is exceptionally controlling" (Personal Communication, February 5, 2020). In regard to his level of financial independence, he further remarked, " I do not feel that I could fend for myself (today) in the spirit of honesty and I still get assistance from my parents for my student loans because I would not be able to survive otherwise" (Christian, Personal Communication, February 5, 2020).

Such participant reflections in regard to finances led each of the participants to express, in varying ways, that they were an "adult in progress" (Jane, Personal Communication, January 17, 2017). Furthermore, in regard to such perceptions in terms of markers of adulthood, all of the participants reflected that 18 years of age is merely an arbitrary delineation of adulthood imposed by an outdated societal norm, and that adulthood does not come until much later- well into a person's twenties and as old as 30. One participant even noted that 35 would be a more fitting age marker.

Upon reflection of college, as a preparatory experience for professional practice and adulthood, Christopher reflected:

> College was a time for me to slack off, run, be in consistently good shape and eat like a cow and have almost zero consequence other than being stuck with a hangover afterwards. I think that I loved college because I got to be on my own. I would say it was worth it. I got to be an adult kind of. I was adult adjacent. It was

essentially the adult experience without having to be an adult (Christopher,

Personal Communication, January 30, 2020).

It is the notion expressed by Christopher in regard to being "adult adjacent" and living an experience without responsibility that masks perceptions of reality when it comes to autonomy and perceptions of independence for college age students. For participants in this study, college was an intermediary agent between adolescence and the responsibilities that would face them in the real world, specifically living and working as professional teachers. All participants further yielded that a degree conferral, does not denote adulthood either. With all participants graduating from their respective colleges at the age of 22, each denoted a sense of optimism with an equal part anticipation.

Seeking Identity

Such intense self-reflection afforded by all participants' in this study illustrate the scope of identity seeking that occurs during emerging adulthood. As reflected in the participant quotes, instability associated with participants' life path for development was burdened with a number of unknowns, decisions, responsibilities, and opportunities. For all participants, a new level of independence was expected upon graduation and employment. Daniel noted that "It was kind of an unknown period to me" (Personal Communication, January 23, 2020). He went on to express that " I feel like (a person's) twenties is a real kind of learning stage. Kind of like you're learning about yourself, you're learning about your career, and you're learning about, you know, kind of the independence- how the world kind of works" (Daniel, Personal Communication, January 23, 2020). Similar sentiments reflecting that a person's twenties are a time of discovery was apparent across 100% of the participants interviewed for this study.

In respect to her perception of age in relation to her development and her time as a teacher, Heather reflected that she is still currently on the pathway toward adulthood. She stated, "I constantly joke, like, you know, people would mistake me for my students. Um, but I also had the sense of humor and sometimes the maturity of the students as well" (Heather, Personal Communication, January 31, 2020). Role and identity delineations were reported across all cases to be a decisive factor that impacted participants' professional capabilities in the classroom. Recognizing that as teachers, four out of five participants noted that they were in the same developmental age period as the students they were responsible for. All participants, as previously noted, expressed insecurities with age in respect to professional relationships and was thus an integral factor in creating complications in regard to job performance.

Feeling In-between

As a whole, participants all expressed feelings of being in between adolescence and adulthood. While all had attended a university preparatory program and attained a subsequent teaching position, all participants relayed that they were dependent upon parents for support in differing capacities. Lack of financial independence further enhanced negative feelings of efficacy and self-esteem as they pertained to perceptions of autonomy and independence. This analysis, coupled with the participants' reflections on age and maturation in relation to their teaching positions further heightened feelings of instability and lack of identity during this developmental time.

With participant responses echoing similar sentiments to feeling like an "adult in progress" (Jane, Personal Communication, January 14, 2020) or "adult adjacent"(Christopher, Personal Communication, February 4, 2020), such data could further lend support to the researcher's third question of research: What attributes are associated with teacher readiness?

Research Question 3:

What attributes are associated with teacher readiness?

In regard to feelings of efficacy in relation to teacher readiness, 100% of participants reported not being prepared in some manner through their teacher preparatory programs. This theme further provided applicability to the *a priori* codes of Feelings of Instability and Identity Exploration that were derived from Arnett's framework of emerging adulthood. Such perceptions of readiness and participant reflections presented through the data led to reported low self-esteem, disappointment, anxiety and depression, as well as perceptions of failure. Such considerations of behalf of participants also led four out of six participants to fault blame on others for their lack of readiness to handle classroom expectations.

Isolation

In respect to participants' perceptions of readiness, an element that six out of the six participants did not anticipate was the immense feeling of isolation that was experienced. This was communicated across all cases in respect to the direct lack of supervision, mentoring, and guidance provided during their time in teaching. The terms "alone" and "on my own" were noted to be among the most often stated across case studies. Christopher noted, "I felt very isolated and I felt as though I kind of wasted five years of my life. I was essentially just handed a bunch of materials and said, this is what you teach now" (Personal Communication, February 4, 2020).

A profound sense of isolation was depicted across all participant interviews. Five of the six participants expressed feelings of abandonment, comparing their experiences to just being dumped in front of a class with little more than a manual to guide their practice. Jane recollected that when it was time for her performance evaluation that she felt it to be "Really weird when the principal came in, that he would have to do a double check, like you're Jane right? (Personal

Communication, January 14, 2020). Christine noted, "I was flying blind and had no mentor. I really don't know how I did it" (Personal Communication, January 21, 2020). Responses such as Christine's were expressed in kind across each of the case studies. Christopher disclosed, "It was just me and 44 students"(Personal Communication, February 4, 2020). He noted that there was no mentor or help to be found to support him in his professional development at his respective school setting. Daniel, was the only participant who reported having a mentor. He subsequently reported however that there was little follow through or structure to guide the mentor program's purpose, therefor making it ineffective (Daniel, Personal Communication, January 23, 2020).

Lack of Support

Feelings of isolation paired with a perceived lack of support deeply impacted participants' perspectives of their own readiness to adequately and competently perform the teaching responsibilities bestowed upon them. Despite all participants reporting having experience in the classroom during their college classes and student teaching experiences, all participants noted that they lacked proper training in classroom management and parent communication. Five of the six participants, indicated that these factors provided the most concern in regard to feelings of efficacy in relation to practice. With a visible lack of administrative support, issues concerning errant student behaviors, as well as parental communication, only compounded professional anxieties for these emerging adult teachers. Jane noted that she had no problem with content knowledge, designing lessons, or even delivering the lessons. It was the poor student behavior that complicated her job. Because there was a lack of administrative support, "When push came to shove with parents, or students, that's where things started to fall apart" (Jane, Personal Communication, January 14, 2020). Having to initiate responses to behavior in conjunction with communication with parents proved to be strenuous

across all case studies. This perceived lack of support across all participants inhibited them from feeling confident within their professional practice. All participants reported that despite their college experiences in creating lesson plans, they were not provided the tools necessary to navigate the complexities of communicating disciplinary techniques, classroom management strategies, or how to thoughtfully communicate with parents. Christine noted, "There were a lot of heavy topics…I saw student entitlement and lack of follow through with parents to reprimand or have any sort of accountability" (Personal Communication, January 21, 2020). Daniel noted how uncomfortable communication was:

> I felt like a child. It was a double edge sword, communicating with students, where it was good to build kind of a connection to students, but also very difficult because you got into a trap of while you're building those connections and rapport, it more comes across as friendly rather than kind of authority like. The idea of authority gets minimalized in their eyes because of my age (Daniel, Personal Communication, January 23, 2020).

A factor that further compounded such feelings of isolation, perceived lack of support, and poor efficacy in classroom management and parent communication was the fact that four of the six participants were hired for their positions within a week of starting school in September. Due to time constraints, little time was afforded these new teachers to acclimate to their new settings.

Self-efficacy

In regard to attributes needed for teacher readiness and competency, similar sentiments were echoed among participants. Despite perceptions of readiness on behalf of the new teachers at graduation from their respective preparatory programs, in hindsight, participants felt a lack of

maturity at the time of their employment to execute all professional tasks dutifully. All participants reported that a sense autonomy and self-efficacy were lacking in the face of obligatory duties. Christine stated that despite having a great college experience and having faith that her university provided her with the tools necessary to teach a lesson, she " Didn't know that she needed expectations to approach conversations or that dynamics could be different" (Personal Communication, January 21, 2020). With the need to be able to communicate effectively with students, staff, and parents alike, six of the six participants cited this to be an area of difficulty, which led to feelings of insecurity. More so, with the myriad of delegations and new responsibilities thrust upon the new teachers all at once, participants expressed difficulty with struggling and adjusting to new responsibilities delegated to their positions. Perceptions of inadequacies were transformed to blame. As Heather noted, "It was an awful first year, and they gave me all of the hard students. I was set up for failure" (Personal Communication, January 31, 2020). Kate reflected, "I kind of got pushed under the bus" (Personal Communication, February 12, 2020). Such blame was common across case studies. Within each of the participants' interviews an element concerning a lack of fairness was presented as argument or factor in their attrition.

All participants initially felt prepared from their university programs to enter the teaching field. It was not until they could retrospectively reflect upon their experiences that they thought otherwise. Among references most commonly cited in regard to participants' lack of readiness, are the psychosocial and developmental factors attributed with being a young teacher and an emerging adult.

The idea of readiness, a term defined by Baker (2005), is described as being a combination of one's ability and willingness to participate in doing a job in which teachers, can

be considered "more-ready" or competent at classroom instruction. Readiness further refers to one's ability to effectively create a supportive environment for all students with confidence in their engagement with students. For participants in this study, intense feelings of insecurity and efficacy led to a lack of confidence reported by all participants across case studies

Research Question 4:

What attributes impact developmental maturation in emerging adult teachers?

The analysis of data suggests that the impact on developmental maturation in emerging adult teachers in this study was mostly affected by the participants' level of support from parents. Levels of social and financial support were primary contributors to participants' sense of self-efficacy and overall feelings and perceptions associated with being an adult. With emerging adulthood categorized as such an intensely self-reflective period where one is finding a direction, while divergent paths are being pondered in regard to life, love, and work, study participants found their paths to independence to be diverted by their need for financial support from parents and family members (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

Data further reflected that of all the participants interviewed, each participant struggled with identification and sense of self. Participants reflected that during the time, after having left college and subsequently entering the teaching profession, they were, in addition to their professional responsibilities, learning who they were, learning what they wanted out of life, and learning what they wanted to be. In relation to self-discovery and building of efficacy, dependency on others, particularly family for support, was detrimental to feelings of worth. Findings from this study point to the idea that one's capacity and motivation to implement behaviors necessary for success appear to be directly related to participants ability to live autonomously. It is the actualization of self-efficacy that appears to permit one to commit to

goal-oriented tasks. Development of efficacy, determined one's level of educational attainment and success professionally and personally. The study however, showed a clear struggle in participant perceptions of themselves when it came to self-efficacy. With doubt expressed in relation to age, along with reports of being unable to independently and financially support themselves at various times during this developmental period, participants clearly struggled with their respective sense of self and autonomy in relation to their ability to perform adult responsibilities.

Implications of theories presented by both Arnett and Bandura can lead further research to examine the elements associated with attrition rates of emerging adult teachers. With the idea of self-efficacy in relation to perceptions of ability, Bandura's theory of self-efficacy is embedded within Arnett's framework. For this study, although data was discerned using Arnett's framework for emerging adulthood, the data can attribute the notion of self-efficacy to be an integral factor of success in developing a professional identity in emerging adult teachers. Furthermore, emerging adult teachers possessing a greater sense of self-efficacy will have increased resiliency and coping skills that can lead to success. Such skills will allow for emerging adult teachers to navigate varying professional obligations, as well as bounce back from unsuccessful experiences more quickly autonomously (Bandura, Adams, & Beyer, 1977).

Conclusion

The experiences and evidence obtained in this study suggests that there is an integral factor of self-efficacy that is necessary to consider in relation to this problem of practice that is coupled with Arnett's tenets of emerging adulthood. Highly complex developmental tasks were reported across all participants as a time demarcated with themes of intense identity searching,

change, low self-esteem, and wanting to meet familial and societal expectations. Dominant

codes, as highlighted in Table 5, specifically highlight such commonalities among participants.

Lebel and Beaulieu (2011) highlight that changes in roles and identity from adolescence

to adulthood occur not only in behavior but are emotional, hormonal, and cognitive in nature.

During this life stage, brain structure is inherently changing. From a scientific perspective, the

transition into young adulthood intensifies in their late twenties as the prefrontal cortex, the part

of the brain responsible for rational judgement and long-term consequences, matures fully

("Understanding the Teen Brain," n.d.). From a sociological perspective, emerging adults are

metaphorically stuck between adolescence and adulthood. Arnett (2000, 2013, 2014, 2016) notes

that each young person navigating this time, between the ages of eighteen and their late twenties,

distinctively follow their own path that primarily consists of a path of self-identification.

In regard to this study, a most important principle on this road to fulfillment and

actualization was the attainment of meaningful employment as a teacher (Arnett 2000, 2013,

2014, 2016). As young teachers emerge through the stages of early adulthood, and develop not

only a personal identity, they are developing a professional identity (Sutherland, et al., 2010).

The emerging adults in this study shared their experiences relevant to their construction

of professional identity, in congruence with their developmental journey into adulthood. Through

their reflections of experiences they expressed significant individual, social, and community role

identification processes that they wrestled with (Walkington, 2005). Participants commonly

reflected that the combination of applying theoretical knowledge derived from their college

experiences, while attaining to contextual and multifaceted situations in the classroom and

outside of the classroom, resulted in feelings of stress, inability to handle workload, and a poor

self-efficacy (Torres, 2012).

CHAPTER FIVE. DISCUSSION

This multiple case study research explored the perceived experiences of emerging adult teachers in conjunction with their psychosocial development as it relates to teacher attrition. This study sought to examine the developmental readiness of emerging adult teachers and their perceptions of maturity in relation to their experiences with work, autonomy, and perceptions of efficacy.

This chapter contains discussions around the problem of practice and future research opportunities to support the following research questions:

- What are the perceptions of lived experiences of Emerging Adult teachers who leave teaching within five years?

- What is the connection between developmental maturation and teacher attrition in emerging adult teachers?

- What attributes are associated with teacher readiness?

- What attributes impact developmental maturation in emerging adult teachers?

Key Findings

According to the research findings, the impact of development on teacher attrition for the participants of this study was relevant. Participant data clearly reflected common themes pertaining to feelings of uncertainty and change stemming from societal expectations, development, and constructed perspectives. Most substantially, feelings of instability were deeply entwined in the narratives of participants. Collectively, data reflected a time in participants' lives that were defined by wanting to please and uphold expectations while navigating decision making and the subjective task of developing both professional and personal identities.

Participants all reflected varying degrees of efficacy in terms of their developmental transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood while all participants emerged through Arnett's tenets of emerging adulthood to reflect similar experiences all relative to their individual departures from the teaching profession. With feelings of instability during their time in the classroom impacting them both professionally and socially, participants were further left to reconcile feelings associated with identity exploration as well as feelings associated to not yet feeling like adults. Such reflections placed participants level of autonomy, decision making abilities, and overall sense of self-efficacy being reported as low.

Interpretations of Findings

This qualitative study pursued insight into the psychosocial developmental factors that couple with the phenomenon of teacher attrition. Attention was specifically placed on emerging adult teachers who had left their teaching careers within the first five years of employment. In congruence with Arnett's Emerging Adulthood Theory and the developmental shift established through his theoretical tenets, data obtained from this study fell in close alignment and validated Arnett's theoretical perspective. Participant data from this study further upheld Arnett's theory of emerging adulthood to a be a period of substantial growth. Participants characterized their experiences and expectations throughout their college and professional experiences to be a time of notable transition in terms of home, family, career, finances, and perceptions of independence. Such transitions noted by both Arnett and this study's participants provide constructs that support the foundational perspectives of a person's life (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

Arnett noted in his theoretical perspective that "there is now a longer road to adulthood" (Arnett, 2014, pg.1). Despite many emerging adults leaving home in their late teens, many do not distinguish themselves as "adult" until they are as old as twenty-nine (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014,

2016). Adulthood was expressed by all participants of this study to be an arbitrary experience that is subjective to one's individual experiences. Despite one participant expressing that adulthood came roughly around the age of 25, all other participants reflected that they were all continuing their journeys into adulthood and did not yet consider themselves fully adult and would only presume that by the age of 30 or even 35 they would consider themselves fully maturated and living their adult lives.

Evidence from this study further validated Arnett's tenet of identity exploration and self-focus. Each of the participants not only noted the myriad of decisions and self-reflection that took place in their lives during this developmental time, but all participants experienced a range of emotion in terms of stress and reported anxiety and depression. Such emotions were further emphasized through participants' perspectives on identity; specifically in relation to their roles as teachers. All participants reported conflicts with identity in relation to not only professional roles, but their social and familial roles as well.

The concept of independence and autonomy was among the most notable within these discussions. A clear dichotomy among participants was presented in regard to expectations of their professional roles and how they personally assumed and regarded their own identities. At the time of their employment as teachers, all participants expressed that they did not feel like they were adults, and that their jobs were professional hindered by such viewpoints. Such data further edifies Arnett's theory and suggests possible relevance to the topic of teacher attrition in emerging adults.

Insight from the sampled participants suggest that, despite perceptions of maturation of the college graduate teacher candidates, levels of psychological development and autonomy are lacking in the face of professional realities and expectations. Specifically, classroom

management, efficacy, and level of commitment were most notable from the data obtained (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016). Although previous studies have noted factors associated with attrition including work demands, salary, lack of administrative support, poor school culture, inadequate resources, and student behavior, attrition from teaching that occurs during emerging adult has shown in this particular study to be compounded by the developmental tenets of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016; Sass et al., 2012).

Strong perceptions of feeling alone coupled with balancing work-life expectations led all participants of this study to experience a reported form of anxiety or depression. Regarding the concept of work-life balance, the expectations of emerging adult teachers were not a consideration thought of by participants in their pre-service experiences. The reported encompassing nature of the profession led participants to consider salary and compensation as being insubstantial. When factoring the number of hours worked, preparation for work, and other necessary duties, participants were left feeling fiscally unable to support themselves and unfairly monetarily compensated.

Such fiscal insecurity was also highlighted across participants as being a burden to manage independently. Participants, having transitioned from their family homes and related financial security, were tasked with not only finding a level of independence when it came to work and decision making, but were also tasked with attaining financial independence for the first time.

Finances were among the most prevalent topics of discussion related to perceptions of adulthood. All participants noted that financial independence was an indicator of both maturity as well as adulthood. It was their lack of financial independence that often led to a lack of autonomy and low self-esteem.

Arnett (2014) notes that with such an emphasis on work and identity during this time in one's life "high hopes are often met with hard realities" (p. 192). He further contends that "there is a dark side to the work prospects of emerging adults" (Arnett, 2014, p.192). There are such high expectations for how work will fulfill them and also be a source of income, that often times reality falls considerably short of the ideal that they had constructed for themselves. Furthermore, emerging adults often find that they grow tired of their once desired occupation and succumb to exploration of other fields of interest during this time (Arnett, 2014). Despite having attained educational training, the developmental nature of emerging adults is to explore. Emerging adulthood is categorized as "a time of open possibilities" (Arnett, 2014, p.185). One's story has yet to be written, with so many future unknowns ahead with varying paths to attainment, it is a time when "dreams flourish" (Arnett, 2014, p. 185).

An additional theme of identity in relation to student-teacher relationships remained a constant throughout participant reflections. Specifically, the study participants reflected a discomfort in the age difference between themselves and their students. This commonality expressed by participants surfaced not only numerical age, but level of maturity.

This discomfort was additionally highlighted in participant discussions about parent communication. Anecdotal references to age and perceptions of being too young were echoed among all participants, with half of the participants reflecting that they were in the same stage of development as the students they were assigned to work with, while all but one reported parental concern over lack of age span between their child and the emerging adult teacher.

The young educators in this study faced a dichotomy in their transitions from students to authority figures. Haberman (2012), notes that young teachers are expected to shift from "perpetrators to enforcers" and that young teachers face a significant shift in their social and

cognitive development at this time entering the teaching profession (Haberman, 2012). In a short period of time, the roles are changing dramatically.

Evidence provided through the data also highlighted a strong aptitude or love of school as students themselves that factored into their college level decision making regarding major courses of study. Reflection of experiences provided the consistent narrative of being able to easily navigate school and responsibilities during adolescence. A common reflection among participants in regard to their transition into teaching, was the it was among the first times they were given autonomy and decision making. Furthermore when a matter was brought to their attention that was negative or required redirection in regard to performance, participants expressed a great deal of difficulty in navigating any mitigation or consequences for their actions. As Participant 4, Daniel, reflected upon the conclusion of his interviews, he had "never learned how to gracefully fail" (P4, Personal Communication, January 24, 2020).

Participants in this case study all experienced varying symptoms of depression and anxiety as a result of their teaching experiences and expressed varying degrees of helplessness when faced with challenging situations. For each participant, negative feelings of self-worth as well as blame were concurrent themes expressed.

Implication for Practice

Leadership

A significant implication of the interpretations of findings is attributed to the lack of administrative support. With such consistent concerns expressed over this lacking resource, the reported data should be deemed relevant to the problem of attrition, particularly among emerging adult teachers.

There is a critical need to support young educators entering the teaching profession. Lack of administrative support is not a new finding unique to this to this study as it pertains to attrition. In fact, it has been a topic of scholarly discussion for some time in relation to attrition and teacher success (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017, Sass et al., 2012).

Participants of this study reported feeling alone and unsupported. All but one participant was assigned a mentor teacher. Lack of support in conjunction with high expectations, wanting to please, and wanting to help others make their mark of the world, ultimately lead this study's participants to feel stress and low- efficacy in relation to performing expected professional tasks. As a result, blame was attributed to administrative practices and school community support.

During this semi-autonomous stage of development for emerging adults, it is important for administration to recognize that their emerging adult teachers are navigating an intensely self-reflective time in their lives (Dolan, 2019). Arnett (2015) characterizes this time in an emerging adult's social and cognitive development to be a time of intense self-focus and instability. It is further compounded by the reality that this time in development is where one typically internalizes problems and stress, ultimately increasing the likelihood of anxiety and depression (Arnett, 2015).

Implications of this developmental factor must lead educational leaders to consider the impact of such significant growth in maturation, world views, and cognitive development of teachers in their twenties. Furthermore, it is necessary for building principals and administration to recognize the significance they play in being an instrumental role in the mentoring and support of the young staff (Dolan, 2019).

With consideration of leadership theory in mind, and its place within this problem of practice, Bernard Bass, and his examination of the psychology between leader and follower

become relevant for consideration to the implications of this study. His development of theory focused attention in terms of the influence of and on the followers of leaders as a tool of measurement affecting success of leadership. Central to his focus of work, Bass looked specifically to motivation, inspiration, and charisma (Clayton, 2016). Bass advised that workers seek to find meaning beyond themselves. All participants of this study reflected similar notions of wanting to help others and do good for others beyond themselves. In his reflections of theory, Bass submitted that people are innately wired to respond to those leaders in which they feel a sense of trust, admiration, loyalty and respect. He advanced the idea that people under such leadership are encouraged to contribute to the decision- making process, while feeling motivated by the idealized influence of those above them (Clayton, 2016, Dolan, 2019). With Arnett's theory and framework in mind, it is a viable consideration that our principals not only lead in a traditional sense, but mentor, and provide developmental guidance to their emerging adult faculty.

In contemplation of the data obtained through this study, the question remains; How do we balance the delicacy of development with the responsibilities held by emerging adult teachers? Moreover, how do educational leaders and specifically principals, effectively implement such a psychologically complex mentorship, beyond the daily responsibilities of running a school (Dolan, 2019)?

Teacher Preparatory Programs

A lack of preparation was reported from all participants upon their initial experiences and interactions within the classroom. Although not one specific practice or collegiate learning experience was reported as missing in regard to their preservice training, all participants expressed a notion that expectations influenced their performance in the classroom. Study

participants all expressed high expectations for job satisfaction as well as preparedness in regard to job performance upon entering the profession. It was not until facilitating daily interactions with students, faculty, administration, and parents did those expectations become consciously connected to their practice. Participants all entered their respective teaching assignments with a sense of possibility and optimism. It was not until the dynamics of their day to day experiences were integrated into their scopes of practice did participants reflect not feeling prepared. Specifically, feelings attributed to their age, and the perceptions of identity in relation to others as well as self-efficacy in regard to communication practices were among the most significant in findings. Low-efficacy and insecurity, as reported relating to job performance and the elements of communication skills needed, were relevant to participants' decisions to leave the profession.
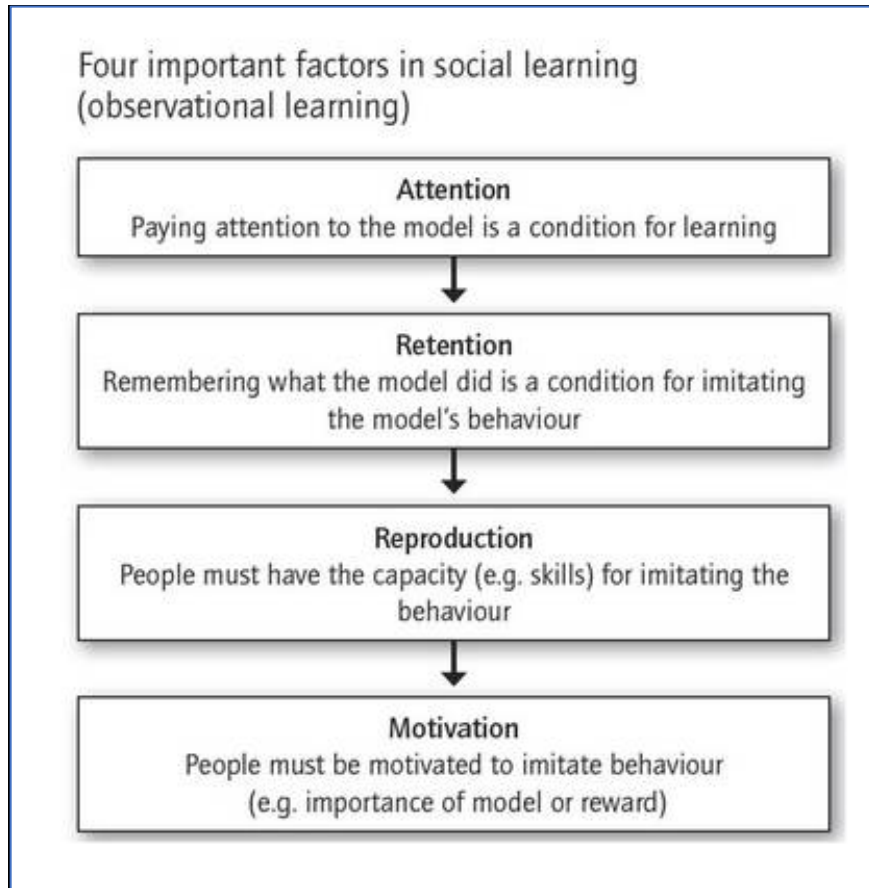
Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher believes there to be an implication of this analysis that is relevant to a model of developmental readiness of teachers that could be derived from Bandura's Social Learning Theory. While the researcher believes that use of a multiple case study for this study was the correct choice for this study, a mixed methods approach to gain further understanding and saturation of this phenomena would be a viable next step in research. A quantitative focus would also lend more impact to this topic of research while an expansion of geographic location, as well as an increase in participant selection, would serve to deepen appreciation and understanding of this problem of practice.

Based on the research constructed through this study, many opportunities exist for additional research related to attrition and teaching among emerging adults. Specifically, an area of focus derived from the study's themes suggest that a viable area of further research be in the area of psychology and specifically social learning theory.

Social learning theory is a method of observational learning which stems from Bandura's work that is prioritized on the idea of self-efficacy (Dolan, 2019). The idea of self-efficacy refers to how one perceives their own capabilities in regard to performing a task. People's beliefs about their efficacy directly relate to their level of motivation and accomplishment (Bandura, 1994). Bandura's model of social learning, as highlighted in Figure 8:

Four important factors in social learning (observational learning)

Attention
Paying attention to the model is a condition for learning

Retention
Remembering what the model did is a condition for imitating the model's behaviour

Reproduction
People must have the capacity (e.g. skills) for imitating the behaviour

Motivation
People must be motivated to imitate behaviour (e.g. importance of model or reward)

Figure 8. Bandura's Social Learning Theory

In consideration of the topic of attrition in new young teachers, the researcher further believes that attention should be given to integrate Arnett's theory of emerging adulthood with both Bandura and Bass' respective theories. Implications of this study could help to formulate a design of programming and support to ensure observational learning that builds efficacy in new educators.

Meta-analysis of studies in regard to the development of self-efficacy has concluded that one's ability to think meta-cognitively as well as one's attunement of learning goal orientation, and perception of self or self-clarity, can all be considered to be predictors of developmental readiness. Such findings are relevant not only to the nature of leadership, but can also be assignable and relevant to educational leadership specifically, as well as professional readiness in new teachers (Dolan, 2019; Nohria & Khurana, 2010).

Limitations of Study

There were some limitations to this multiple case study research. First, due to the nature of qualitative methodology and the dependency of results being placed upon participants' ability to recount experiences, such reflections provided limitations in this qualitative process. Limitations were rooted in participant perceptions, epistemological beliefs, and accuracy to recall events as they pertain to the events and feeling relative to this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2013).

A second and most notable limitation in regard to this study was the lack of significant sample size. With a sample size of six participants, results specifically and solely pertained to their own lived experiences and cannot be generalized across the whole population of emerging adult teacher who have left the teaching profession (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, due to the limited diversity of participants; all being of white decent and from middle class households, perceptions and expectations of college were entwined in their collective upbringings. All participants expressed that college was an assumed expectation and was subsumed in their personal expectations for life course.

Regarding participants' self-perceptions of maturity, adulthood, and development, because there are limited measures to accurately evaluate maturity, data obtained from this

research should only pertain to the participants of the study and their specific reflections and

definitions associated with maturity. This study only utilized Arnett's theoretical criteria for

maturation and therefore does not represent other theories or perspectives that measure adulthood

or markers associated to it (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016).

Finally, it is of equal significance to acknowledge the researcher's biases pertaining to

her own personal experiences, knowledge of teaching, and ultimate attrition from teaching. This

bias, although bracketed, was present in meaning making, and analysis of data presented

(Creswell & Creswell, 2013). As a former fourth-grade teacher, the researcher's personal and

professional bias in regard to this study remained at the forefront of consideration in regard to

ethical practice. Although, absolute removal of personal and professional biases during the

research process and analytic sequence was a non-viable option, the researcher documented and

disclosed personal and professional deliberations throughout the process. The researcher

surfaced and monitored her identity through journaling (Creswell & Creswell, 2013).

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to pursue the perceived experiences of emerging adult

teachers, specifically in conjunction with psychosocial development and teacher attrition.

Through this work, the researcher sought to appraise participant perceptions of the

developmental readiness of emerging adult teachers in relation to their perceptions of maturity

and participants' ability to successfully perform professional teaching duties. Such perceptions

were explored specifically in relation to work, autonomy, and perceptions of efficacy. Despite

initial perceptions of maturity and readiness of the emerging adult teachers in this study,

participant data harmoniously reflected significant cause for consideration of developmental

readiness in emerging adult teachers. Most notable indicators of data presented feelings of

instability coupled with identity exploration to strongly influence one's capacity to successfully navigate the professional responsibilities charged to teachers. Specifically, levels of autonomy in conjunction with self-efficacy were decisively clear factors reflected in the data presented. An additional delineation among study participants were expectations of performance. Perceptions of said expectations were derived from personal, societal, and familial perspectives.

The level of teacher quality, competence, and knowledge is among the highest of influences on a child's learning (Hattie, 2012). With the turbulent rate of attrition occurring in our schools annually, the need for continued study of teacher attrition continues to be an important matter for scholars. It is significant for researchers to not only continue to examine organizational structures of education, pre-service training, policy, and staffing dynamics within the educational community, but developmental readiness as well (Arnett, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2016; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Ingersoll, 2003). Research suggests that a closer examination of teacher needs for support is necessary for a holistic approach to remediate this phenomenon in regard to not only student achievement, but staff retention (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). The Alliance for Excellent Education (2014), imparts that those students who are impacted the greatest by attrition are among the lowest socio-economic status, with higher attrition rates of occurrence in low SES districts reported. It is the construction of these opportunity gaps caused by attrition within these school districts that stand to perpetuate and widen America's achievement gap (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 1999, Ingersoll, 2003). Consequently, attrition can no longer be considered a reality of the profession as too much is at stake. Without a deeper and expanded scope of perspective focused on how we address the issue of attrition, particularly in emerging adult teachers, this problem will continue to persist leaving a negative educational impact for future generations.

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Appendix A: Invitation to Participate

Dear _____,

I am a doctoral candidate in the Southern New Hampshire University Educational Leadership Doctoral program. I am currently in the process of creating a study to examine attrition of teachers in the Emerging Adult stage of development for my dissertation. I am working under the guidance of Dr. Audrey Rogers, Dr. Richard Ayers, and Dr. Elise Pepin.

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore teacher attrition specifically through the lens of Jeffrey Arnett's theory of Emerging Adulthood. Particularly, I am seeking to interview and retrieve data from teachers between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-nine years of age who have left the teaching profession within the first five years of teaching.

It will be during our first interview together that I will present all details to you in regards to the structure of our interviews, as well as the type of questions I will ask. During this initial interview, I will present my assurances to you in regard to ethical practice. I have disclosed these practices at the end of this email for your consideration.

It is my hope that this research will be valuable to the study of teacher attrition, specifically in regard to young teachers. I would very much appreciate your help with this project.

Kindest regards,
Amanda Dolan M.Ed.
a.dolan1@snhu.edu

Assurances to interviewees for ethical practice:

If you agree to participate in an individual interview, anything you tell me will be treated with confidence, respect, and ethical regard, free of discrimination or judgement relating to bias.

- As a researcher, I respect your right to decide which questions you may choose to answer, without question.
- As a researcher, I respect your right to withdraw from this process at any time, without recourse.
- As a researcher, I may wish to utilize quotes from our interview for the purpose of written expression within my dissertation. All quotes will be expressed using a pseudonym and will only be used with your expressed, signed permission.

Appendix B: Informed Consent Agreement

Project Title:

Facing attrition: The lived experience of emerging adult teachers in the public education

Purpose of the research study:
The purpose of this study is to highlight the perceived experiences of emerging adult teachers in conjunction with their psychosocial development as it relates to teacher attrition in the United States. With nearly fifty percent of new teachers leaving the profession within the first five years of teaching, this study will seek to examine the developmental readiness of emerging adult teachers and their perceptions of maturity as it relates to their experiences with work, autonomy, and perceptions of efficacy.

What you will do in the study:

As a participant in the study, you will be given details regarding the research and the terms to consent. You will be interviewed by a researcher in respect to your experience and decision to leave teaching. All interviews will be recorded using a Livescribe EchoSmart Pen and Galaxy Smartphone audio recorder.

Time required:

Each of the three interviews will last no more than ninety minutes. The third interview length will be subject to participant reflection upon data retrieved from the prior two interviews

Risks:

There are no anticipated risks in this study.

Benefits:

There will be no benefits, monetary or otherwise, for your participation in this research study. The report from this study will be made available to you, as well as your interview transcripts for the purpose of validation and clarification.

Confidentiality:

All participant's personal information will be kept confidential. The data collected will be recorded text only, to be transcribed at a later time. The information obtained through participant interviews will be assigned a pseudonym. Information will be stored for private record and when the study is completed and the data has been analyzed, this information will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any reports or publications.

Voluntary participation:

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary.

Right to withdraw from the study:

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

To withdraw from this study please contact Amanda Dolan at a.dolan1@snhu.edu or at 603-361-3152.

Participation Agreement:

I agree to participate in this study (please check one): YES___   NO___

Participant's Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Date of Interview_____

Name of Participant: _____

Interviewed by: Amanda Dolan

I am interviewing former teachers, who are Emerging Adults, who have left the teaching

profession within their first five years of teaching. With nearly fifty percent of new teachers

leaving the profession within the first five years of teaching, this study will seek to examine the

developmental readiness of emerging adult teachers and their perceptions of maturity as it relates

to their experiences with work and developing a sense of maturation in regard to self and

identity.

The information that you provide in the interview will be used in the research that I am

conducting at Southern New Hampshire University. The collection of interview data obtained

from all of the participants interviewed will be reviewed and saved by the supervising faculty

members.

The researcher will follow Seidman's (2006) structure for phenomenological based interviewing

protocol, in which interviews will be conducted with open-ended questions. Use of this

methodology with provide participants a degree of latitude in exploring the topic from their

respective points of view. Seidman's (2006) Three Interviews Series will be conducted with all

of the 6 to 10 participants, allowing the researcher and the participants, time to build rapport in

order to effectively develop an accurate picture of the participants' lived formative experiences.

Participant Interview 1:

1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself:

2. Describe your elementary school experience:

3. Did you attend a public-school setting, private setting, home-school?

4. What were your early experiences with teachers like?

5. Tell me about your family growing up and the dynamics of your household:

6. When did you decide that you wanted to attend college?

7. Was this decision influenced by anyone or anything?

8. Did you know what you wanted to study upon entering college?

9. What was your major course of study in college? Concentration?

10. Were there any factors that lead you to your choice of scholarship?

11. Describe yourself as a student growing up:

12. Tell me about your work-ethic:

13. How did you know that you were "ready" for college?

14. How did you perceive your level of independence upon entering college?

15. How was your degree financed?

16. Did you live away at school or on your own?

17. Describe what kind of student you were in college:

18. How many different programs of study did you explore in college?

19. Did you participate in any mentoring or student teaching experiences while in college?

20. Describe those experiences:

Participant Interview 2:

1. How long did you attend college?

2. How old were you when you graduated?

3. When you graduated, did you feel prepared to work in the field of teaching?

4. Do you believe that your collegiate classroom work was impactful to your job teaching?

5. Where did you live after graduation?

6. Was this living situation what you had imagined?

7. How financially independent were you at this time?

8. What were your feelings in regard to adulthood at this time?

9. What does it mean to be an adult?

10. Do you feel like you are an adult?

11. What do you consider to be adult responsibilities?

12. At what age do you believe people become adults?

13. Do you pay rent or a mortgage?

14. What bills do you pay on your own?

15. Do you handle your own personal finances?

16. Are you currently in a relationship?

17. What are your thoughts about marriage and children?

18. When would be an ideal time for marriage and family (if you are interested ?)

19. How long did it take you to attain a teaching position upon graduation?

20. Upon taking your teaching job, how did you feel?

21. Tell me about where you worked teaching and what grade level you taught:

22. Did you feel that you were a part of a community in the school?

23. Did your school have a mentor program?

24. Tell me about the administrative support at your school:

25. Tell me about your interactions with parents/guardians:

26. Tell me about your interactions with students:

27. Describe how your expectations and reality were met when it came to working in the classroom:

28. How long did you teach?

29. What was the deciding factor(s) that caused you to leave?

30. Did you expect that this would be a career you would have had for a long time?

31. Describe your identity to me:

32. Do you believe your identity is tied to your work?

33. What are the most important things in regard to work?

34. What is your current employment status?

35. Where do you envision yourself ten years from now?

36. How important is it to get a college degree?

37. How much debt do you have as a result of college?

38. Was college worth it for you?

39. How do you feel about your ability to navigate personal relationships with friends?

40. How do you make important decisions?

41. Have you ever had any issues with anxiety or depression?

Participant Interview 3:

1. Thinking back to what you shared in interview one and two, do you feel that your college experience was meaningful?

2. Thinking back to what you shared in interview one and two, what have your experiences taught you about yourself?

3. Thinking back to what you shared in interview one and two, is there anything that you would have done differently?