Improving the retention of special education inclusion teachers: Understanding their experiences in work and preparation in an urban setting.

A Dissertation submitted
to the Graduate School
Valdosta State University

in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in Leadership

in the Department of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology
of the Dewar College of Education and Human Services
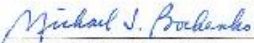

January 2023

Justin Schanck

B.A., Stockton University, 2001
M.A., Seton Hall University, 2004
Ed.S., Georgia College and State University, 2011

This dissertation, "Improving the retention of special education inclusion teachers: Understanding their experiences in work and preparation in an urban setting," by Justin Schanck, is approved by:

Dissertation Committee Chair

Michael J. Bochenko, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor
Leadership, Technology, & Workforce Development

Dissertation Committee Research Member

Herbert R. Fiester, Ph.D.
Professor
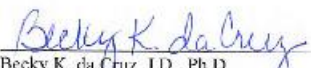Leadership, Technology, & Workforce Development

Committee Member

Kathy Nobles, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor
Leadership, Technology, & Workforce Development

Committee Member

Elaine K. Reichert, Ed.D.
Adjunct Instructor
Leadership, Technology, & Workforce Development

Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research

Becky K. da Cruz, J.D., Ph.D.
Associate Provost for Graduate Studies & Research
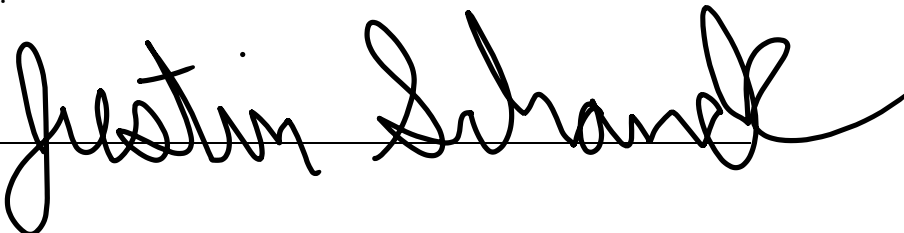Professor of Criminal Justice

Defense Date

January 18, 2023

FAIR USE

This dissertation is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, revised in 1976). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgment. Use of the material for financial gain without the author's expressed written permission is not allowed.

DUPLICATION

I authorize the Head of Interlibrary Loan or the Head of Archives at the Odum Library at Valdosta State University to arrange for duplication of this dissertation for educational or scholarly purposes when so requested by a library user. The duplication shall be at the user's expense.

Signature _____

I refuse permission for this dissertation to be duplicated in whole or in part.

Signature _____

ABSTRACT

This research sought to understand the experiences and perceptions of special education inclusion teachers (SEITs) from an urban county in Central Georgia. The qualitative narrative analysis proposed here aims to give school districts insight into why SEITs leave the field. This study followed a basic qualitative design. Participants were pulled from an urban school district in Central Georgia by emailing or phone calling through an open records request. A total of four participants were selected for this study. Two of the chosen participants were female, and two were male. The two females were aged 26 and 26; the two males were aged 23 and 25. The two male participants were African American, while the female participants were white.

Data were collected in four interviews and coded by In Vivio, Pattern, and Codeweaving during the analysis process. Five themes were developed through the analysis process. Those themes were Job Choice, Preparation, Workload, and Job Effectiveness. Implications for practice include lessening teacher workloads, developing more robust mentorship programs, and improving how SEITs are prepared for the job. Future research suggested would be to compare SEITs that left the field to those that are still in the area. Also, reaching those with an innate desire to teach to those who choose to teach for convenience would be essential. Lastly, the participants of this study all had some disability they were diagnosed with at an early age. It could be helpful to look at the differences between SEITs with a diagnosed disability and those without a disability.

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dedication

      This project is dedicated to my wife, Sarah, son Connor, and daughter Audrey. Without the love and support of my wife and my children's understanding, I am not sure I would have completed this process. I love you all more than you could know.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The role of special education teachers has evolved, especially since The

Rehabilitation Act (1973), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

(2004), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) were all enacted. IDEA is

different from the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act because it

does not simply prohibit discrimination based on disability (Stasio, Fiorilli, Benevene,

Uusitalo, & Chiacchio, 2017). Instead, it requires states to comply with IDEA

procedures as a condition of receiving federal funds (Stasio et al., 2017). More

specifically, IDEA requires states to have free and public education (FAPE) for children

with disabilities, including access to the general education curriculum. IDEA mandates

part of guaranteeing FAPE to include the evaluation of students suspected of having a

disability (Stasio et al., 2017), including creating an individualized education plan (IEP).

IEPs are developed by a committee, supporting a student with the tools they need to

access the curriculum. An IEP committee includes parents, guardians, teachers,

administrators, school psychologists, and the student.

Special education inclusion teachers (SEIT) work directly with students with IEPs

in a co-teach setting. SEITs are responsible for ensuring instructional accommodations

are being met in the classroom, scheduling IEPs for the annual reviews of each child on

1

their caseload, and working with general education and special education students within the classroom (Robinson, 2011). Such a classroom setting illustrates the term inclusion. Some SEITs can teach up to four different subjects, depending on their schedules, and attend all four content area meetings to keep abreast of the lesson planning. Having special education teachers attend content area meetings are crucial (Cancio et al., 2018). SEITs are essential in working with general education teachers to accommodate lesson plans for special education students when needed (Robinson, 2011). The SEIT provides guidance when discussing the appropriate way to develop activities to meet the needs of the special education students in the classroom (Robinson, 2011).

The primary responsibilities of the SEIT, as discussed thus far, reflect a partial range of duties. Joining different committees upon request, counseling children with challenging behaviors, dealing with conflicts when working in another adult's classroom, or being used as a behavior management specialist serve as a small sampling of assigned responsibilities befalling the SEIT. The additional stressors may lead to a challenging work environment and cause the SEIT to teach general education students exclusively or leave teaching altogether.

SEITs have reported numerous stressors when teaching children with special needs (Robinson, 2011). Increased caseloads, pressure attributed to student achievement, addressing student behavior, and worries about the existence of their current positions can cause significant stress (Cancio et al., 2018). This work-related stress may cause the quality of service to decline or culminate to a point the SEIT leaves the profession altogether. Escaping the profession was one of the main reasons for teachers leaving the field (*Table 1*). Using exit surveys in the study, Cancio et al. (2018) found that the

special educator job is difficult, demanding, and stressful. According to Feng and Sass (2018), the number of teachers entering the field of special education dropped by 17% from 2006 to 2017, while the number of children being recognized as having special needs decreased by only one percent.

Table 1

Reasons for SEITs Leaving Teaching (Cancio et al., 2018)

Reasons	Percentage
Other	18.2
Personal Reasons	31.3
Escape Teaching	37.2
Retirement	42.1

37.2% of SEITs are leaving their jobs to escape teaching, but SEITs aren't the only jobs in education that are having difficulties with retention. General education teachers are also leaving the field, specifically math and science teachers (Loewus, 2021). Loewus (2021) reported that 33% of general education teachers said that it was very likely that they would escape teaching within the next two years. While the numbers for special education inclusion teachers are slightly larger based on *Table 1* and *Table 2*, there can be cause for concern for the field of education as a whole.

Table 2

Likelihood of General Education Teachers Leaving in the Next Two Years (Loewus,

2021)

Responses	Percentage
Very Unlikely	27
Somewhat Unlikely	19
Somewhat Likely	21
Very Likely	33

The perception of the teaching profession has changed over time. Based on

surveys conducted by Park, Jacob, Wagner, & Baiden (2013), teaching is not viewed as

the profession it once was. Since the early 1990s, with the development of charter

schools, more rigorous academic standards have been adopted, teacher evaluations began

being tied to student performance on standardized tests, and structured lesson plans

offered less room for creativity (Park et al., 2013). As reported in 2013, only eight

percent of teachers earning a bachelor's degree in education had a major in special

education. It further noted that those who did not major in special education indicated it

was because of the stressors associated with the job (Park et al., 2013). Participants

stated that other individuals within the profession would tell them to choose a different

career path because of the tremendous workload (Park et al., 2013). Radford (2017)

provided an example of what the workload can look like in the classroom, with a teacher

stating she was responsible for 20 middle school students with a spectrum of disabilities.

Teenagers with intellectual disabilities, emotional behavioral disabilities, and specific

learning disabilities were assembled in one classroom. The teacher would implement 20

individual education plans in addition to 20 sets of classroom and testing accommodations. Subsequently, the quality of education for the student declines as the number of students within a classroom increases (Radford, 2017). This is especially true when it applies to students with disabilities. The student-to-teacher ratio has increased since the last recession ended in 2009 (Gilmour, 2019). This ratio went from 15:1 to 16:1 in Georgia, with some counties in the state experiencing more significant numbers (Gilmour, 2019) and no pay increase (Park et al., 2013).

From 2001 until 2014, the attrition rate of SEITs has ranged anywhere from 10% to 20% across the United States (Park et al., 2013). The rate is even more significant when reviewing the attrition data of SEITs within the first five years of starting their career (Tilos, 2019), which can be viewed in *Table 3*. The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (n.d.) reported an attrition rate of 44% for SEITs within their first five years of teaching. The attrition data for general education teachers are close behind SEITs, with 44% reporting leaving after their first five years, as seen in *Table 4* (Will, 2020). Considering this, school districts are dealing with a continuing recruitment, hiring, and induction cycle. The time and resources leaders spend to induct SEITs must be considered in relation to the cost of retaining them (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). Because of the value related to retention, the central office and local school personnel must take steps to reduce the rate of attrition (Thornton et al., 2010). The special education teaching profession should not be a cycle of new teachers who change careers after only a few years (Thornton et al., 2010). The best way to accomplish this task is to understand why teachers leave the field. District leaders have continually stated the SEIT

attrition issues we face throughout the country, including in the state of Georgia, but fail to address the factors for why it is still an issue to this day (Maslach, 2015).

Table 3

Average attrition rates of SEITs in the first five years in the United States (Tilos, 2019)

Years	Percentage
After 1	18.2
After 2	31.3
After 3	37.2
After 4	42.1
After 5	46.1

Table 4

Average attrition rates of general education teachers in the first five years in the United States (Will, 2020)

Years	Percentage
After 1	16
After 2	30
After 3	33
After 4	41
After 5	44

Theoretical Framework

Research on attrition rates of SEITs has focused on the internal struggles occurring when one decides to leave their job. The results from surveys given to participants throughout much of the research lay a foundation rooted in understanding the concepts of burnout, feelings of helplessness, a lack of gratitude, and poor working conditions (Gilmour, 2019). Poor working conditions have been associated with feelings of inadequacy and a lack of support from the administration. A scarcity of resources for students was noted as contributing to the burnout factor (Olson, 2014). The internal struggles SEITs face when contemplating leaving the profession are best associated with three theories: The Human Capital Theory of Occupational Choice, the Labor Economic Theory of Supply and Demand, and The Multidimensional Theory of Burnout.

The Human Capital Theory of Occupational Choice

The Human Capital Theory of Occupational Choice finds individuals making systematic assessments of the net monetary and nonmonetary benefits from different occupations leading to systematic decisions throughout their career to enter, stay, or leave a profession (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). The nonmonetary benefits include working conditions, support of peers and supervisors, compatibility of hours and schedules with family and leisure needs, availability of adequate materials, students' learning attitudes, and parental support. Individuals will choose occupations with a maximum net return (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019).

A monetary benefit is money associated with an occupation (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Research in teaching has focused on financial bonuses for student achievement based on standardized test scores (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). In some

school systems, a bonus may be given to teachers with high student achievement, while other teachers without high-achieving students do not receive the bonus. This has the opposite effect of improving morale and performance (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Some school districts tried to provide bonuses to the entire school for positive performance instead of individual classrooms, but the impact has been inconclusive (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019).

Labor Economic Theory of Supply and Demand

The Labor Economic Theory of Supply and Demand suggests that an individual will work in a position if the overall compensation package makes it an attractive job (Montrosse & Young, 2012). This theory states that compensation is not limited to salary and benefits but includes any aspect of work influencing one's desire to enter, stay, or leave (Montrosse & Young, 2012). Those influences could range from the work schedule to the job location. For teachers, it could be the intrinsic rewards one derives from teaching. Intrinsic rewards initiate a positive emotional response in an individual and depend on that individual's effort. Examples of intrinsic rewards in teaching could be the ability to inspire others, impact many lives, and allow your creativity to flow. Conditions of service are an essential factor as to whether someone may stay on a job or leave (Montrosse & Young, 2012). These conditions are then studied and broken into categories to understand the overall makeup of the teacher labor market.

The Multidimensional Theory of Burnout

According to Maslach (2015), The Multidimensional Theory of Burnout conceptualizes burnout in three core components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. She explains *burnout* as an

individual stress experience embedded in complex social relationships. It involves a person's conception of both self and others. Maslach (2015) explains *emotional exhaustion* as being emotionally overextended and depleted of one's emotional resources. The sources of exhaustion are usually developed from work overload or personal conflicts at work. Personal conflicts can develop from the co-teaching experience or complex relationships associated with administrators. Maslach (2015) defines *depersonalization* as a negative, cynical, or excessively detached response to other people. This develops as a response to overloaded emotional exhaustion and represents the interpersonal dimension of burnout (Maslach, 2015). According to Maslach (2015), the last dimension, *reduced personal accomplishment*, is a decline in feelings of competence and productivity at work. This lowered sense of self-efficacy has been linked to depression and an inability to cope with the job (Maslach, 2015). This can be exaggerated by a lack of opportunities to develop professionally. The individual develops a growing sense of inadequacy in being able to help others. This represents the self-evaluation component of burnout. Maslach (2015) states that this three-dimensional model places the individual stress experience within a social context. This is what makes the concept of burnout distinct from other types of stress.

Figure 1. Multidimensional Theory of Burnout
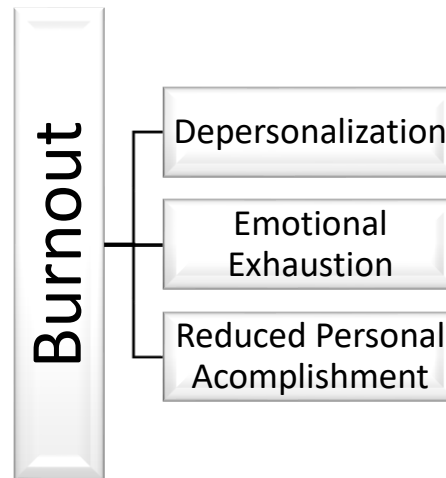
Figure 1. This figure is representative of Maslach's (2015) Multidimensional Theory of Burnout. The chart shows how the three factors of depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and reduced personal accomplishment all tie back to the concept of burnout.

This study will investigate the thoughts, feelings, and, more importantly, experiences of SEITs having left the teaching field. The multidimensional theory of burnout focuses on individuals' emotional exhaustion, in this case, SEITs, which is stated in the literature review (Maslach, 2015). Since burnout is a social and emotional construct impacting the concepts of self and relationships, it aligns well with this study (Maslach, 2015) when answering the following research questions:

RQ1: What were the experiences of special education inclusion teachers who have left the profession?

RQ2: How do special education inclusion teachers, who have left the profession, perceive their support as a special education inclusion teacher?

RQ3: What impact did special education inclusion teachers' classroom experiences have on their decision to leave the field?

More specifically, the perception of performance and support would be negatively impacted by the theory of burnout, which is one reason teachers leave the field of education, according to Maslach (2015). Asking the overarching research questions will allow the participants to reflect on their experiences by speaking about their feelings. Those feelings could be tied to exhaustion from conflicts and overload in the work environment. SEITs may also choose to stay or leave based on their job's monetary and nonmonetary benefits, which inversely impacts the supply and demand of the teacher job market. An analysis of the transcripts from the interviews revealed if these theories played a role in SEITs leaving the profession.

Statement of the Problem

Being a SEIT causes stressors (conditions that trigger stress) that build over time (Tilos, 2019). These stressors develop through increased workloads, high-stakes testing for children with disabilities, and teacher performance evaluations. When a SEIT leaves a teaching position because of stressors, their negative feelings toward the job can impact the recruitment of future candidates. These teachers' negative thoughts and feelings can spread throughout districts and communities. This can have an even greater impact the more that leave the profession. High turnover rates raise a red flag for future candidates and those already employed.

Currently, school systems throughout the U.S. cannot recruit and retain enough teachers certified to teach in an inclusion setting; ideally, through the study of the problem, recommendations will be made to improve retention. A certified teacher is defined as a person meeting specific qualifications or standards (Tilos, 2019). One such

qualification in Georgia is obtaining a passing score on the Georgia Assessment for the

Certification of Educators (GACE). This problem is worth studying because it continues

to occur in school districts throughout the country and impacts every district member,

including students.

Purpose of the Study

The scope of this study is linked to the concepts generated in *Figure 2* and pulled

from the theoretical frameworks discussed earlier. The concepts are mapped based on the

significance level, with the main concepts beginning in the center of the figure and then

spreading out to the sub-concepts. The concepts and sub-concepts focus on the factors

impacting SEIT burnout rates and why they choose to leave or stay in the teacher

workforce, some of which overlap with the general education teacher population. These

concepts impact the supply and demand of the teacher work pool.

Figure 2. Concept Map of Former SEITs Experiences

Professional Development
1. Lack of PD offered can impact performance,
2. Can also lower morale.

Student Performance
1. Low performance can lead to frustration.
2. Pressure from poor standardized test scores.

Workload
1. Larger IEP caseloads can lead to frustration
2. Working outside of school can lead to burnout.

Career Experiences of Former Special Education Inclusion Teachers
1. Perception of Support
2. Perception of Performance

Mentorship Programs
1. Mentorship programs can increase confidence in teachers.
2. Need to be paired with someone of the same skillset.

Administrative and/or Staff Support
1. Lack of support can lead to burnout.

Teacher Evaluations
1. Low evaluations without support impact burnout.
2. Low evaluations impact teacher performance.

Figure 2. The scope of this study is linked to the concepts generated in *figure 2*. It was developed based on research conducted by Billingsley & Bettini (2019), and Tilos (2019). The concepts are mapped based on the significance level, with the main concepts beginning in the center of the page and then spreading out to the sub-concepts.

The purpose of the qualitative narrative analysis proposed here is to give school districts insight into why SEITs leave the field. This perspective would come by way of interviewing those having left the profession. This information could help school districts change the hiring and recruiting practices of SEITs, along with improving support after hire.

This study will focus on the factors of the perception of on-the-job performance and the perception of on-the-job support. Within these two elements, the study will understand the impacts of workload (caseload size, paperwork, etc.), how SEITs are evaluated (who conducted their evaluations and were the evaluations positive or negative experiences), student performance (in the classroom and on high stakes testing), support from administration, and the implementation of mentorship programs. An in-depth narrative analysis of these factors will help achieve this study's purpose. Life experiences will be examined for relevance to this topic but not as a primary focus. It will be essential to gather background information to paint a complete picture of each participant, which may include family and educational background. This will also allow the researcher to determine if any commonalities exist between participants in this area. If so, then it might be worth exploring in future studies.

Research Questions

To develop an understanding of how the experiences of SEITs shape their decisions to leave the field, I propose a narrative research level of inquiry to answer the following three overarching questions:

RQ1: What were the experiences of special education inclusion teachers who have left the profession?

RQ2: How do special education inclusion teachers, who have left the profession, perceive their support as a special education inclusion teacher?

RQ3: What impact did special education inclusion teachers' classroom experiences have on their decision to leave the field?

Responses to the research questions will help achieve this study's goal by revealing the positive and negative aspects a participant may experience in their teaching career. Career experiences are any experiences a person gains working in a specific field or occupation. Gaining a better understanding of their experiences will help school and central office personnel make sound decisions regarding teacher retention.

The perception of support greatly affects teachers' leaving the field (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). If the participants describe a lack of support throughout their careers, then insight into their experiences would help school personnel change current policy. The policy could be anything from establishing or fixing mentorship programs to looking at hiring practices.

While the first research question deals with general career experiences, such as everything occurring outside the classroom, the third question focuses on events inside the classroom. Classroom experiences may address workload concerns, student performance, teacher evaluations, and professional development. Gaining insight into those having left the field would help local, and school personnel make improvements to the experiences of SEITs when they are in the classroom.

Significance of the Study

Hermann (2018) asserted that solving the SEIT attrition issues is essential to improving the educational system. The results of this study will give school districts personal insight into why SEITs leave the field. This information could help school districts change their hiring and recruiting practices for SEITs. It is the researcher's intent, through this qualitative narrative analysis, to provoke discussions within the impacted school systems to develop strategies for retaining SEITs.

Researchers (Whitford & Villaume, 2014) continually discover reasons for teachers leaving the field through the administration of surveys. These scales rate how teachers feel based on particular situations and assist researchers in drawing inferences about teachers' struggles. Surveys do not describe the thoughts and feelings of SEITs in detail. When we develop a better understanding of the personal struggles faced by teachers, we increase the ability to retain them.

Therefore, researcher interviews of SEITs who have left the field of teaching to help districts enact policies to improve retention rates have the potential to expand what is currently known about teacher attrition. The results of this study could also positively impact the methods by which SEITs are recruited.

Students suffer from SEIT attrition as it can cause long-term emotional and academic stress. Student learning rhythms are disrupted when there is a lack of consistency because of a constantly changing staff (Gilmour, 2019). Students are impacted because they are left with long-term substitute teachers in the classroom who never go through the process to get certified (Gilmour, 2019). This leads to significant turnover rates every year. One year of poor instruction puts students at a tremendous disadvantage in their future academic endeavors and directly impacts graduation rates (Feng & Sass, 2018). This is evident in the graduation rate reported in an urban school district in Central Georgia for the 2018 school year, which was 58.79% for students with special needs (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.). In 2017, the graduation rate was 58.10%, and in 2016 it was 57.20% (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.). There is consistently a 30% to 40% gap in the graduation rate between special and general

education students each year. If we can keep certified SEITs in these positions, it will likely positively impact student outcomes, including graduation rates.

Definition of Terms

Americans with Disabilities Act (1990). The nation's first comprehensive civil rights law addressing the needs of people with disabilities includes prohibiting discrimination in employment, public services, public accommodations, and telecommunications (Schneider, 2017).

Burnout. A state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity (Maslach, 2015).

Co-Teach Classroom. This is when special education and general education teacher are paired together to teach a classroom of students. Special education and general education teachers are responsible for planning, instructing, and assessing (Cancio et al., 2018).

Differentiated Instruction. A framework or philosophy for effective teaching provides all students, within their diverse classroom community of learners, a range of different avenues for understanding new concepts (Whitford & Villaume, 2014).

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). The educational right of all students in the United States is guaranteed by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Whitford & Villaume, 2014).

Individualized Education Plan (IEP).   Individualized Education Program. A written document was developed for each public school child eligible for special education (Schneider, 2017).

17

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004). Provides very specific requirements to ensure a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities (Schneider, 2017).

Teacher Attrition. The percentage of teachers exiting the educational profession in a given school year (Cancio et al., 2018).

The Rehabilitation Act (1973). Prohibits discrimination based on disability in programs conducted by federal agencies, programs receiving federal financial assistance, federal employment, and the employment practices of federal contractors (Whitford & Villaume, 2014).

Summary of Methodology

This study was conducted through a qualitative narrative inquiry. A qualitative narrative inquiry is a process where the researcher analyzes stories, journals, field notes, letters, conversations, interviews, family stories, photos, and life experiences, to understand the way people create meaning in their lives (Maxwell, 2013). More specifically, the methodological approach focused on the biographical component of the stories developed by each participant (Merriam, 2018). The stories were analyzed in terms of the importance of life events and turning-point experiences and the impact of other persons in the participants' lives (Merriam, 2018). They were also analyzed based on the impact of student performance bonuses, mentorship programs, teacher evaluations, administrative support, classroom structure, caseload numbers, and professional development offerings.

Participants were pulled from an urban school district in Central Georgia by way of emailing or phone calling through an open records request. The urban school district

has roughly 320 special education classroom teachers (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.). Of those 320 teachers, ten to twenty leave each year (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.). Their departure was either coded as personal reasons or transferring to another district. These teachers have taught mainly in a co-teach environment. Co-teaching is working with children with special needs in the general education classroom. The general education and special education teachers share the workload in teaching the entire classroom of students. The profiles required for this study were four participants between the ages of 22 and 30 that have left the teaching field, specifically being a SEIT. There were two male and two female participants, all previously coming from secondary schools. This limit was set because any number greater than six has the potential to reach saturation. Saturation happens when no new information is gained from interviewing more participants. If saturation does not occur after six participants, then the number of participants can increase. The sample size drawn would be between eight and nine to protect from participant attrition. The personal insight would come from interviewing those having left the profession, which would be coded for commonalities and themes.

I used the Seidman (2019) three-part interview series to develop trust with the participants. It also allowed each question to be explored as in-depth as possible. The first interview focused on life history in a surface-level manner, allowing the participant to feel comfortable and ease into the process (Seidman, 2019). The second interview focused more on the participant's current life as it related to the content of the topic for this study (Seidman, 2019). The third interview required the participants to reflect on the meaning of their experiences described in the second interview (Seidman, 2019). It specifically focused on emotional and intellectual connections (Seidman, 2019). I used

19

the fourth interview for any follow-up questions for the participants. The responses to the interview questions were transcribed and coded in three phases using MAXQDA, data analysis software for qualitative and mixed-methods research. Interview dates and times can be found in *Appendix E*. Once the field notes and interview responses were transcribed, the results were used to answer the research questions for this study.

Limitations

There are two specific threats discussed by Maxwell (2013), researcher bias and reactivity. These threats are particularly important for qualitative research. A qualitative researcher's awareness of the subjectivity they may bring to the study is known as bias (Maxwell, 2013). Bias is when a conclusion contains data fitting the researcher's existing theory, goals, or preconceptions (Maxwell, 2013). According to Maxwell (2013), it is virtually impossible to eliminate the researcher's beliefs and theories from their study. Therefore, it is essential to understand how a researcher's values and expectations may influence the conclusions of a study (Maxwell, 2013). I have thought about my own bias regarding my research. It was vital for me to talk about my experiences as a special education teacher so the reader has some background knowledge of my perspective. It will allow the reader to compare the study's results to my personal experiences and their conclusions regarding the impact of bias.

Organization of the Study

This study will be presented in seven separate chapters. Chapter one discusses the background of the research, the research questions, and the significance of the study. Chapter two will be a review of the literature. More specifically, it will detail past findings and implications of this current study. Chapter three details the qualitative

narrative analysis used for this research, sample selection, and data collection methods.

Chapter four will present the research findings from the interviews conducted and field notes taken during the various interactions with the participants. Chapter five will discuss the coded results of the interviews and field notes, along with suggestions for future research.   Chapter six will discuss the analysis of the transcripts regarding themes that are present. Lastly, chapter seven will discuss the discussion of results.

Summary

This chapter presented the study's background, purpose, and significance and the research questions driving this study. The need for interviewing SEITs was discussed, particularly improving previous studies that only scratched the surface of understanding their thoughts and feelings. Additionally, this chapter presents the statement of the problem, the definition of terms, and the study's limitations.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The review of the literature will be discussed in separate phases. The first area to be addressed will be the background of special education. It will be important to understand the laws encompassing the teaching profession and how it plays a role in a teacher's experiences, including teacher preparation programs. The next section will address how the career experiences of special education teachers impact their perception of support and feelings towards their given career, along with any coping mechanisms they may use to deal with stressful situations. More specifically, literature on SEITs perceptions of their teaching positions will be linked to the theoretical frameworks discussed in chapter one. Lastly, section three will review solutions for retaining SEITs. In summary, this chapter will examine the broad scope of research that has been published regarding the experiences special education teachers face in their careers.

History of Special Education

Schools' requirement to serve special education students occurred in the 1970s (Tropea & Winzer, 1994). In earlier times, special needs students were either refused enrollment (Tropea & Winzer, 1994) or inadequately served. As new laws were passed, special education went from being a separate program to being integrated into the general education program (Tropea & Winzer, 1994). These laws ensured the inclusion of individuals with disabilities into the larger population of individuals (Rotatori, Obiakor &

Bakken, 2011). It all started with the foundations that were built in the 1950s. In 1954, the Supreme Court decided on the case of *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* (Tropea & Winzer, 1994). This case raised the importance of the claim that even though white and black children were separate (Winzer, 2014), they were still provided equal opportunities (Rotatori et al., 2011). The case proved that separate did not mean equal (Tropea & Winzer, 1994). This became a foundation for legal actions for families of children with disabilities (Winzer, 2014) to ensure they received a free and appropriate public education (Rotatori et al., 2011). This decision also began the movement to provide inclusive education to students with disabilities with their general education peers (Winzer, 2014).

Following *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, court decisions have expanded and upheld the educational rights of students with exceptionalities (Rotatori et al., 2011). Before the passage of Education of All Handicapped Children in 1975, *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* in 1972 established the rights of special needs students and their parents to receive an appropriate education that included special education services (Rotatori et al., 2011). Several court cases were to follow, focusing on the inclusion of students with exceptionalities in the general education setting (Winzer, 2014). Some of those cases were *Sacramento City Unified School District v. Rachel H.* (1994) (Tropea & Winzer, 1994) and *Board of Education of the Borough of Clementon School District v. Oberti* (1993) (Winzer, 2014). Winzer (2014) noted that these cases not only encouraged school districts to educate all students in general education settings but also provided guidelines for placing students in the least restrictive environment (Rotatori et al., 2011). Those guidelines involved comparing the

educational, behavioral, and social outcomes taught in a general education setting to being educated in a special education classroom using those same outcomes (Tropea & Winzer, 1994). An emphasis was placed on the importance of examining the impact of students with disabilities on the education of their general education peers and teachers (Winzer, 2014). Lastly, the guidelines for a least restrictive environment stated the importance of considering the costs of educating students (Tropea & Winzer, 1994) in an inclusive classroom and the effects of these costs on the district's resources for educating all students (Rotatori et al., 2011). All these cases were built from the foundations of specific laws passed.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed in 1975 (Rotatori et al., 2011) and provided students with disabilities access to public education (Winzer, 2014). IDEA mandated children are taught in the least restrictive environment and have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (Rotatori et al., 2011). The IEP guides the delivery of special education services and addresses academic and functional goals. It focuses on a student's postsecondary options, employment, and independent living (Rotatori et al., 2011).

Special education initially focused on serving students with sensory disabilities and then cognitive disabilities (Rotatori et al., 2011). Students with socially constructed disabilities make up most of the special education student population (Winzer, 2014). This occurred when socially constructed disabilities (Winzer, 2014) were added to the eligibility categories to include emotionally disturbed and learning-disabled students (Rotatori et al., 2011). Learning disabilities were described as poor performance (Tropea & Winzer, 1994) by a student and not explained through sensory, physical, or severe

cognitive disabilities (Rotatori et al., 2011). There was an increase in serving students who fell on the autism spectrum disorder (Rotatori et al., 2011). These laws and court cases eventually led to a reform in how teachers were prepared at higher education institutions (Rotatori et al., 2011).

Preparation of Special Education Inclusion Teachers

History of Special Education Teacher Preparation

Teacher preparation first occurred in residential facilities, but with the demands of educating all individuals (Feuer, Floden, Chudowsky & Ahn, 2013), the preparation changed by the 1960s and early 1970s. Preparation moved away from residential settings or facilities providing housing for children with severe and profound disabilities to teachers' colleges (Feuer et al., 2013). By the early 1970s, a series of laws designed to enhance the educational opportunities of special education children (Feuer et al., 2013) produced extensive growth in special education teacher education. The early college programs were designed to teach individuals ways in which they could provide an appropriate education to students with disabilities (Greenberg, McKee & Walsh, 2013). By the 1980s, the education of special needs children moved in a different direction (Greenberg et al., 2013).

College and university teacher preparation programs moved from a categorical focus on disabilities to a more generalized approach (Feuer et al., 2013). Proponents of this era questioned the categorical methods of focusing on specific disabilities to plan instruction and behavior management (Feuer et al., 2013). The teacher preparation programs viewed the learning and behavioral needs of students with disabilities on a continuum of severity (Greenberg et al., 2013). In the 1990s, the move to educate

students with disabilities in general education classrooms prompted further consideration of the roles of special education teachers (Greenberg et al., 2013). Because of this shift in focus, collaboration became a focal point (Feuer et al., 2013) in special education teacher preparation. As more special education students entered the general education classrooms, preparation programs focused on special education and general education teacher collaboration (Feuer et al., 2013). Both were responsible for delivering instruction.

Special education teacher preparation programs went through another transition. IDEA legislation mandated that students with disabilities access the general education curriculum (Feuer et al., 2013). When No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was passed in 2001, it mandated that schools be held accountable for the performance of students with disabilities by using assessments tied to the general education curriculum standards (Feuer et al., 2013). Special education teachers (SEITs) have a solid knowledge base for understanding a multitude of disabilities, they must be proficient at knowing and fully understanding the content of the general education curriculum (Greenberg et al., 2013). Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely, and Danielson (2010) suggest that the ability of students with disabilities to make adequate yearly progress depends on the skill level and motivation of the SEIT. Some have discussed the possibility of requiring SEITs to become highly qualified in the content they teach. Still, using this as a recruiting tool lessens the ability to retain them (Greenberg et al., 2013). This means SEITs must pass an assessment to show proficiency in a particular subject. Brownell et al. (2010) suggest that the preparation of SEITs might need to change with a focus on recruiting skilled general education teachers. Qualified general education teachers have a stronger knowledge of

the curriculum and a better grasp of providing specialized instruction since they must complete the RTI process for selected students (Greenberg et al., 2013). These skills would translate well to working with students with disabilities.

The Effectiveness of Today's Teacher Preparation for SEITs

Many special education programs reviewed by Brownell et al. (2010) lacked a clear and concise vision and failed to integrate subject-matter pedagogy with educational theory and field experience. Brownell et al. (2010) did find that such programs stressed the importance of collaboration with faculty and school personnel (Greenberg et al., 2013). Emphasis was placed heavily on well-planned collaboration and field experiences. The one missing aspect of collaboration was among community stakeholders and parents (Greenberg et al., 2013). Some of the programs did have courses related to family engagement (Greenberg et al., 2013), but there was no evidence of the coursework being applied to field experiences. Many SEITs expressed concern about needing to feel adequately prepared to collaborate with parents in the school setting (Greenberg et al., 2013). SEITs needed to learn how to bring parents into the planning process. Planning usually occurs in isolation (Greenberg et al., 2013). Special education programs offered diversity-related experiences (Greenberg et al., 2013), stressing the importance of the individual learner. According to Brownell, Ross, Colón, and Mccallum (2005), it was difficult to tell how diversity knowledge was implemented throughout the students' experiences in these teacher preparation programs. Special education programs focused intensively on assessing students, but Brownell et al. (2005) described the need for a more comprehensive focus considering the importance of monitoring student progress.

According to Brownell et al. (2005), programs will continue to need help defining what a quality SEIT looks like in the classroom. This is due to the complexities of special education teaching. Teacher preparation programs must define what it means to be a qualified first-time special education teacher (Sharp, 2019). A measure tied to the quality of the teacher must account for teaching students with dramatically different needs (Sharp, 2019), providing instruction in multiple content areas, and the ability to engage in multiple roles. Those multiple roles include interacting with students, parents, and administration. Researchers must do better at measuring ways of identifying student outcomes (Sharp, 2019) aligned to what the teachers can do in the classroom (Brownell et al., 2005). State assessments and standardized tests should not be the sole indicators of students with special needs growth. These assessments are not sensitive to achievement growth, mainly when special education students are administered at grade level (Brownell, Ross, Colón, & Mccallum, 2005). The assessments do not capture the value outcomes of special needs students, such as the ability to live independently.

All these factors must be considered when developing a strong teacher education program for potential SEITs (Sharp, 2019) in collaboration with state and local school boards. Without more refined programs, we will continue to lose SEITs because of the stress and lack of training associated with the job (Sharp, 2019).

Perception of Teacher Preparation Programs

Bishop, Brownell, Klingner, Leko, and Galman (2010) interviewed teachers to find out what was important to them when working through a teacher preparation program. There were three factors teachers described as being essential to their preparation. Those factors were content knowledge in special education and pedagogical

understanding of academic content (Sharp, 2019), opportunities to practice and apply

knowledge in the classroom setting, and preparation in classroom management (Sharp,

2019). Teachers reported that their programs stressed the importance of basic reading

skills but ignored strategies when working with more complex disabilities (Bishop,

Brownell, Leko, & Galman, 2010). Courses lacked focus on preparing teachers for how

to educate students of all disabilities. Teachers discussed the importance of applied

practice when learning how to teach academic content. Those who were not as confident

in their teaching abilities said their preparation mainly consisted of theory and less

applied practice (Sharp, 2019). Field experience, teachers believed, was the best

supplement to learning (Bishop et al., 2010). The problem is that most programs focus

on classwork and less on-field experiences (Bishop et al., 2010). According to the

teachers interviewed, learning about theories and teaching methods was insufficient

(Bishop et al., 2010). Special education teachers reported needing more opportunities to

apply the information acquired from coursework (Bishop et al., 2010).

Leko (2018) questioned SEITs about the content of their undergraduate and

graduate courses. Fifty-seven percent of the teachers reported learning about direct and

implicit instruction regarding teaching math and reading to children with special needs.

The rest of the sample reported that the content learned was more text-based

collaborative learning. Seventy-one percent of the teachers surveyed reported that

undergraduate and graduate school classes were lecture-based with little practical

experience. In contrast, others reported student assessments as their instruction's driving

focus (Leko, 2018). Forty-three percent of SEITs reported having the opportunity to

observe a veteran teacher in practice, with only 32% of SEITs serving in a tutorial capacity with students (Leko, 2018).

The SEITs reported on their perception of their undergraduate and graduate coursework and if it adequately prepared them for their job. SEITs did not feel strongly about their preparation for becoming special education teachers (Leko, 2018). Twenty-nine percent stated they were adequately prepared, 29% believed they were not prepared, 13% expressed strong disagreement about being prepared, and 7% strongly agreed their preparation was adequate (Leko, 2018). Twenty-three percent of the SEITs reported being neutral. The participants of this study were asked if they had opportunities to implement the coursework content from their undergraduate and graduate school classes. Thirty-nine percent said they were able to implement the content they learned, while 16% were not able to implement it (Leko, 2018). Nine percent strongly felt they were able to implement what they learned, with 6% indicating strongly they were not able to implement (Leko, 2018). Thirty percent reported a sentiment of indifference to the question of implementation. A follow-up question about learned techniques was posed to teachers who believed they could not implement what was learned from undergraduate and graduate school. Fifty-six percent of those teachers reported that the learned techniques did not align with the current needs of their classroom (Leko, 2018). Forty-two percent of conveyed techniques were too dated (Leko, 2018). Twenty-eight percent indicated that their current teaching context was not structured to support what they had learned in their studies (Leko, 2018). Thirty-two reported a lack of time, 25% a lack of appropriate courses offered, and 10% indicated a lack of funding (Leko, 2018). Finally,

10% indicated they disliked the techniques they learned in their undergraduate studies (Leko, 2018).

Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks discussed in this section will be the Multidimensional Theory of Burnout, the Human Capital Theory of Occupational Choice, and the Labor Economic Theory of Supply and Demand. These frameworks will be supported by documentation of literature supporting the research questions of this study. The literature will be reported based on its impact on this study and, specifically, what has been done in the past and where the research needs to go.

Occupational Burnout

The concept of burnout is tied to the conceptual framework of this study. According to Leiter and Maslach (2015), the Multidimensional Theory of Burnout is a prolonged response to an occupation's chronic interpersonal and emotional stressors. It is defined by three dimensions: exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficiency. Exhaustion refers to feeling overextended and depleted of emotional and physical resources. The cynicism component represents the interpersonal context dimension of burnout. This refers to a negative or detached response to various aspects of the job (Leiter & Maslach, 2015). The component of reduced efficiency represents the self-evaluation aspect of burnout. This suggests feelings of incompetence and lack of achievement on the job.

The initial studies on burnout developed from studies conducted in the human services and education sectors. The concern with these jobs was the number of emotional challenges one could face while at a job with others, either in teaching or some caregiver role. Research on burnout branched into other job sectors, such as computer

programming, where relationships with other individuals were less prevalent. Leiter and

Maslach (2015) did not find burnout as pronounced in these jobs and kept thinking this

concept was uniquely tied to the emotional stressors of social services and teaching. This

is not to say that factors such as time pressures and workload did not correlate with

burnout for the nonsocial service jobs, but those factors were not as strong. More recent

research has focused on the emotional work-related factors encompassing certain

occupations. These emotional factors can require one to display or suppress emotions or

require the employee to be emotionally empathic throughout the day. According to

Leiter and Maslach (2015), these factors account for additional variance in burnout on top

of the job stressors mentioned earlier.

  The impact of burnout on the field of teaching. A more specific approach

Leiter and Maslach (2015) took in studying burnout was to look at different jobs and how

defined job profiles were measured on three dimensions. Leiter and Maslach (2015)

learned that the teaching field received high ratings for exhaustion compared to other

professions. Cynicism and inefficiency are rated evenly with the national averages. The

information gained from these studies suggests that occupations' essential characteristics

affect workers' burnout experience (Leiter & Maslach, 2015). Leiter and Maslach (2015)

noted that their study's data must be cautiously presented. There may be other

explanations as to why certain factors are present in some professions and not in others.

For example, males are predominantly employed in law enforcement, explaining why the

profession is rated high for cynicism.

  The impact of specific job attributes on burnout was studied by Leiter and

Maslach (2015). Leiter and Maslach (2015) discovered that high job expectations, in

terms of the nature of the work and achieving success, resulted in individuals experiencing a high burnout rate. High expectations can lead to people working too hard and doing too much. Exhaustion and cynicism quickly ensue. Subsequently, burnout may occur when an individual puts more effort into a task than what they perceive to get in return, sometimes known as compassion fatigue.

Compassion fatigue is a phenomenon special education teachers can experience throughout their careers. Donahoo et al. (2017) sought to explore various alternative therapies to help improve the compassion fatigue issues causing special education teachers to quit their jobs at unexpected rates. "Teachers who work with children who have experienced traumatic events are susceptible to secondary traumatic stress" (Donahoo et al., 2017, p. 442). These traumatic events can range from a lack of attention to academic weaknesses and violence. Special education teachers have reported numerous stressors when teaching children with special needs. Increased caseloads, pressure on student achievement, student behaviors, and worries about the existence of their current positions can cause significant stress (Cancio et al., 2018). This work-related stress often results in declining work quality and leaving the profession altogether. Research indicates that the special educator's job is more complex, demanding, and stressful than general educators (Cancio et al., 2018). According to Feng and Sass (2018), the number of teachers entering the field of special education dropped by 17% from 2006 to 2017, while the number of children being recognized as having special needs increased.

Stress can develop due to external events (Thornton et al., 2010) negatively impacting the body and mind. The efficiency of a SEIT is tied to their opinions, values,

and behaviors directly correlated to their ability to teach (Thornton et al., 2010). Work satisfaction declines along with teacher performance when stress is experienced in the school setting (Tilos, 2019). The effects of job-related stress can be a serious problem and lead to depression, low performance, lack of motivation, absenteeism, or fatigue (Thornton et al., 2010). The outcomes of teachers' work-related stress could lead to a high turnover rate for districts across the country (Thornton et al., 2010).

Special education teachers have discussed a lack of funding for the appropriate tools for their students as contributing factors to frustration and burnout (Tilos, 2019). The students taught by special education teachers come with a litany of learning difficulties. These difficulties sometimes require specialized instruction or adaptive tools to help the students access the curriculum. In some instances, funds were never available to get what the students needed (Tilos, 2019). Funding set aside for special education was used to purchase items for general education students or items the principal deemed appropriate (Tilos, 2019). In turn, SEITs take money out of their own pockets to offset the cost of materials needed for each of their students. Administrators ignoring the importance of fulfilling the needs of special education students can lead to stress, anxiety, and burnout in the SEIT.

Cancio et al. (2018) surveyed special education teachers in Ohio, Illinois, Texas, and Arizona. Convenience sampling was used to obtain the participants for the survey. The rating survey contained stress and coping strategies scales. Four emails were distributed to a sample pool of 512 special education teachers. Survey responses were provided by 211 (41%) special educator teachers (Cancio et al., 2018). Eighty-seven percent of the respondents indicated they were endorsed or licensed in the area they were

currently teaching. The data reflected that 94% of the special education teachers valued

their positions, 89% had positive relationships with their colleagues, and 81% were

committed to their field. Many participants (63%) noted a tendency to carry school

problems home, with 57% indicating that their work leads to frustration. A significant

number of SEITs (78%) expressed feeling constantly tired, with over half (61%) sharing

that the amount of work undertaken would interfere with job performance. Work

obligations lent themselves to a great deal of stress and gave rise to many SEITs using

adaptive coping strategies to handle the pressure (Cancio et al., 2018).

As the results indicated, teacher stress significantly impacted the retention of

special education teachers. When teachers find their workload to be manageable, they

tend to plan to continue teaching (Dillon & Silva, 2011). When teachers see their

workloads as less manageable and stress-producing, they are more likely to quit and

become exhausted. How do these teachers develop coping strategies to deal with stress?

Dillon and Silva (2011) reported that the most used adaptive coping strategies were

listening to music and feeling supported by family and friends. Using coping strategies,

such as counseling, eating, perception medication, alcohol, and recreational drugs, were

indicators of increasing stress levels (Dillon & Silva, 2011). On the other hand, SEITs

involved in professional organizations, such as the Council for Exceptional Children,

exhibited reduced stress levels (Dillon & Silva, 2011).

Similar to studies conducted by Cancio et al. (2018), many researchers have used

surveys to collect data, but more needs to be done in conducting interviews with these

teachers. Interviews could allow a researcher to develop a deeper understanding of a

teacher's feelings and motivations about their job. Regardless of the studies reviewed

and analyzed, teacher burnout is a genuine concern, especially for special education teachers. A study conducted by Stasio, Fiorilli, Benevene, Uusitalo, and Chiacchio (2017) defined burnout as referring to the feelings of physical and psychological fatigue and exhaustion experienced by an individual. Stasio et al. (2017) found that the strongest variables impacting burnout were teachers' happiness at school, self-esteem, and job satisfaction. The expectation is for teachers with low self-esteem and unhappiness to experience burnout in their personal lives and at work. Self-esteem, happiness, and job satisfaction at school improve teachers' resilience. They are better equipped to manage the kinds of stressful situations special needs teachers experience in the classroom (Stasio et al., 2017). Teachers can use coping mechanisms to maintain positive health but cannot do it in isolation. Teachers need the support of family and friends and school and central office administration. Fostering a positive work environment where everyone's opinion is valued and all are treated as equals lessens the likelihood of burnout.

The literature indicates burnout is widespread among social and human services individuals, including teachers of all grade levels. The risk factors contributing to the stress and burnout of these individuals, specifically teachers of special needs students, found they were being required to cope with a variety of learning difficulties, student aggression, conflict among co-teachers, time pressures, larger classrooms sizes, and demanding parents (Stasio et al., 2017). Stasio et al. (2017) reported that teachers of special needs children in Turkey had the same experiences as teachers from the United States. Those teachers often reported feeling more exhausted and depersonalized than their counterparts in general education classroom settings. This continues to be a common theme throughout most research, regardless of country of origin.

In Greece, Brittle (2020) conducted research to locate key stress sources for SEITs and identify appropriate coping strategies to combat stress. Some of the stresses identified included increased responsibility for the student's well-being and education, a general lack of support from state and local officials, and the pressure of time at school (Brittle, 2020). There was a reported lack of resources to meet each child's individual needs, which contributed to the teachers' stress levels. Men reported being more stressed than women regarding dealing with behaviors in the classroom. The teachers mainly discussed using active strategies to combat the stresses experienced on the job (Brittle, 2020). This means SEITs would try to remove or circumvent the stressors through task-oriented or social support strategies. Task-oriented strategies include thinking about steps to solve a problem, and social support strategies include having and maintaining stable relationships (Brittle, 2020).

The women in Greece were more likely to seek to build relationships within the school building than men (Brittle, 2020). This was a significant factor for women to maintain lower stress levels (Brittle, 2020), whereas men experienced more considerable stress. A substantial reason for these teachers to seek support was due to experiencing a lack of support from state and local government (Brittle, 2020).

If we want to understand why special education teachers leave the profession, Kaff (2004) suggests focusing on attrition rates. Not only is there a need to focus on attrition rates of teachers in general, but the attrition rate of SEITs also needs to be explored to determine if these teachers are leaving more than others. Kaff (2004) reported a higher attrition rate for teachers working with students diagnosed with emotional behavioral disorders than those teaching children with learning disabilities or

intellectual disabilities. In Kaff's (2004) study, 400 questionnaires were administered, and 341 (85%) were completed. Random special education teachers were invited to complete the questionnaire from a list provided by the Kansas State Board of Education. One hundred questionnaires were given equally to teachers in the largest eligibility groups; Emotional/Behavioral Disorders, Intellectual Disabilities, Learning Disabilities, and Interrelated. Interrelated refers to those teaching across multiple disabilities. The teachers were to fill out a second questionnaire a month after their first questionnaire was completed. Of all the respondents working in the area of emotional or behavioral disabilities, 63% reported wanting to leave the field. A similar response was noted by 43% of those working with learning disabilities, 37% of the intellectual disabilities teachers, and 36% of the interrelated group.

Other factors contributing to teachers wanting to leave the field were the following: administrative issues, lack of support, student issues, paperwork/regulatory issues, how services were provided to students with disabilities, money concerns, parent and community support, and time and training (Kaff, 2004). The most significant contributor reported by teachers was administrative issues and lack of support. Many of the teachers across the board said administrators did not understand the roles undertaken daily. The teachers believed administrators and general educators were not very supportive of their work (Kaff, 2004). Teaching had taken a backseat compared to all the other duties and responsibilities required of special education teachers. Kaff (2004) suggests that teacher preparation programs must refocus their agendas, so the special education teacher is prepared to meet the job's demands.

Burnout and personality traits. Personality traits have been studied to see who is at greater risk of experiencing burnout during their careers (Leiter & Maslach, 2015). It was discovered that those who do not participate in daily activities or are open to change had higher burnout scores (Leiter & Maslach, 2015), specifically with exhaustion. Compared to those with an internal locus of control, those with an internal locus of control experience higher rates of burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 2015). Therefore, teachers attributing successes and failures to their abilities will experience greater occupational happiness (Leiter & Maslach, 2015). This type of teacher confronts situations actively instead of passively (Lako, 2018). Individuals having low self-esteem are passive or have an external locus of control and will often exhibit more significant levels of burnout (Lako, 2018).

Burnout and demographic variables. Burnout is a social phenomenon rather than an individual one. When demographics were examined as a whole, it was found that age played a significant role in determining levels of burnout. Leiter and Maslach (2015) found that young employees reported a higher level of burnout compared to those between the ages of thirty and forty. Burnout appears to be more of a risk earlier in an individual's career, but few studies have thoroughly examined this aspect (Leiter & Maslach, 2015). According to Leiter and Maslach (2015), gender does not appear to factor in burnout. Specific jobs showed higher levels of burnout in males, and there were specific jobs where females scored higher.

Williams and Dikes (2015) looked at the implications of demographic variables as they relate to burnout among SEITs. It was reported that attrition for SEITs was at an annual rate of 13% when their study was completed. In 2013, the United States

Department of Education identified a special education teacher shortage as critical in most states. Many districts are forced to hire teachers not certified in the respective special needs field. Special education teachers, specifically SEITs, leave the classroom at twice the rate of their general education colleagues (Williams & Dikes, 2015). High levels of job stress were associated with decreased job satisfaction and a high turnover rate.

The purpose of the study conducted by Williams and Dikes (2015) was to explore special education teachers' emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and personal accomplishment (PA) as they related to 10 demographic variables. The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey was used (1996) (Williams & Dikes, 2015). It consists of three separate subscales to measure burnout. The MBI-ES is a seven-point, Likert-type scale survey consisting of twenty-two statements concerning perceptions of work (Williams & Dikes, 2015). Scores range from low to moderate to high (Williams & Dikes, 2015). High burnout is reflected by high scores on the EE and DP subscales and a low score on the PA subscale and vice versa (Williams & Dikes, 2015). The demographic questionnaire asks about gender, age, marital status, degree attained, years teaching, caseload number, grade level taught, number of students taught daily, additional hours of completing paperwork, and teaching assignments. The study's population (Williams & Dikes, 2015) consisted of 215 special education teachers employed in an Alabama school system. The sample size was 65 special education teachers. Frequencies and percentages were compiled on the demographic information provided by the participants and then compared to the responses on the MBI-ES using SPSS (Williams & Dikes, 2015). A t-test was performed to determine if there were statistically

significant differences between the demographics and scores on the EE, DP, and PA (Williams & Dikes, 2015).

The results of the Williams and Dikes (2015) study reflected that male special education teachers exhibited depersonalization more frequently than female special education teachers. Females tended to score higher on the exhaustion scale. Special education teachers who were not married or dating showed higher levels of burnout (Williams & Dikes, 2015). As teachers' years of experience increased, so did their levels of stress (Williams & Dikes, 2015). This information contradicts what Leiter and Maslach (2015) said regarding age and gender related to burnout.

Caseloads were linked to burnout. Williams and Dikes' (2015) results found 15 or fewer cases per teacher to be manageable. Middle school and high school teachers with high student-to-teacher ratios were found to be more prone to stress. Factors positively correlated to stress were extra hours of completing paperwork and lack of planning time during the school day (Williams & Dikes, 2015).

Brunstring, Sreckovic, and Lane (2014) conducted a synthesis of research from 1979 to 2013 tied explicitly to burnout rates of special education teachers. In five studies by Brunstring et al. (2014), teacherage was negatively correlated to burnout. In essence, the older the teacher is, the less likely they will be impacted by burnout and have a better sense of personal accomplishment (Brunstring, Sreckovic, & Lane, 2014). Gender, too, was a factor in burnout, with males being positively correlated with burnout. "Role conflict, role ambiguity, and administrative support were found to be particularly salient factors in teacher burnout related to male teachers" (Brunstring et al., 2014, p. 705).

These factors might interest further research since previous findings have been conflicting.

Coping strategies to combat burnout. When stress is the cause of burnout, it can seem like an insurmountable problem to solve. Providing special education teachers with coping strategies can assist in overcoming burnout, and better equip them to help their students in the classroom (Radford, 2017). Coping is defined by Radford (2017) as the attempts a person makes to master challenging or difficult circumstances. The three coping strategies discussed (Radford, 2017) were direct, indirect, and active approaches. Direct coping involves challenging the sources of stress, whereas indirect is how one thinks about physically responding to stress to reduce its impact. Active coping requires taking action to change oneself or the situation.

Radford (2017) cited a study by Elizabeth Cooley and Paul Yovanoff (1996) where special education teachers were placed in two groups. One group received five weekly, two-hour workshops focusing on the three different forms of coping (direct, indirect, and active) (Radford, 2017). The other group did not receive any training. After undertaking the workshop, the participants reported feeling more satisfied and committed to their jobs which decreased the feeling of burnout. In contrast, those not participating felt less satisfied and wanted to quit their jobs. This study demonstrated the importance of teaching special educators how to cope with and manage stress related to their jobs (Radford, 2017).

Gilmour (2019) went as far as to suggest that some of the struggles special education teachers face occur when they are placed in inclusion settings. Retaining teachers in an inclusion setting was more difficult because many needed to learn how to

teach in that environment. Throughout Gilmour's (2019) study, she reported that

teachers in an inclusion setting often change their instruction in undesirable ways when

students with disabilities are mixed with general education students. Usually, the teachers

would spend less time planning instruction and more time managing behaviors. Students

with disabilities are often placed in classrooms with low-functioning general education

students or students with behavior difficulties. This adds to the stress on special

education teachers. Gilmour (2019) suggests schools make improvements in scheduling

special needs students appropriately to reduce the stress levels of everyone involved.

Gilmour (2019) reported that the number of special education teachers declined

by more than 17% between 2005 and 2012. The number of students with special needs

decreased by only 4%. The student-to-teacher ratio in special education is currently more

significant than the overall student-to-teacher ratio. Special education students need to get

the required services.

Donahoo et al. (2017) used a quasi-experimental design with a pre/post-test

evaluation to see if alternative therapies would alleviate some of the stress teachers face

throughout their careers. "All participants received an educational session on stress and

selected alternative interventions such as mindfulness and prayer to reduce stress and

compassion fatigue" (Donahoo et al., 2017, p. 443). The participants included 67 special

education teachers employed by a rural Western Kentucky school district. Teachers were

eligible to participate and were contacted by email through the school district's central

office. All subjects were fully informed, and a signed consent form was required. The

participants were placed in two specific groups. One group was randomly assigned to

receive weekly electronic reminders on ways to reduce stress (Donahoo et al., 2017).

The other group did not receive any reminders. The effectiveness of these reminders was analyzed using pre-and post-evaluations. The evaluations used were the Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL) and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Donahoo et al., 2017). The PSS is a 10-item scale measuring perceived stress based on self-reported feelings and thoughts (Donahoo et al., 2017). An average score is 13, while 20 or above is experiencing an increased level of stress (Donahoo et al., 2017). The ProQOL was designed to measure the quality of life for professionals in helping fields (Donahoo et al., 2017) and contains subscales of Compassion Satisfaction (CS). The average scores for each subscale are 50, while higher scores indicate happiness with work and little compassion fatigue (Donahoo et al., 2017). Lower scores indicate compassion fatigue (Donahoo et al., 2017). Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) analyzed the data obtained from the evaluations.

Donahoo et al. (2017) suggest that prayer and mindfulness may reduce stress levels and compassion fatigue. Analysis revealed lower PSS scores for individuals using a higher frequency of mindfulness. The practice of prayer and mindfulness not only decreased PSS scores but improved CS scores. Therefore, it is essential to assess levels of compassion fatigue in special education teachers throughout a given school year. Practices can be implemented to improve the overall well-being of special education teachers, directly impacting retention rates.

Feng and Sass (2018) explained that removing stressors from the teaching environment is difficult. Therefore, SEITs need to learn strategies and techniques to help in managing the school environment effectively. Feng and Sass (2018) proposed a model called ABC (activating events, beliefs, consequences) to deal with stress management

where the SEIT can develop an understanding of the causes and consequences of their

current stress. The SEIT then changes the behavior leading to the identified stress.

These steps would be used to improve interactions with students, parents, and colleagues.

School administration must be proactive, and address staff needs to improve retention

rates. A list of strategies should be developed to include personal stress management,

cognitive-behavioral techniques, and flexibility.

Research on burnout reduction has focused on the individual's ability to manage

the workplace. The primary goal of research in this area is to alleviate burnout. Leiter

and Maslach (2015) found that educational sessions focusing on team building and

coping strategies tended to lower feelings of burnout. Jobs being more time-constraining

in nature made it difficult for individuals to practice coping strategies. Teachers would

require autonomy for this to occur and for burnout impacts to lessen. Various programs

such as relaxation training, interpersonal and social skills training, and time management

training were noted as reducing exhaustion in most participants. The one construct this

training did not impact was cynicism.

Changing the workplace starts with a focus on leadership. Altering the mindset of

leaders and teaching employees coping strategies is the best way to combat burnout. It is

difficult for one strategy to exist without the other when employees and leaders

participate in weekly sessions to brainstorm ways of reducing perceived inequalities in

the workforce; exhaustion levels correlate to decreasing feelings of burnout (Leiter &

Maslach, 2015).

Human Capital Theory of Occupational Choice

The Human Capital Theory of Occupational Choice states that individuals make systematic assessments of the net monetary and nonmonetary benefits from different occupations and make systematic decisions throughout their careers, to enter, stay, or leave a profession (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Feng (2011) looked at some studies done in the past on teacher attrition and occupational choice. Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2001), as cited in Feng (2011), interviewed Texas public school teachers and found they preferred working with high-achieving, non-minority, and non-low-income students in their classrooms. These were some factors contributing to teachers' choices in choosing a school district. Some of the teachers interviewed were African American and favored finding schools with a higher black student enrollment (Feng, 2011).

Using the Baccalaureate and Beyond Survey, combined with the Common Core data from various districts, Feng (2011) used a multinomial logit hazard regression to determine why teachers leave their initial school placements. It was reported that teachers who obtained higher degrees tended to stay in the field of education compared to those with only a bachelor's degree (Feng, 2011). Those teachers with a higher degree were more invested in the field than someone having only completed their undergraduate studies (Feng, 2011). When schools with high minority and poverty rates were assessed, the desire for higher salaries was a factor in deciding to leave or stay (Feng, 2011).

Improving intrinsic and extrinsic values. Loan forgiveness programs have become more popular over the years as an incentive to keep teachers from leaving. Those teaching in high-needs areas (math, science, special education) for at least five years were given up to 10,000 dollars to put towards their student loans (Feng & Sass,

2018). Years of duty for each teacher and loan forgiveness amounts were statistically

analyzed and compared. What Feng and Sass (2018) found was that the loan forgiveness

component of the FTCSP (Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program) had substantial

positive effects on the likelihood that an individual would remain in teaching (Feng &

Sass, 2018). Loan forgiveness would be a monetary benefit, as stated in the Human

Capital Theory of Occupational Choice, boosting extrinsic values of the job. Positive

effects were found for the largest shortage areas being special education and gifted

teachers (Feng & Sass, 2018). The reimbursement scale ranged from 500 to 2,500 dollars

per year with a cap of 10,000 depending on the teacher's subject area (Feng & Sass,

2018).

As it relates to administrative support, Brunstring et al. (2014) reported that it is

essential for administrators to provide teachers with emotional support. Administrators

being available to listen to concerns or solve conflicts greatly improves the overall rates

of teacher burnout (Brunstring et al., 2014) and is a nonmonetary benefit to improving the

intrinsic values of the job. Assisting with supplying resources for classrooms, or

providing professional learning opportunities when needed, proved to be beneficial. A

specific professional learning opportunity needed for most, if not all, teachers is the

application of appropriate classroom management techniques (Brunstring et al., 2014).

Experiencing difficulty in managing behaviors is a significant contributor to burnout. If

the administration provides teachers with professional solid learning opportunities to

improve classroom management, burnout rates should decrease over time (Brunstring et

al., 2014).

Creating a supportive work environment to retain highly qualified teachers is essential. This can be accomplished by having an open-door policy (Brunstring et al., 2014). Teachers need to feel they can express concerns to the administration when needed. It is important to provide leadership opportunities (Brittle, 2020), establish mentorship programs, and reach out to the local community. A lack of leadership opportunities can contribute to teacher dissatisfaction (Brittle, 2020). Teachers need to feel trusted, especially when it comes to giving them opportunities to lead in their classrooms and during professional development (Brittle, 2020). Mentorship programs can help boost confidence and give teachers an outlet they might not be able to find with their colleagues (Brittle, 2020). Lastly, when the community is involved, teachers will feel as if their jobs matter and their work is supported outside of the school setting (Brittle, 2020). These examples enhance the extrinsic values of teaching and will lead to the retention of SEITs.

Kang (2011) found that 95% of teachers reported being in a mentorship program during their careers, 30% never analyzed lesson plans or student work together, and their mentor never observed 25% throughout the school year. A reported 45% indicated their mentor was not certified in a similar field (Kang, 2011). Mentorship programs are critical when developed correctly (Kang, 2011).

Professional development for SEITs plays an essential role in retaining quality teachers. A survey by Berry, Petrin, Gravelle, and Farmer (2011) asked SEITs their thoughts on improving their professional development to promote confidence in their knowledge of teaching special needs children. When a group of rural SEITs was asked a list of open-ended questions, Berry et al. (2011) concluded that the teachers needed more

professional development on strategies for working with paraprofessionals and parents. SEITs need more professional development working with low-incidence disabilities, emotional and behavioral disorders, classroom management, collaborative and inclusive practices skills, and curriculum content (Berry, Petrin, Gravelle, & Farmer, 2011). According to Berry et al. (2011), the retention rates of SIETs improve when a school or school district considers these areas when forming a professional development plan. A school district in Oregon reported a retention rate of 95% after building-level administrators focused solely on building professional development around the concerns of their SEITs (Berry et al., 2011). These special education inclusion teachers reported being more confident and capable of successfully teaching their students (Berry et al., 2011) because of their support.

Lowering standards and shortening training are stop-gap measures that will only increase attrition rates (Kang, 2011). Combining necessary stop-gap measures with comprehensive, long-term solutions is needed to address the shortages in special education. According to Williams and Dikes (2015), policymakers, state and local districts, and preparation programs should consider a three-pronged approach to address teacher shortage concerns. One is to ensure financial incentives are grounded in research and combined with other long-term solutions. The second is to provide well-designed preparation, ongoing induction, and instructional-focused professional learning (Williams & Dikes, 2015). Third, developing supportive work environments attending to issues of workload manageability will reduce stress and improve retention concerns (Williams & Dikes, 2015).

Caseload numbers should be below 15 for optimal efficiency, and student-to-teacher ratios should be ten or fewer special education students per general education classroom (Williams & Dikes, 2015). This means schools need to be adequately staffed. School districts and policymakers must reduce unnecessary paperwork for SEITs (Williams & Dikes, 2015). Paperwork considered essential should be streamlined. If data is kept in a computerized format, then SEITs should be required to keep hard copies of IEPs (Williams & Dikes, 2015). These changes must not merely be talked about but must be implemented, practiced, and enforced. Administrators should schedule SEITs during the most extended planning period possible so that enough time is available to complete essential paperwork (Williams & Dikes, 2015). SEITs need to be allowed to determine the subjects they feel most comfortable teaching (Kang, 2011). SEITs should be matched with a compatible general education teacher and be afforded ample opportunities for meaningful professional development (Williams & Dikes, 2015). These are some ways a school system can improve a teaching job's intrinsic and extrinsic values to improve retention rates.

Labor Economic Theory of Supply and Demand

The Labor Economic Theory of Supply and Demand examines the teacher labor force to understand their behaviors as a group (Richards, Stroub & Guthery, 2020). Instead of looking at the individual teacher and understanding how they make choices, the Labor Economic Theory of Supply and Demand looks at trends associated with teacher attrition (Richards et al., 2020). In a study by Richards, Stroub, and Guthery (2020), school closures were examined as to how they impacted teachers staying in the field or leaving and pursuing a different career. Richards et al. (2020) looked at school

closures throughout Texas over seventeen years and found that only one in every seven teachers returned to teaching after two or more years. Many teachers affected by school closures were not employed in a school setting after two years (Richards et al., 2020). Teachers with twenty or more years of experience tended to leave the teaching field if a school closure impacted them. The departure of these experienced teachers weakened the teacher workforce (Richards et al., 2020).

Reasoning behind teacher supply shortages. Teacher shortage issues have been occurring in the United States and other countries for years. A review of the literature conducted by O'Doherty and Harford (2018) showed that twenty-six countries were experiencing a teacher shortage. The demand for teachers continues to increase as the supply lessens (O'Doherty & Harford, 2018). A country can only meet the demand if they increase the supply. This means a policy change is necessary. When factors such as salary and working conditions remain the same, the pool of potential applicants lessens over time (O'Doherty & Harford, 2018). Through analysis of surveys conducted in multiple countries, shortage issues were addressed by understanding the motivations of those in the field and what attracted them to the job (O'Doherty & Harford, 2018). In Belgium, it was more difficult to attract teachers to Brussels because of the high cost of living and increased number of disadvantaged students. The 1,600 teacher shortage in Germany, reported in 2015, was due to poor work conditions. Another common factor across countries was the relatively low pay (O'Doherty & Harford, 2018).

The U.S. Department of Education reported that the overall number of teacher candidates has decreased by thirty-one percent since 2008 (O'Doherty & Harford, 2018). California recorded diminishing numbers of issued preliminary teacher credentials in

elementary and secondary education and special education (O'Doherty & Harford, 2018). This is because enrollment in teacher preparation programs dropped by fifty percent between 2009 and 2013 (O'Doherty & Harford, 2018). These issues are not just isolated to California. Many across the United States are experiencing the same concerns.

There have been competing ideas on increasing teachers' supply while maintaining quality. Anderson, Cameron-Standerford, Bergh, and Bohjanen (2019) suggested that teacher evaluations must be more conducive to the teacher's working conditions. When evaluations support teacher growth, teachers are more likely to remain in their positions and attract others to join the profession, thus increasing the supply of applicants (Anderson, Cameron-Standerford, Bergh, & Bohjanen, 2019). Anderson et al., (2019) conducted a mixed-methods study on the effectiveness of teacher evaluations and how they correlated to teachers being content with their current job. Teachers in Michigan were interviewed (Anderson et al., 2019), and data were analyzed from their evaluations. The sample from the study revealed that 99% of the teachers were rated as effective or highly effective on their evaluations, but this did not correlate to them being happy or content with their jobs (Anderson et al., 2019).

Teachers felt stressed because of a competitive culture and a distrust of the system (Anderson et al., 2019). These factors were perceived barriers to job satisfaction. Teacher evaluation mandates hurt teacher effectiveness and well-being (Anderson et al., 2019). Many of the administrators interviewed were critical of the evaluations. One solution offered was to increase the time given to evaluations (Anderson et al., 2019). An increase in the time for evaluations gives administrators more time to spend with the teachers and share more constructive feedback (Anderson et al., 2019). Providing an

environment fostering teacher growth would improve the well-being of everyone involved and could improve the attrition rates of teachers while bolstering the supply chain. Competitive salaries and mentorship programs could also help (Anderson et al., 2019).

To level the supply and demand of classroom teachers, districts revert to relaxing qualification requirements during the hiring process (Berry & Shields, 2017). If there are not enough highly qualified teachers to fill positions, a less eligible applicant will usually be hired. Some will even issue emergency certificates with filling a vacant position (Berry & Shields, 2017). Hiring teachers with poor performance records is counterproductive to policies trying to enhance the quality of teaching practices in the classroom (Berry & Shields, 2017).

Financial incentives can increase teacher supply and maintain highly qualified teachers (Berry & Shields, 2017). The problem is that if these incentives do not work, administrators will find less productive ways of evening the supply and demand efforts (Berry & Shields, 2017). This can be done by increasing the workload of existing teachers by making classroom sizes larger (Berry & Shields, 2017). A larger student-to-teacher ratio does not improve the quality of teaching and, in some cases, can have the opposite outcome.

Conclusion

Numerous studies have been done to determine specific reasons for special education teachers leaving their field of work. Through questionnaires and short answer responses, many results have pointed in the direction of the burnout theory. That is a response to emotionally taxing workplace events that lead them to leave their jobs. Some

research even goes so far as to explain how some teachers manage and positively cope with their stressors. The problem is that questionnaires (the basis of study for most of these studies) can only provide a reader with surface-level responses. Very little has been done regarding understanding the stories of those who face struggles in their day-to-day jobs and have no choice but to leave. One way to understand teachers' stories is to conduct in-depth interviews and field observations. In doing so, the reader will be able to dig beneath the surface and get a better understanding of the experiences of teachers that are chosen as participants.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of the proposed qualitative narrative inquiry study is to give insight into why special education inclusion teachers (SEITs) leave the field. This perspective will be gleaned from interviewing those who left the profession. This information could potentially help school districts change the recruiting and retention practices of SEITs.

Previous researchers have demonstrated that age and teaching in urban school districts can significantly impact SEITs leaving their jobs (Richards et al., 2020). The participants for this study will have worked in an urban school district and be between the ages of 22 and 30 at their time of employment. I will look to understand a SEIT's perception of on-the-job performance and perception of on-the-job support. An in-depth narrative analysis will help in achieving the purpose of this study.

Research Design

I used a qualitative narrative analysis approach to capture the stories of special education inclusion teachers in an urban district in Central Georgia. This method allowed an open-ended approach to understanding possible trends in why SEITs in this school district have chosen to leave the teaching field (O'Doherty & Harford, 2018). The focus was on understanding how participants interpret their experiences in the workplace. The interview process included an in-depth, phenomenological-based approach, which was used as the primary data source (Seidman, 2019). This approach

focused on an individual's lived experiences within the world we live in. It is appropriate for this study because I focused on the experiences of SEITs to assist in understanding the continuous need to fill SEIT positions within an urban school setting due to a low retention rate. Maxwell's (2013) discussion of reactivity and researcher bias was used to highlight how my influences may impact the study. A discussion of my influences in the conclusion section allowed the reader to make his or her judgments regarding the credibility of this research. The overall process of this study was grounded in the theoretical frameworks discussed throughout the first two chapters. These include the following: the Multidimensional Theory of Burnout, the Human Capital Theory of Occupational Choice, and the Labor Economic Theory of Supply and Demand.

Population & Sample

An ethnically diverse student population in an urban school setting can lead to increased levels of burnout (Anderson et al., 2019). Other factors that can cause increased levels of burnout are the low socioeconomic status of the student population, a lack of appropriate resources, including professional development, and a lack of perceived support (Leiter & Maslach, 2015). The general population for this research was special education inclusion teachers (SEITs) who worked in an urban school setting in Central Georgia middle and high schools. The ability to compare to other urban districts was based on research conducted by Milner and Lomotey (2014), and Perez, Uline, and Johnson (2019). The other urban districts were similar in the ethnic makeup of the student body, percentages of Title 1 schools, and student-to-teacher classroom ratios (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.). Title 1 schools receive federal funds for Title 1 students (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.). These schools with large

56

concentrations of low-income students receive supplemental funds to assist in meeting the educational needs of these students (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.). There are roughly 320 special education teachers in the county where this study was conducted (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.).

Of those 320 teachers, on average, ten to twenty leave each year (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.). Their leave is either coded as personal reasons or transferring to another district (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.). The school district reports the names and codes on the Board Briefs. These teachers have taught mostly in a co-teach environment (Richards et al., 2020). Co-teaching refers to working with children with special needs within the general education classroom (Richards et al., 2020). The general education and special education teacher share the workload in teaching the entire classroom.

I focused on interviewing SEITs who have left the teaching field within the past four years. I looked at the Board Briefs from an urban school district in Central Georgia to review the names of the employees listed. The Board Briefs provided information on those employed outside of education or left the field without explanation. I wrote a request for research or an open records request, requesting the personal email address of those that left the field, which was directory information. I then sent out a letter about the study to gauge who would be willing to participate from the identified population. The letter can be reviewed in *Appendix C*. The Institutional Review Board Protocol Exemption Report can be reviewed in *Appendix D*.

The number required for this study was four participants. The four participants were chosen based on age and gender. Two male and two female SEITs were chosen

between the ages of 22 and 30 when they leave their teaching position. Two male and

female participants were chosen because research on gender and teacher attrition has

been inconsistent (Williams & Dikes, 2015). Some researchers have shown that males

exhibit higher attrition rates because of their inability to cope with the emotional

components of teaching (Williams & Dikes, 2015). Other researchers have shown that

females exhibit higher attrition rates because of a lack of autonomy in their classrooms

(Williams & Dikes, 2015). The inconsistency also comes from a greater difference in the

number of male and female teachers employed (Leiter & Maslach, 2015).

The age range of 22 to 30, from middle or high school, was established for the

participants of this study. Previous researchers identified this age range, and school

levels, as having the highest attrition rates for SEITs (Williams & Dikes, 2015). This is

relevant because this group of teachers was rated as exhibiting the highest burnout

compared to older teachers (Williams & Dikes, 2015). This is also the age range that

urban school districts have the most difficult time retaining (Williams & Dikes, 2015).

Ethnicity demographics were not reported as a factor in SEIT attrition rates (Williams &

Dikes, 2015).

To protect from participant attrition, the sample size drawn was larger than the

four participants used for this study. The participants were selected using purposeful

sampling. The cases were selected strategically and purposefully based on how the

participants could assist me in answering the research questions for this study (Patton,

2009). In the case of this research, it was SEITs that have left the field in an urban school

setting in Central Georgia. The Board Briefs from the 2018-2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-

2021 school years were used to access the participants for this study.

An average of five to six SEITs leave the field each year. Once the Board Briefs were reviewed, and individuals were identified that meet the criteria for this study, contact was be made with each of those individuals. The individuals were identified as having left the teaching field, fell within the 22 to 30 age range, and were a mix of male and female gender from middle or high schools. The gender and age of each participant was identified through an open records request. These individuals were a SEIT before they left the field of teaching, which was stated in the Board Briefs. If an average of 12 to 15 teachers left the district within the three school years stated, then at least four meet the criteria for this study. The first two females and the first two males that respond to the interview request and fell within the specified age range were chosen to participate in the study. The participants left the profession within the last three school years. If a participant decided to leave the study for specified or unspecified reasons, another individual could have chosen from those contacted that meet the criteria. If saturation was not reached with the four interviewed participants, then the sample size could have increased from the identified population. Saturation would occur if no new information was gained after interviewing the four participants for this study.

Data Collection Methods

Participants were interviewed using a set of questions developed for this study. The questions were crafted with the intent of being able to assist in answering the research questions. The set of questions for the first interview was developed so that I could get to know the participant, including their upbringing and higher education experiences. The questions for the second interview were developed to understand the experiences of the SEIT in their job. The third interview questions were developed to

provide a more in-depth understanding of responses from the second interview. A fourth and final interview was established to answer any follow-up questions necessary for gaining the most information to answer the research questions. Even though a fourth interview is not part of the Siedman (2019) process, I thought it was necessary for this study. The interview questions were targeted at answering the following research questions:

RQ1: What were the experiences of special education inclusion teachers who have left the profession?

RQ2: How do special education inclusion teachers, who have left the profession, perceive their support as a special education inclusion teacher?

RQ3: What impact did special education inclusion teachers' classroom experiences have on their decision to leave the field?

The questions in *Appendix A* were developed to be open-ended while avoiding any leading questions. Leading questions have the potential to lead participants' responses in specific directions (Seidman, 2019). Open-ended questions allow for more exploration of the topics by the participants (Seidman, 2019). Follow-up questions were also developed, but some may be asked during the interview that are not developed pre-interview. Some follow-up questions may not be developed beforehand to allow for more flexibility and to maintain fluid responses (Seidman, 2019).

The responses to the main questions caused me to think of follow-up questions that did not come to mind previously. The interview questions can be examined further in *Appendix A* of this research. Field notes and memos were used to support the research process, through documenting needed contextual information. The contextual

information was in the form of a description of the interview environment, and the mannerisms of the interviewee (Maxwell, 2013). This information will give the reader a better understanding of how and why answers were given to questions by the participants. Memos were my analysis of the interview process and what I learned from the interviewees' responses (Maxwell, 2013). Memos are summaries of any findings that give me a better understanding of the data collected, and, more specifically, what I learned from the process (Maxwell, 2013). Memos and field notes were coded and analyzed by the same method as the transcripts from the interviews. The coding process is explained in more detail in this study's data analysis procedures section.

The research questions for this study focused on perceptions, life, and career experiences. In-depth interviewing allowed the researcher to gather information about the experiences of special education inclusion teachers who have left the field in an urban school setting in Central Georgia. I used the Seidman (2019) three-part interview series to develop trust with the participants. The Seidman (2019) interview series allowed each question to be explored as in-depth as possible. The first interview focused on life history in a surface-level manner, allowing the participant to feel comfortable and at ease with the process (Seidman, 2019). The second interview focused more on the participant's current life as it relates to the content of the topic for this study (Seidman, 2019).

The last interview required the participant to reflect on the meaning of their experiences described in the second interview (Seidman, 2019). A fourth and final interview was established for any follow-up questions that were necessary. The interviews were face-to-face, 90 minutes per session. There was a three to seven day

break between each interview to allow for reflection (Seidman, 2019). The break

allowed the participants to think about what was discussed during the previous interview.

The participants had the opportunity to clarify anything said when we met again. If the

participant needed to change anything they said previously, or if they feel they were

misrepresented in the transcripts, then an amendment was made to the transcripts. Copies

of the transcripts were sent to the participants after each of the three interview sessions.

This process helped maintain trust and transparency throughout the study. The interview

protocol can be reviewed in *Appendix A*. Interview dates and times can be reviewed in

Appendix E.

We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions (Patton, 2009). "We cannot

observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time" (Patton, 2009, p. 341).

The purpose of interviewing is to allow us to understand the participant's perspective

(Patton, 2009), more specifically, their perspective on career experiences and what

caused them to leave the field of education. We interview to find out what is in and on

someone else's mind and to gather their stories (Patton, 2009). Therefore, the procedures

outlined previously produced findings based on the transcribed interviews, along with

field notes and observations. The questions were open-ended and tied to each

participant's potential stories. There were also follow-up questions, which can be

reviewed in *Appendix A*, along with the open-ended questions.

Data Analysis Procedures

The transcription of the interviews took an average of four to six hours per

interview (Seidman, 2019). This amount of in-depth interviewing generated vast

amounts of text, so the words, sentences, paragraphs, and pages were reduced to what

was significant and of interest to the study (Saldaña, 2016). The analysis was accomplished using the software program MAXQDA, specifically developed for qualitative analysis. Once the transcriptions were uploaded to the program, the software was used to code the extensive dialogue. The first cycle of coding used for this study was In Vivo Coding (Saldaña, 2016). Once the interview transcripts were uploaded to the MAXQDA program, I grouped three to five sentences of the transcripts starting from the beginning. This type of In Vivo Coding is also known as "lumper" coding (Saldaña, 2016) since some of the dialogue from the interview is lumped together. Then, I derived codes from the data by using each participant's exact language and terminology (Saldaña, 2016). The codes were three to five-word phrases taken directly from the interview. This type of coding helps a researcher obtain an in-depth understanding of the stories told by each participant (Saldaña, 2016). The codes were listed on a text editing page and then cut and pasted into outlined clusters of chronological life events (Saldaña, 2016).

I employed pattern coding for the next cycle (Saldaña, 2016). I took the summaries from the first coding and group them into smaller categories. I identified emergent themes, configurations, or explanations between participants through Pattern Coding (Saldaña, 2016). Pattern Coding allowed me to put the information obtained from the first cycle into more meaningful units of analysis. Also, Pattern Coding is appropriate when looking for causes or explanations in the data. For example, after In Vivo Coding was completed, I looked at the codes assigned to a particular area of interest in the transcripts from the 4 participants of this study. The area of interest might be the working conditions of the SEITs. The codes generated from the first round of coding for the area of interest were listed together to determine a pattern code. The pattern code was

a phrase to describe the area of interest of all 4 participants. This process occurred after each interview phase was completed for each interviewee. For example, the transcribing and coding would begin once the first interview was completed for the first interviewee. When he or she completed the second interview, transcribing and coding would occur, and this was the same process once the last interview was completed. This was the same process for all four participants.

Lastly, codeweaving was used as a post-coding technique to integrate keycode words and phrases into a narrative form (Saldaña, 2016). Codeweaving provided a more cohesive picture of special education inclusion teachers' shared or unshared experiences. Codeweaving helped me investigate how the items might interrelate, indicate a process, or suggest causation, which will assist in writing my final report (Saldaña, 2016). I looked for evidence to support summary statements or evidence that suggested a revision of those statements.

The way that I mapped the coding helped to pull detailed and relevant information from the interviews. The last phase integrated the coding into a narrative form, allowing the research questions to be answered in detail. It was also important to have the participants review this study's results to ensure that they represent the message they wanted to convey, which is member checking. This step helped bolster the credibility of the answers generated for each research question.

Threats to Validity

Maxwell (2013) discusses two specific threats: researcher bias and reactivity. These threats are particularly important for qualitative research. Qualitative researchers need to be aware of the subjectivity they may bring to their study, also known as bias

(Maxwell, 2013). Bias is when the "selection of data that is used fits the researcher's existing theory, goals, or preconceptions" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). According to Maxwell (2013), it is virtually impossible to eliminate the researcher's beliefs and theories from his or her study. Therefore, it is important to understand "how a particular researcher's values and expectations may have influenced the conduct and conclusions of the study (which may be either positive or negative) and avoiding the negative consequences of these" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). I thought about my own bias regarding my research. It was vital for me to understand my personal experiences as a special education teacher. Understanding my personal experiences was done by writing a memo at the start of the interview process. Maxwell (2013) called this type of memo *The Evolution of a Research Design*. This memo is where the researcher discusses what they are studying and how they developed their research design, including personal experiences' impact (Maxwell, 2013). When quality checks were completed after every hour of coding, which is described later, the initial memo that I wrote was used to ensure personal experiences remain absent. I may have had negative experiences, or my literature review primarily discusses burnout rates, but it did not mean that those were my participants' experiences.

I had to ensure that my personal experiences remained separate from the analysis of the interview transcripts. Still, my personal experiences were discussed in the discussion section of this study. Keeping personal experiences separate from the analysis of transcripts was done by following the coding procedures outlined in the *Data Analysis Procedures* section of this chapter. I also mitigated bias by ensuring interview questions were open-ended to prevent the participant from agreeing or disagreeing. The questions

in *Appendix A* were framed to help the participants feel accepted no matter what their responses were to the questions (Williams & Dikes, 2015). I did not use leading questions to prompt a participant to answer in favor of a particular assumption (Williams & Dikes, 2015).

Quality and coding checks were made periodically throughout the transcript analysis to ensure that the processes outlined in the previous section were being implemented as stated. The analysis of the transcripts is of high quality when the data can be used to answer the research questions. The quality and coding checks occurred once at the end of every hour of coding. Changes were made during those checks as needed. I did not go back to previous hours of data analysis since those checks would have been completed following the outline I have provided.

The goal of a qualitative study is not to eliminate the researcher's influence, "but to understand it and use it productively" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 125). Maxwell used the term "reflexivity" to describe this validity threat. It was essential for me to describe my influence on how each participant responded to the given questions, and how this may affect the validity of the inferences I drew from the interview process (Maxwell, 2013). My influences were stated in the reflection section of my field notes and memos and discussed at the end of this study. I used field notes and memos to assist in the monitoring of subjectivity.

Memos are notes of ideas about codes and their relationships that stand out to the analyst while coding the interviews (Maxwell, 2013). Field notes are notes that I created so I could remember the behaviors of the participants as well as any defining characteristics of the setting (Maxwell, 2013). The field notes and memos were written

in labeled notebooks throughout the process, one notebook for each participant of field notes, and one for each coding session of memos. I used a specified template for the field notes that can be reviewed in *Appendix B*. The memos and field notes helped me know if my personal feelings or thoughts were interjected into the research process at any point (Maxwell, 2013). The reflective content of field notes and memos was intended to contextualize what I observed based on my perspective and personal, cultural, and situational experiences (Maxwell, 2013). Field notes were completed during the three interviews for each participant. I wrote the field notes at the end of each interview session, with three separate field notes for each participant. Memos were written during the interview process for each participant, which were short. I wrote memos every 15 minutes for one to two minutes at a time. There was an average of six memos per interview session. The shorter memos ensured I did not divert too much attention away from the participant. Memos were also written after the data was collected from the interviews. Those memos took 10 to 20 minutes to write and were more detailed to provide for greater reflection. Memos were a mini analysis of what I thought I was learning during the interview and data collection process. Identifying subjectivity concerns occurred once all the data was analyzed, and my field notes and memos were reviewed. I looked at my thoughts and feelings about the process and if those thoughts and feelings impacted the study results. For example, did my personal experiences of being a special education teacher influence the responses of the participants? If there were subjectivity concerns, I incorporated those findings within the discussion section of this study.

Summary

Numerous studies have addressed the reasons why SEITs leave the field, yet the issue remains prevalent today. Simply using a questionnaire to gauge the thoughts and feelings of these teachers is not enough. Very few have told their stories. The research questions of this study were best answered by conducting interviews, which allowed the participants to tell their stories. Responses to the questions were analyzed and compared to the theoretical frameworks discussed earlier.

Chapter IV

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

Four participants met the criteria outlined in Chapter three for this study. Each participant left the field of teaching specifically from their role as a special education inclusion teacher (SEIT) between the ages of 23 and 30. The participants were two males and two females. These former teachers were identified based on identification from the 2018-2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021 Board Briefs. Board Briefs are public records that can be accessed through the district website of the urban school district in Central Georgia. Once they were identified, I filed an open records request to obtain email addresses. I contacted them through email and explained the project I was attempting to complete. I then set up interview times at the convenience of each participant. Three 90-minute interviews per participant were conducted online and recorded for transcription and reliability, as defined in Chapter three.

In the remaining chapters, I will focus on the results and analysis of the transcriptions developed by each participant. In this Chapter, I will provide a detailed profile of each participant and the schools where they were employed. In Chapter five, I will provide data from all three interviews for each participant. In Chapter six, I will explain the data analysis procedures and reveal the findings from the analysis of the transcripts. Lastly, in Chapter seven, I will connect my findings from this study to

previous research discussed in Chapter two. I will also discuss the limitations and recommendations for future research.

Site Description

This study was conducted in an urban school district in the United States. The county is located fifty-three miles outside a major metropolitan city in the southeast portion of the United States. According to the 2020 Census Bureau, the total population of this county is 157,346 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). The median household income for this county is $42,140, compared to the state median income of $61,980 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). The poverty rate of individuals residing in this county is 23.4%, compared to the state of Georgia, which is 13.3%. More specifically, the poverty rate is 37.5% for 18-year-olds, 22.2% for 18-to-64-year-old, and 14.9% for 65 and older.

When it comes to the educational attainment of the residents of this county, 24.9% have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to the state level of 32.5%. 60.5% have a high school diploma or equivalent degree.

The disability rate in this county is 16.8% as compared to the state of Georgia, which is 12.6%. 3.2% have hearing difficulty, 4.1% vision difficulty, 6.2% cognitive difficulty, 9.3% ambulatory difficulty, 3.4% self-care difficulty, and 7.8% independent living difficulty.

There are six high schools and six middle schools within this county. The participants from this study were employed at one of these secondary schools. The specific school will be referenced by stating Darcy School Profile, John School Profile, Lucy School Profile, and Connor School Profile. These profiles intend to give the reader

some background of each school the participant left. The interviews occurred virtually using an online platform.

Description of Participants

A total of four participants were selected for this study. Two of the chosen participants were female, and two were male. The two females were aged 26 and 26; the two males were aged 23 and 25. The two male participants were African American, while the female participants were white. Demographic information is in Table 5.

Table 5

Demographics of Participants

	Age	Gender	Race	Undergrad Major	Years of Teaching
Darcy	26	Female	White	Early Childhood Education and Special Education	3
John	23	Male	African American	Education (Special Education)	1
Lucy	26	Female	White	Education and Sports Medicine	3
Connor	25	Male	African American	Liberal Studies (Psychology and Education)	2

Note: Ages are reported at the time each participant began their interview.

Participant Profiles

Disclaimer on Participant Identities

The identity of each participant will remain confidential. Each participant has been assigned a pseudonym to preserve the privacy and confidentiality of responses. Confidentiality will be maintained but cannot be guaranteed. There is the possibility that a participant could be identified based on demographic and employment descriptions in the report.

Darcy Profile

Darcy is a 26-year-old white female. She was born and raised in Georgia and has been a resident of the same city for her entire life. This participant attended school in Georgia from elementary to high until she dropped out in the twelfth grade. She explained that her reasoning for dropping out of school was that she was bullied incessantly. She became bulimic and needed some mental health support. The school she attended did very little to give her the help she needed from the bullying. She also described a time when she was diagnosed with dyslexia and ADHD. She had to take medication for ADHD. Because of these diagnoses, the students would also make fun of her for having to use accommodations on tests to help her succeed. She did talk about one teacher who made a lasting impact on her because this teacher invested in getting to know Darcy. There was also a time she received an award for having the highest GPA in her class for math. It was a complete shock and surprise since she never felt competent or worthy regarding school and academics. She did play violin in the school band, which came easily to her. Reading music was the one area where she felt successful.

Darcy described fearing her parents because she never wanted to disappoint them. She grew up in a conservative Christian family that attended church every Sunday. They lived above the poverty line, but this participant did not know this was the case. She said her parents never discussed financial matters in front of the children. They were hard workers. Her dad worked as a mechanic and loved to fix things with his hands. Her mom held odd jobs here and there. She was a caretaker for the elderly and did some medical billing work. Darcy learned what hard work and dedication were at an early age from her parents. She knew what it meant to do a job and do it well. "Always put 110% into what you do." Because of her mother and father's work ethic, it was difficult for Darcy to approach them when she wanted to drop out of high school.

Darcy returned to school to get her GED while getting credit for a certificate in medical billing. Working to obtain her GED occurred at the local technical school in the city where she lived. She said she had to go back and finish what she started because she was "stubborn" and "persistent." Finishing her GED and completing the certificate in medical billing all occurred while she had a newborn child. There were not many jobs in the area where she lived. She needed some income for her family, so a friend convinced her to apply for a paraprofessional job at the local elementary school near her house. Working as a paraprofessional started her developing an interest in teaching.

Darcy was a paraprofessional for two years until she decided to go back to school. She investigated a few different programs until she found a local university that accepted some of her credits from a technical school. This program was a traditional educational program with pedagogy courses and a practicum at the end of the program. Darcy stated that she did not learn much of anything from most of her classes. They did not prepare

her for the process of teaching in the classroom. There was one class she distinctly remembered as being helpful. She could not remember the name, but she remembered many hands-on activities. They learned how to read a book to students, develop lesson plans, and implement them. She suggested that programs today must teach teachers, specifically particular education majors, how to write IEPs. She felt underprepared in that area. What prepared her and made her practicum much more manageable was previously being a paraprofessional. She suggested that everyone be a paraprofessional first before becoming a teacher. This way, students would know whether teaching was the right profession for them.

John Profile

John was a 23-year-old African American male. He lived in Virginia until he was in Grade 3. He then moved to Maryland for one year and then to Georgia, where he has lived ever since. He grew up with his mom, dad, and brother until he was in Grade 5 when his parents divorced. According to John, it was a mutual decision, and he and his brother split equal time between both parents. His parents ended up remarrying a few years after they divorced.

John's father was an engineer, and his mother was a realtor. His mother and father worked hard in their respective careers. His parents are where his strong work ethic came from. He saw how dedicated his parents were and how their hard work paid off with raises. He also measured his mother and father's successes with their level of happiness. Also, his mother and father's strong Christian beliefs are what made their lives content.

John described himself as a perfectionist. He does not know where or when the perfectionist trait developed, but he remembers being a perfectionist for most of his life. He was always much harder on himself than his parents. His parents never pushed him to get straight A's and B's. If he did not do well on an assignment or a school test, he would develop anxiety, which caused a panic attack. John has not taken medication for anxiety until recently. Having a disability was also why he taught special education when he finished school.

There were always random teachers who impacted his life throughout the school. Usually, the teacher took the time to get to know him and was compassionate. The person who had the most significant impact was his youth group leader from Grade 6 to 12. This was a person he could always turn to no matter what was going on in his life. It could have been school, personal, or family troubles, and he was always there as an understanding and compassionate listener.

John's school experiences were standard. All his academic classes followed the same pattern children have today. He always had some English, Math, Social Studies, and Science classes. The one thing he could not remember was whether there were any children with special needs in his classroom. He remembered seeing a class of medically fragile students in his high school, but the medically fragile classroom was on the lower floor of the school building. Most kids never had to go to the lower part of the building for any reason. He had one or two classes that presented some difficulty in high school but, for the most part, the school came easy. John did not do any extracurricular activities because nothing was interesting to him.

John went to a local college where he majored in education with a concentration in special education. This program was unique because, after two years of taking the foundation of education and acceptable arts courses, a student was required to interview for a cohort in their concentrations. If accepted, students will learn more about the field and complete a practicum in multiple grade levels. Once accepted into the cohort, John was required to student teach in PreK, upper elementary, and high school settings. During his junior year, his student teaching averaged 2 to 3 days a week. In the Spring, it was every day for an average of ten weeks. He planned lessons with the teachers and attended faculty meetings during his student teaching time. According to John, the amount of student teaching required was more than enough preparation for a teaching job. He did say you do not learn to teach from textbooks but learning about the law as it relates to special education was very helpful. He also had ample time to practice writing IEPs in one of his classes. Writing IEPs helped improve his technical writing when he got an actual teaching job.

Lucy Profile

Lucy was a 26-year-old white female. She was born in Flint, Michigan, and moved to Huntington, West Virginia, at age 8. The reason for her family moving was that they were looking for a more settled life. Her dad worked in the automotive industry in Detroit and spent most of his time working. On average, he would work at least 60 hours a week, but desired a more settled life to see his children grow. She grew up in a basic nuclear family with a mom, a dad, and an older sister. Her mom never really worked an official nine to five type job. Lucy's mom would volunteer at the elementary school in the area, make sure the family had food, keep the house in order, and help her

and her sister with their homework. She described her father as a *craftsman* who could do anything with his hands. He was the type of person who found that if a job was not done well and to his specifications, he would go back and complete the job and do it the *right* way. Lucy believes this is how she developed her work ethic. She remembered this one statement her dad would always say, which sticks with her today; "what kind of dog are you if you do not hold up your tail?"

Lucy did talk about an outside community member they treated like family. He was a member of her church community. He was a grandfather figure. His wife had passed away, and this gentleman had no children. He developed a strong bond with Lucy's family. He would come for dinner on the weekends and help Lucy with her homework. He was a listening ear when she did not feel like she could talk with her family. He even did fun things with the kids, like occasionally taking them to the movies. She always remembered him being a kind person. Being a kind person is a trait she holds dearly even today. "Building relationships and being kind is so important even in the field of teaching."

When we discussed how she experienced school growing up, she explained that she was not a good student. Lucy always was in trouble for not paying attention, not sitting down, and never wanting to complete her assignments. According to Lucy, she acted out in class because she did not understand the assignments. The behaviors, which caused difficulties in school, occurred until she was in Grade 8. Her parents had her see a doctor who prescribed her attention deficit hyperactivity disorder medication, but it did not work. They then worked on her diet, including reducing sugar and red dye. The diet and some behavior modification techniques helped her focus more on her schoolwork.

She remembered a time when she was younger and particularly hyperactive. The teacher separated the troubled kids from the better-behaved children. Lucy remembers the teacher handing out work and not explaining anything to the troubled children. The teacher focused more of her time on the other side of the room. Since Lucy and the other children on her side of the room did not understand the material, they started breaking crayons and throwing them at each other. It is a memory she explained she would never forget. She would not make the same mistake when she became a teacher.

Lucy went to a University in West Virginia. She had a dual degree in Education and Sports Medicine. When she graduated, Lucy tried to enter the field of Sports Medicine, but there were exams she had to pass to go further into graduate school. She was unable to pass the exams. She worked random jobs until she got married and moved to Georgia. Someone convinced her to become a paraprofessional at the local middle school. She worked as a paraprofessional for two years until she thought about becoming a teacher. Lucy had to go through an alternative path to certification because she never completed student teaching during her undergraduate studies. She said she does not remember much from her undergraduate studies being useful. The alternative certification (TAPP or Teacher Academy for Preparation and Pedagogy) did not help much either. She said the TAPP student teaching was helpful because the instructors constantly gave constructive feedback. The TAPP program was packed into one year, and Lucy said it felt more rushed than anything. What helped her most when she first started to teach was her experiences as a paraprofessional. She already knew the basics of what needed to be done from being a paraprofessional. According to Lucy, "the

hands-on activities were helpful, but that was it." She said things need to change for teacher candidates to feel more prepared.

Connor Profile

Connor was a 25-year-old African American male. He was born and raised in Central Georgia. His mother and father divorced by age two, but the split was amicable. His mom and dad were hardworking individuals. His dad was in the military and eventually worked for Boeing. His mom was always a paraprofessional at various elementary and middle schools throughout the city. Connor described a time when he got along with the family members on his dad's side more than on his mom's. It was primarily because the half-brothers and half-sisters were closer to his age. The family from his mother's side is not as close because they are scattered throughout the country. He does not know them as well. His dad has been on disability for the past several years due to an accident on the job, but he can never forget his dad and mom going to work every day and on time. They never made excuses for failures and always told him to "put his best foot forward."

Connor remembered growing up in school and getting a fever at a young age. The fever was not treated early enough and caused problems with his hearing. His hearing loss never recovered. He was fitted for hearing aids at an early age, which caused an IEP to be developed for him at school. Connor did not struggle with getting good grades at school, even with hearing issues. What he did struggle with was his social integration. He described a time in elementary school when other students would make fun of him because the teacher needed to wear a special microphone to help him hear better. The students making fun of him caused him to become angry and fight other

students in the school when no one would help. He was constantly getting into fights, and the teachers and staff could not figure out why. After facing years of bullying, he told his mom he was done wearing the hearing aids and learned to read lips instead. Reading lips did not impact his grades, and he was eventually taken off an IEP after two years of middle school. The bullying stopped, too, after he stopped wearing the hearing aids. He does remember a teacher from elementary and middle school who helped him process some of the feelings he was experiencing. They were caring and compassionate teachers who made his day a little easier. He also participated in extracurricular activities like track and field and soccer. These sports gave him a better sense of belonging.

Connor remembered his aunt and uncle being the most significant influence on his desire to go to college after graduating high school. He saw their success and accomplishment and wanted the same thing for himself. He applied to a local technical school and earned an early childhood education associate degree. Once he finished, a teacher from the technical school convinced him to apply to a local university for a degree in education. With the help of a recommendation letter written by the teacher, he could get into the university program. Connor explained that the actual content classes did little to prepare him for teaching. The practicum was helpful because it gave him teaching experience and constructive feedback from his professors. Also, the more "hands-on" classes were useful too. More specifically, where they put bulletin boards together and practiced writing lesson plans. He did substitute teaching during his time in school. According to Connor, substitute teaching was the most beneficial experience because he knew what to expect when he got into the classroom.

Description of Each Participant's Former School

  The following profiles describe each school where the SEIT (special education inclusion teacher) participant formerly taught. The information provided lists the total student body population and ethnic makeup of the students. The school profiles also contain the student-to-teacher ratio and the percentage of students at or below the poverty line. Some of this information is in Table 6 of this section.

Table 6

Description of Participant's Former School

	School Grade Level	Student-to-Teacher Ratio	Percentage of Poor Students	Percentage of Minority Enrollment	Proficiency in Reading and Math
Darcy's School	Middle School	17:1	95%	84%	Reading 35%
					Math 30%
John's School	High School	17:1	99%	75%	Reading 50%
					Math 25%
Lucy's School	Middle School	15:1	95%	68%	Reading 30%
					Math 30%
Connor's School	Middle School	16:1	95%	95%	Reading 20%
					Math 10%

Note: Information was taken from Find the best K-12 schools - U.S. news education, n.d.

Darcy School Profile

Darcy was employed at a public middle school in an urban school district in Central Georgia. The school serves students from Grade 6 to 8. The student body population is roughly 1,000, with an average of 45% female and 55% male (Find the best K-12 schools - U.S. news education, n.d.). On Average, 30% of the students scored at or above the proficient level for math, and 35% scored at or above proficiency for reading (Find the best K-12 schools - U.S. news education, n.d.). The minority enrollment of the school is around 80%. The student-to-teacher ratio is 17:1, with around 60 full-time teachers and two counselors on staff (Find the best K-12 schools - U.S. news education, n.d.). The school enrolls 95% of poor students.

On average, 16% of the student body is white, 70% is Black, 6% are Hispanic, 4% are Asian, 3% are two or more races, 0.2% are Pacific Islander, and 0.1% are American Indian (Find the best K-12 schools - U.S. news education, n.d.).

John School Profile

John was employed at a public high school in an urban district in Central Georgia. The school serves students from Grade 9 to 12. The student population is roughly 1,200, 50% female and 50% male (Find the best K-12 schools - U.S. news education, n.d.). On average, 25% of students were proficient on the Georgia Milestones mathematics portion of the exam (Find the best K-12 schools - U.S. news education, n.d.). 50% of the students were proficient on the Georgia Milestones reading portion of the exam. The student-to-teacher ratio is 17:1, and there are around 70 full-time teachers. At least 99% of the student body was reported to be economically disadvantaged. There is also an

average of 80% enrollment of minority students (Find the best K-12 schools - U.S. news education, n.d.).

On average, 30% of the student body is white, 63% is Black, 5% is Asian, 4% are Hispanic, 2% are two or more races, 0.2% are American Indian, 0.1% are Pacific Islander (Find the best K-12 schools - U.S. news education, n.d.).

Lucy School Profile

This participant was employed at a public middle school in an urban district in Central Georgia. The school serves students from Grade 6 to 8. The student body population is around 800, 50% female and 50% male (Find the best K-12 schools - U.S. news education, n.d.). Roughly 30% of the students scored at or above the proficient level for math, and 30% scored at or above proficiency for reading (Find the best K-12 schools - U.S. news education, n.d.). The minority enrollment of the school is around 70%. The student-to-teacher ratio is 15:1, with roughly 60 full-time teachers and two counselors on staff. The school enrolls around 95% of economically disadvantaged students (Find the best K-12 schools - U.S. news education, n.d.).

On average, 32% of the student population are White, 50% are Black, 13% are Hispanic or Latino, 3% are two or more races, 0.8% are Asian, and 0.1% are American Indian (Find the best K-12 schools - U.S. news education, n.d.).

Connor School Profile

Connor was employed at an urban middle school in Central Georgia. This school serves Grades 6 to 8 students. The total population is roughly 950 students, with a 16:1 student-to-teacher ratio. On average, 10% of the student population scored at or above the proficiency level for math. 20% scored at or above the proficiency level for reading

(Find the best K-12 schools - U.S. news education, n.d.). The school's minority student enrollment is roughly 90%. The student population is around 45% female and 55% male (Find the best K-12 schools - U.S. news education, n.d.). The school also enrolls 95% of economically disadvantaged students.

The race makeup of the student body is, on average, 5% white, 85% black, 6% Hispanic, 2% two or more races, 0.5% Asian, and 0.1% American Indian (Find the best K-12 schools - U.S. news education, n.d.).

Chapter V

RESULTS

Introduction

The perception of the teaching profession from potential candidates has changed over time. Based on surveys conducted by Park, Jacob, Wagner, & Baiden (2013), teaching is not viewed as the profession it once was. Since the early 1990s, with the development of charter schools, more rigorous academic standards have been adopted, teacher evaluations began being tied to student performance on standardized tests, and structured lesson plans offered less room for creativity (Park et al., 2013).

Research on attrition rates of special education inclusion teachers (SEITs) has focused on the internal struggles occurring when one decides to leave their job. The results from surveys given to participants throughout much of the previous SEIT research lay a foundation rooted in understanding the concepts of burnout, feelings of helplessness, a lack of gratitude, and poor working conditions (Gilmour, 2019). Poor working conditions have been associated with feelings of inadequacy and a lack of support from the administration (Park et al., 2013). A scarcity of student resources was noted as contributing to the burnout factor (Park et al., 2013). The internal struggles SEITs face when contemplating leaving the profession are best associated with three theories: The Human Capital Theory of Occupational Choice, The Economic Labor Market Theory, and The Multidimensional Theory of Burnout (Park et al., 2013).

Hermann (2018) asserted that a solution to the SEIT attrition issues is essential to improving the educational system. The results of this study will give school districts personal insight into why SEITs leave the field. This information could help school districts change their hiring and recruiting practices for SEITs.

The two research questions that guided the research were:

RQ1: What were the experiences of special education inclusion teachers who have left the profession?

RQ2: How do special education inclusion teachers, who have left the profession, perceive their support as a special education inclusion teacher?

RQ3: What impact did special education inclusion teachers' classroom experiences have on their decision to leave the field?

Participant Results

The results from the three interviews with each of the 4 participants are discussed in this chapter. For each participant, results are discussed as they relate to the three research questions based on this study. Direct quotes and text citations are used to support the results provided for each research question.

Darcy Results

Results related to experiences of special education inclusion teachers who have left the profession. Darcy did not have to search long for her special education inclusion teacher job. She was a paraprofessional at the school that hired her to teach. She was a paraprofessional for two years until she began student teaching at that same school. The school's principal hired her to teach when her practicum was complete. She did not have to go through an interview process at that time. She described the process as just falling into her lap. As such, she could not speak about any interview process.

Darcy taught for a total of 3 years at her middle school. She described the school environment as being very welcoming. The administrators gave her a welcome basket with the essentials on her first day of new teacher orientation. There was guidance on how the teacher evaluations would be conducted and professional development on dealing with classroom behaviors. Professional development occurred before she even began working with a classroom full of students. She also said planning with the other teachers was beneficial because they gave her all the resources she could need.

During her first year of teaching, she said she remembers coming home and crying daily because she felt overwhelmed. The support lessened as the beginning months of school developed. Darcy distinctly remembers the administrators asking her to be the family engagement facilitator in combination with the two academic subjects she was required to co-teach every day. "Being a new teacher, I felt I could not say no." She was also responsible for morning and afternoon breakfast duty and carpool duty. One duty required her to make sure the students ate breakfast promptly and arrived at class on time. In the afternoon, she ensured the kids got to their parent's or guardians' cars when her assigned number was called.

Darcy was solely responsible for teaching reading and math for four periods within a school day. She also had intervention time that was placed within the four periods. Intervention time would be for struggling students in a particular subject area. They may work in any area where they need support. They would also be in small groups of general and special education students. The groups would rotate daily within a set group of teachers. She also described the content planning meetings occurring in the mornings before the students got to class. Attending content planning once a week meant

staff would have to arrive at school earlier than usual. Teachers would conduct content

meetings and plan lessons for the week accordingly. Darcy would have to split her time

between math and language arts content meetings. She spent more time preparing for

reading because most children on her caseload were identified as learning disabled in

reading.

Darcy said a lot of her crying came from not getting much support regarding

managing and maintaining IEPs. She explained how she did not have the proper training

to write an IEP. "My only training was someone handing me an example to model, and

that was it." She had twelve students on her caseload who mostly had a learning

disability. Darcy struggled to figure out how to serve best her students based on each

student's many IEP goals in their files. Each student had IEP goals depending on their

disability and what they needed to improve upon. The students could have anywhere

between 2 to 8 goals. "Each goal required a weekly analyzed work sample too, but I did

not know how to fit the task into the school day." "We got in trouble if we pulled them

out of class during instructional time." She said a high point for her was the group of

students she had on her caseload. The students always wanted to work, and they

generally did their best. Darcy was a relatively new mom then, and her family had just

moved into a new home, so life was complicated.

Darcy said she always had a hard-working group of kids for the three years she

was at her middle school. The only goal she wanted to accomplish for herself was to

"survive." She said the paperwork was essential because the potential for litigation was

always held over her and the other teachers. "I had to ensure the information I provided

was accurate, all the progress notes were up to date, and the proper papers were filed into

the correct folders." There was so much work that she had to bring it home consistently. Teaching started to impact her personal life. Her husband expressed his dislike for her having to work so much because he did not get to spend quality time with her. "I always fought with my husband over my work schedule." Darcy's daughter said, "I hate that bag," referring to her bag with her computer. The statement was made because her daughter knew she would have to work that night, which meant less time for them to spend together.

Darcy also felt like she could never give her students the proper attention they deserved. She could not provide them with attention because everyone stressed documentation and paperwork. It seemed as if teaching the children was less important. Also, regarding documentation, she said, "the same information was required to be submitted on four separate forms." SEITs had to document progress monitoring, service time for each child, attendance for each child, maintain grades, and document that each child was receiving their accommodations each day. According to Darcy, "this was not a requirement from the state because I knew teachers from other counties." She said other counties were not required to document half the information that she was at her school. She wondered if it could have something to do with litigation fears.

Darcy described a time when she was observed in the classroom. After the observation, she met with the Assistant Principal to review her ratings. She distinctly remembers receiving a low score in one area. She thinks it was regarding student engagement because one of her students was behaviorally challenging and often did not want to work. Her Assistant Principal asked her what her plan was to improve her score on student engagement. She remembers becoming agitated because she did not know

how to help this one student. Darcy repeatedly asked for help, but she said she did not get any response. So, when the Assistant Principal asked her what she could do, Darcy became angry and frustrated and shut down. Darcy explained, "I did not know what else to do."

Darcy did have some fantastic experiences with co-teaching. She said the teachers from year one to year three were all excellent. The general education teachers were compassionate and understanding and treated her equally. If she was having a difficult day with paperwork, the general education teachers understood if she had to write up an IEP for a meeting and miss some of the class. She felt like there was equal responsibility shared between the general education teacher and herself. Darcy and her co-teachers evaluations on effective co-teaching from people at Central Office reflected her beliefs in a shared effort. She did say that a key to effective co-teaching has a pre-established relationship. She was friends with her colleagues inside and outside of the classroom. Relationships translated into effective teaching strategies within each classroom. Darcy also said, "honesty was important." She was honest with the people she worked with regarding her shortcomings. If there were an area of the content she did not feel comfortable with, she would have a conversation with the general education teacher about it. Most of the time, she could plan with the teachers, but if she did not, they would send her the lesson plans. Not being able to plan meant she would have to fly by the seat of her pants, which was never comfortable for her. Lack of time and planning was probably the one negative experience she had with teaching, but lack of time and planning did not cause her to leave. Darcy left because of the weight of everything.

Darcy never felt like she could give her students the tools they needed to be successful. Too much of a focus was placed on paperwork and not enough on helping the students in their areas of need. Also, having to take work home with her daily was causing a strain on her personal life. "Having to do virtual school because of COVID did not help." There should have been some focus on just having time to talk with each child, seeing what they needed and if they were okay. There was never enough time to have conversations. Darcy was doing everything she could, and having the administration say they would look at her students' test scores to see how well she taught just put her over the edge in her last year of teaching. Some of her kids did show incremental progress, but progress was not able to be displayed on standardized testing. "My kids or myself should not have been measured based on one standardized test."

Darcy tried to schedule all her meetings when her kids had connections classes, such as gym or art. She did her best not to schedule any meetings during instructional time. Sometimes she would have to schedule meetings after school. If she were not having meetings after school, she would stay late to try and plan for the next day. Darcy would remember getting home from work around 6:30 at night. She would get to work around 7:00 in the morning when the class would begin around 8:20. The school would let out around 3:20 each day. She would roughly leave 3 to 4 hours after the end of the school day.

A time when Darcy felt most successful was when she started a reading program for the school. The children were given sticker charts. If the students read so many books within a given period, then there were prizes they could pick from. The students could choose from ice cream tokens, treasure box items, jeans pass, or other items from a

list. She saw it was something the kids were interested in and took seriously. The students began reading more books, and eventually, the program translated throughout the entire school.

Results related to how special education inclusion teachers perceived their support before they left the profession. Darcy described her support as being suitable for her first year. During her first year, the assistant principal conducted her teacher evaluations. The following year, her school had a new assistant principal that conducted her evaluations. "The transition of a new assistant principal was when the morale decreased, and the micromanaging increased." Her assistant principal gave her poor ratings on her teacher evaluation form and told her she needed to figure out a way to improve. This comment came without any advice or suggestions on what she could do to improve. Darcy asked the assistant principal for help with reaching her students, but the assistant principal told Darcy she needed to figure it out. She would observe her again once she could figure out the problem. The struggles with her assistant principal occurred for the last two years of her teaching profession. Darcy finally had enough and could not take the constant micromanaging. The assistant principal would constantly tell her everything she was doing wrong. The constant pressure from the assistant principal and the heavy workload significantly contributed to her leaving the profession.

Darcy did talk about a mentorship program that had been implemented at the school during her first year. Each new teacher was paired with a veteran teacher certified as a teacher support specialist. They were asked to meet every week during planning times. During those planning times, the veteran teacher would look at the goals set by the new teacher. The veteran teacher would check to make sure those goals were being met.

It would also be a time for the new teacher to discuss any issues or concerns about the classroom. She said, "while the idea of a mentorship program made sense, it did not work as intended." She was paired with a teacher who had a teacher support specialist certification. Darcy described many times when her mentor would sign off on the paperwork and not meet because there was no time. Their days would be consumed with other things that needed to be done first. Since the importance of mentorship was not at the forefront of non-negotiables, it was often pushed aside for more pressing issues. She thought that a strong mentorship program could have helped her emotional well-being if it had been appropriately implemented.

Results on the impact of classroom experiences on the decision to leave the field. Darcy emphasized the strong relationships she established throughout her time as a special education inclusion teacher. The general education teachers were accommodating and supportive regardless of her strengths and weaknesses. She even talked about how well her students behaved and how they performed to the best of their abilities was gratifying. She had one issue with a coworker who spread hearsay information about her to the principal. According to Darcy, the issue with a coworker was an isolated incident that did not impact her decision to leave. She explained that her desire to go was her constant exhaustion and that she did not feel like she was devoting enough time to helping her students.

Darcy said she had an average of twelve students on her caseload. That would be twelve annual reviews to conduct during the school year. "Annual reviews include writing the IEPs and many other details too." "Progress monitoring of IEP goals must be done, and if a student meets his or her goal, then the IEP is amended, and a new goal

93

established." "Also, if a student exhibits any behavioral concerns, then a functional behavioral assessment needs to be conducted." The functional behavioral assessment focuses on targeted behaviors and how and when the behaviors occur. "Once the functional behavioral assessment is complete, a behavior plan may be established for the student." Darcy's duties and responsibilities did not include the lesson planning that occurred and the grading of assignments since co-teaching is a shared responsibility. She had to keep a daily log for each student to show accommodations were being met and that each child received their appropriate service time. She may have had to fill out all the information on four separate forms that went to 4 individual people. The forms were all in different formats as well. Extra duties and responsibilities took away from teaching her kids how she saw fit.

Darcy would have to take her work home to have time to meet her deadlines. She stayed up late at home when she was not at school. The job would interfere with getting dinner ready at home, helping her kids with homework, getting them to bed, and even spending time with her spouse. Finishing paperwork was a significant disruption in her life and the main reason for leaving. She started to feel less accomplished over time and just exhausted.

Three specific barriers prevented Darcy from doing her job effectively. Her barriers were a lack of time, unrealistic expectations, and a lack of support. Darcy continuously expressed an issue she had with time. There was not enough time to complete IEPs and hold meetings. "We were supposed to complete the writing of IEPs during the school day during planning." "The problem was our planning time was taken up with everything else besides us being able to do our actual work." Darcy tried to write

IEPs during class time with her kids. Writing IEPs took away from instruction time, but it would be a problem if she did not meet the deadlines for her IEPs, then it would be a problem. "IEPs are legal documents, and I would be in serious trouble if I did not have them completed promptly." Darcy developed a strong relationship with her co-teachers, so they understood when she had to complete paperwork. Her co-teachers would pick up the slack in delivering classroom instruction to the students. Having to write IEPs did not include finding time to write lesson plans, monitor behaviors with checklists, plan lessons with teachers, meet with parents unexpectantly, or random professional learning opportunities required during planning time. Darcy said that professional learning usually was something that she could never apply to her practices.

Darcy also had a difficult time keeping up with something called *rainbow folders*. According to Darcy, they were folders that housed all the pertinent information for each child with special needs. They contained psychological testing, behavior information, achievement data, and progress monitoring of IEP goals. Darcy said she was supposed to get work samples from each child on her caseload weekly. Those work samples needed to be analyzed and charted on a graph. She would then use that data to decide what her student needed to be instructed on in math and reading. The issue was that Darcy could not pull her kids to work on their goals during academics. They were supposed to find the time to work on their goals in the academic classes, but some of the goals were way below grade level. If they took the time to work on goals, they would miss crucial instruction in math and reading. There was no time to work on goals appropriately.

As for unrealistic expectations, one of Darcy's most significant issues was her students, who identified as having special needs, having to take standardized tests. Darcy

said she was required to write IEP goals based on the instructional levels of each child. "Some of those children were in the 7th grade but were reading on a 1st-grade level." She wondered how she was supposed to help a Grade 7 student on Grade 1 reading level pass the standardized test at the end of the school year. The standardized test would have been on a Grade 7 level since that was the child's grade at Darcy's school. She explained that her kids could be successful if someone were to look at their individual growth. According to Darcy, if you look at the student's reading level at the beginning of the school year compared to the end, you will see growth. "A person would not be able to see that growth on a standardized test," she said. Those are some of the unrealistic expectations.

Another unrealistic expectation is that Darcy worked with her students and figured out what they needed to be as successful as possible in the classroom. Still, she had to figure it out independently. Darcy explained how she was expected to provide research-based interventions to improve student outcomes but was never offered professional learning geared toward interventions. Darcy had to figure out what interventions would work for her students. If it were a particular type of program that costs money, Darcy would have to figure out how to gather the funds to purchase the program. Unrealistic expectations also would tie into her last barrier of having little to no support with classroom expectations.

Darcy said she received little support from the special education coordinator assigned to her school. The coordinator would be responsible for dealing with certain education-related matters for the school. If there was an IEP meeting, the coordinator would have to be notified and have room on their calendar to attend. Darcy said there

was no room for making errors or receiving constructive feedback. "You were either wrong, or you were right." She explained that you were expected to make corrections without assistance if you made errors. According to Darcy, it was worse that she didn't receive any training on writing an IEP in her undergraduate studies either. She said that IEP writing was something that colleges and universities have missed the mark with when developing their preparation programs. Darcy said, "How was I supposed to improve if I did not receive support?" This lack of support continued until she decided to leave.

She also did not receive support from the administration in her school. If there was a problem with a particular student in her classroom, Darcy was expected to fix the issue without help. If administrators saw that a student was not engaged during one of her lessons, the administrators would ask her what she needed to do to ensure that the student was engaged. Darcy would sometimes ask for help if this was a student she had issues connecting with. "No matter how often I asked for help, I was told it was my responsibility to figure it out." According to Darcy, this was highly frustrating.

John Results

Results related to experiences of special education inclusion teachers who have left the profession. John graduated from college with a degree in special education. He went through with student teaching and completed all his coursework. Then he realized he was not interested in teaching for a career. He was not sure of what he wanted to do at that point. "I just realized that it was not the direction I wanted to go with my career." He moved with his wife to Central Georgia so she could attend law school. John could not find a job then, and since he and his wife would be living off his

income, he decided to apply for a special education teaching position at the nearby high school. These events happened in late May one year. He interviewed for the only job he applied for and was offered the position on the spot. He explained that he took the job because he needed income for himself and his wife. "I took the position for those reasons only."

John taught Grade 9 English and a reading intervention class for one year. He also had morning duty and afternoon duty. These duties mainly consisted of monitoring the halls to ensure students got to class or left in the afternoon to get on buses. He received a caseload at the beginning of the school year. Since he taught Grade 9, the caseload of students he received was from Grade 9. "They ranged from Intellectual Disabilities, Learning Disabilities, and Emotional Behavioral Disorders." "Each student had service times that I was required to ensure were provided." All his students were served in a co-teach setting. "I was required to monitor the progress of their IEP goals, monitor and implement behavior plans, grade class assignments, plan with the general education teachers, attend professional development seminars, differentiate instruction, and meet with parents when necessary." He also had to pull students out if they exhibited severe behavioral issues and disrupted the classroom. John was trained in a de-escalation program to help limit disruptive behaviors, including restraining techniques. He said he had to restrain at least five times during his year of teaching. John was injured during one of the restraints when a student headbutted him on the nose.

At the time of this injury, John reported the incident to the administration at the school, who then called the director of special education for the district. An emergency meeting was held to discuss an alternative placement for the student for more intense

behavioral therapy. According to John, the decision was made, and he was required to collect all the documentation for the behavioral therapy school to receive. The next day the IEP team met again, and the director changed her mind. John said she thought the student needed to stay at the school, and the school needed to try some other types of interventions. John described the decision as "awful" and "defeating." "I felt defeated because the student was struggling, and I was getting hurt." "No one seemed to care about either of us." The incident with the student contributed to the mental and physical exhaustion he faced daily, he said.

John described when progress reports were coded in the computer-based IEP system to go home every nine weeks. The district said they wanted the progress reports to go home every six weeks. According to John, the issue was that the computer program could not change the nine weeks. John said he and his coworkers had to do the same progress report twice, which took up much time. SEITs had to graph the students' progress as well. "After completing the 6-week progress, we had to put information in the computer at nine weeks." The 9-week report had to be done because it would be coded red on the computer if it was not completed. John said being coded red would hinder his ability to access certain areas of the IEP program. According to John, the progress report incident was another example of the administration making decisions that made his job more difficult. "The time I spent completing two identical reports was time away from teaching students."

John was frustrated throughout his last year of teaching because of the massive amounts of documentation needing to be kept. All the paperwork took away from teaching his students, he explained. There was a time when he had to work during

instructional time to meet various deadlines. He would be in the co-teach classroom but working on paperwork simultaneously. John explained that paperwork and a lack of support contributed to a challenging work environment. "The students were never the problem, but everything that went along with teaching was the problem." John said he connected with his students and got along with his co-teachers. The general education teachers made him feel welcome in the classroom and created spaces for him to work. The issue was that John felt guilty for not providing his students with the education they needed and deserved.

Results related to how special education inclusion teachers perceived their support before they left the profession. John described the school as having a "high morale" at the beginning of the school year. "We were all excited to start the school year." He said, "the morale declined as the year went on." The morale declined because the teachers used each other to complain often. He said the negative attitudes and thoughts contributed to the decline in confidence. "It was not the teachers' fault," John said SEITs did not have any other outlet to discuss their concerns or problems with the job. According to John, the administration said there was an open-door policy, but staff feared retaliation if they complained. He thought the retaliation could result in lousy teacher evaluations or make their jobs more difficult. John felt like there was little to no support for the teachers. Even with the implementation of their mentor program, it was still difficult. John said the mentor he was assigned to did not have any background in special education. He said it was nice to have someone to talk to, but she could not help him with his special education questions.

John said his lead special education teacher was as helpful as she could be during the year. The problem was that she had her classes and her caseload to manage. He explained that her time was thin even though she tried to help as much as possible. "The three other new teachers and I did not know who else to turn to for help." John said the administration at his school usually avoided special education matters unless an issue arose with a parent or Central Office. "Training for new teachers involved talking about data and areas of need, but no one told us what to do with the data." "Research-based strategies were always highlighted, but not one person talked about the implementation of said strategies."

John remembers a time when he was pulled out of class during instruction. He said the principal and some person from Central Office were doing classroom observations. After fifteen minutes, the principal and Central Office personnel pulled him out to tell him he was delivering the instruction incorrectly. John wonders why they could not have explained his instructional delivery later. Instead, the principal and Central Office staff member took away from instruction time to tell him he was doing something wrong, even though John said, "I was following the book." "They did not tell me anything positive I was doing; it was just that I was doing something wrong." "It was defeating." He said, "the lack of support was a factor, among other things, as to why I decided to leave." "It was not a hard or difficult decision to make."

Results on the impact of classroom experiences on the decision to leave the field. John explained the reasons for leaving the field of teaching. One of the big reasons was the lack of support he felt he received throughout his time. He felt he was not valued because decisions were made without considering his and his student's

interests. He said some of the policy changes from the administration would make it difficult for him to do his job. Lastly, the paperwork hindered everything he thought was more important, such as teaching the students. Paperwork would interrupt his "instructional time because completing that paperwork was more important to administration" than being in class with his students. He explained that all these concerns and issues made it difficult for him to feel like he was making a difference. Therefore, he decided to leave.

Three specific barriers prevented John from doing his job effectively. Those barriers that he discussed were a lack of time, unrealistic expectations, and a lack of support. John continuously expressed an issue with time. He said there was not enough time to complete IEPs and hold meetings. "We were supposed to complete the writing of IEPs during planning." "The problem was our planning time was taken up with other responsibilities." John tried to write IEPs during class time with his kids. He explained that writing IEPs took away instruction time, but it was an issue if he did not meet the deadlines for his IEPs. "IEPs are legal documents, and I would be in trouble if I did not have them completed." John developed a strong relationship with his co-teachers, so they understood when he had to complete paperwork. His co-teachers would pick up the slack in delivering classroom instruction to the students. John explained that having to write IEPs did not include finding time to write lesson plans, monitor behaviors, plan lessons with teachers, meet with parents unexpectantly, or random unexpected professional learning opportunities required during planning time. John said that professional learning usually was something that he could never apply to his practices.

John also had a difficult time keeping up with something called *rainbow folders*. According to John, they were folders that housed all the pertinent information for each child with special needs. They contained psychological testing, behavior information, achievement data, and progress monitoring of IEP goals. John said he was supposed to get work samples from each child on his caseload weekly. Those work samples needed to be analyzed and charted on a graph. He would then use that data to decide what his students needed to be instructed on in math and reading. John said the issue was that he could not pull his kids to work on their goals during academics. He explained that they were supposed to find the time to work on their goals in the academic classes, but some of the goals were way below grade level. "If they took the time to work on goals, they would miss crucial instruction in math and reading."

As for unrealistic expectations, one of John's most significant issues was his students, who identified as having special needs, having to take standardized tests. John said he was required to write IEP goals based on the instructional levels of each child. "Some of those children were in the 9th grade but were reading on a 4th-grade level." He wondered how he was supposed to help a Grade 9 student on a Grade 4 reading level pass the standardized test. The standardized test would have been on a Grade 9 level since that was the child's grade at John's school. He explained that his kids could be successful if someone were to look at their individual growth. "If you look at the student's reading level at the beginning of the school year compared to the end, you will see growth."

Another unrealistic expectation is that John worked with his students and figured out what they needed to be successful in the classroom. Still, he had to figure it out

independently. He was expected to provide research-based interventions to improve student outcomes, but he said he was never offered any professional learning geared towards interventions. Through extensive research, John had to figure out what types of interventions would work for his students. He said that if a particular program costs money, he would have to figure out how to gather the funds to purchase the program.

John said he received little support from the special education coordinator assigned to his school. The coordinator would be responsible for dealing with special education-related matters for the school. If there were an IEP meeting, the coordinator would have to be notified and have room on their calendar to attend. John said there was no room for making errors or receiving constructive feedback. If you made errors, you were expected to make corrections without assistance. According to John, what made it worse was that he didn't receive any training on writing an IEP in his undergraduate studies either. He said that IEP writing was something that colleges and universities have missed the mark with when developing their preparation programs. John said, "How was I supposed to improve without support?" This lack of support continued until he decided to leave.

He also did not receive support from the administration in his school. If there was a problem with a particular student in her classroom, John said he was expected to fix the issue without help and described some behaviors as being out of control. According to John, if administrators saw that a student was not engaged during one of his lessons, the administrators would ask him what he needed to do to ensure that the student was engaged. If this were a student that he had issues connecting with, John would

sometimes ask for help. "I was told it was my responsibility to figure it out." According to John, this was highly frustrating.

Lucy Results

Results related to experiences of special education inclusion teachers who have left the profession. Lucy did not have to search for a job to teach special education students. She did not even have a strong desire to teach, she said. She took a paraprofessional job at a local middle school in the community when she and her family moved to Central Georgia. She needed to work while her kids were in school, and someone local she knew suggested she apply for a paraprofessional job. So, Lucy applied and was contacted the next day. She went in for an interview a few days later and was hired that day. Lucy explained that as she worked at the middle school throughout the first year, faculty and staff convinced her to undergo an alternative certification program to become a teacher. Again, Lucy stated, "it was not something I ever thought about or wanted to pursue." She had a degree in education but was more interested in using her sports medicine degree. Also, she never completed student teaching, so she was not certified. Lucy said the other staff members at the school kept telling her how good she was with the kids and that the alternative certification was something she needed to think about completing. So, Lucy signed up to complete the certification and was offered a special education inclusion teaching position as soon as she registered. There was no interview process, and she accepted the job.

Lucy was an inclusion teacher for Grades 6, 7, and 8. Her overall responsibilities were lesson planning with the general education teachers, writing distance learning plans for each student on her caseload, maintaining service logs to make sure each student was

105

receiving their services daily, writing annual IEPs, doing amendments to the IEPs, maintaining behavior plans, administering standardized tests, and attending meetings on the latest and most significant piece of technology or program that needed to be implemented. According to Lucy, these had to be done with little help from central office staff or administrators. "I had to depend on veteran teachers to help her maintain all required paperwork."

The relationships she built with students and staff were some of the high points of her teaching last year. She said some of the low points were when she would conduct IEP meetings. IEP meetings were usually with people from the central office, and they would expect her to have completed some form she did not know anything about needing. According to Lucy, she would get "blasted" for doing something wrong during the meeting in front of school administrators and the child's parents. Lucy described the meetings as "demeaning," and she started to "lose confidence" in her abilities over time.

Lucy described her overall experiences teaching in the classroom as being positive. She said things went smoothly when she connected with the general education teacher. The students were excited to learn and completed all their required work. If the general education teacher was teaching a concept the students might not have understood; Lucy said she would come in the next day and explain the same idea differently. "Conducting class in this manner helped us reach more students." There were times when she had terrible co-teaching experiences, but those experiences were limited, explained Lucy. Once, Lucy had a teacher that did not want her in the classroom and did not know why she was there. The general education teacher would give Lucy copies to make during class time. "She also did not want me to interrupt the class when I was in

the room." Lucy said she went to the lead special education teacher to talk with the general education teacher. The lead teacher went over the rules and responsibilities of a co-teach classroom with the general education teacher. After that discussion, Lucy said, "things got a little better." The situation with that one teacher was a rare occurrence, she said.

It was tough for Lucy to maintain her paperwork because she was never given access to online programs to pull student reports. She said she always had to get password information from the general education teachers, which some did not like to provide. The main reason why she left teaching was because of being buried under paperwork. She explained that the co-teachers often understood when she had to work on paperwork during class, but it still made her "feel guilty." "I was not providing for my students the way I knew I should because of the paperwork." According to Lucy, the paperwork also prevented her from maintaining relationships with her students. Some students even got into more trouble than she would have liked throughout the school year because she did not have time to talk with them. She did not have time to provide a safe space for some of her students because she was worried about meeting various central office deadlines. Also, it did not help that her principal did not deal with student behaviors. She remembered needing help with a specific student she brought to the office. She said she walked into the principal's office. The first thing he asked was if the student was in special education, according to Lucy. Lucy said yes, and he said, "send him back to class because I do not have time for this." Lucy never went to the principal for assistance again.

Results related to how special education inclusion teachers perceived their support before they left the profession. Lucy described the support she received as a special education teacher as lessening over time. She remembers explicitly times she would ask the special education coordinator a question. The special education coordinator would often respond with "I don't know," according to Lucy. Lucy said, "I did not know where to turn when I had questions, so we (other special education teachers) had to depend on each other for help." "I felt the administration did not have time for us. I am unsure if it was because they were bogged down in paperwork too, but we felt lost sometimes." The special education department from the central office even stopped having monthly meetings with the schools. She said the monthly meetings were a time for teachers to have their questions answered and talk about special education updates. Lucy said, "this all created terrible morale my last year."

Lucy said some teacher appreciation would have been excellent, but there was no appreciation. The administration constantly told the staff that there was no money to do anything for the team. "We hardly received a thank you or donuts or anything." According to Lucy, improving and focusing on teacher appreciation would be a good start in getting teachers to stay in the field.

Lucy said there was also a lack of consequences for special education students. If a student violated the student code of conduct, the consequences did not match general education students. "Often they would be back not long after the violation occurred," Lucy said it was defeating because the student would be sent back to class and repeat the same behaviors. The students repeated the same behaviors because they knew they would not get in trouble. The behavioral issues were another example of her school's

lacking support for the staff. "The instances described just became unbearable, and I could not handle it." Also, the large amounts of paperwork did not help. The paperwork and behavioral concerns all contributed to her feelings of not helping her students like she thought she could, so she left the field.

Results on the impact of classroom experiences on the decision to leave the field. Lucy had issues with the administration and the lack of guidance and help she received. She was asked to maintain IEP documentation with little to no assistance. The assistance she did receive was from veteran teachers. She said the veteran teachers knew her struggles and did not want her to experience the same issues they encountered. Even though the lack of guidance did not help, Lucy explained that this was only a tiny fraction of why she decided to leave the teaching field.

Lucy said that the main contributor to her decision to leave the classroom was the excessive paperwork required to maintain. Not only did she have to maintain the progress monitoring for all her students, but she also had to hold annual reviews and write distance learning plans. The distance learning plan was in place for when and if the school system had to move to remote learning. "It was essentially a mini-IEP for when the students were taught online." "Also, the lesson planning for multiple subjects, team meetings, behavior management, professional learning seminars, and after-school faculty meetings all took away from building student relationships." The relationships she built tended to falter over the school year because she could not maintain them. Lucy said she had to spend her time focused on meeting deadlines and not working with her students. She noticed their grades slipping and their behavior worsening, but that was not what mattered to people outside the classroom. "All they wanted was their paperwork

completed when asked for." Maintaining large amounts of paperwork was why she left. She knew she could not provide for her students in the most appropriate manner, and she did not see it getting better.

Three specific barriers prevented Lucy from doing her job effectively. Her barriers were a lack of time, unrealistic expectations, and a lack of support. Lucy continuously expressed an issue she had with time. She said there was insufficient time to complete IEPs, hold meetings, grade papers, or teach effectively. "We had to complete the writing of IEPs during planning." "The problem was our planning time was taken up with everything else." Lucy tried to write IEPs during class time with her kids, which took away from instruction time. "IEPs are legal documents, and I would be in trouble if I did not have them finished." Lucy described developing a strong relationship with her co-teachers, so they understood when she had to complete paperwork. Her co-teachers would pick up the slack in delivering classroom instruction. She said that having to write IEPs did not include finding time to write lesson plans, monitor behaviors, plan lessons with teachers, meet with parents, or unexpected professional learning opportunities required during planning time. Lucy explained that professional learning usually was something that she could never apply to her work in the classroom.

Lucy also had a difficult time keeping up with *rainbow folders*. According to Lucy, they were folders that housed important information for each child with special needs. They contained psychological testing, achievement data, and progress monitoring of IEP goals. Lucy said she was supposed to get work samples from each child on her caseload weekly. Those work samples needed to be analyzed and charted on graphs. She would then use that data to decide what her student needed to be instructed on in class.

The issue was that Lucy could not pull her kids to work on their goals during class. They were supposed to find the time to work on their goals in the academic classes, but some of the goals were way below grade level. They would miss crucial instruction if they took the time to work on goals.

As for unrealistic expectations, one of Lucy's most significant issues was her students having to take standardized tests. Lucy said she was required to write IEP goals based on the instructional levels of her students. "Some of those children were in the 6th grade but were reading on a 1st-grade level." She wondered how she was supposed to help a Grade 6 student on Grade 1 reading level pass the standardized test at the end of the school year. The standardized test would have been on a Grade 6 level since that was the child's grade at Lucy's school. She explained that her kids could be successful if someone were to look at their individual growth. Lucy said, "If you look at the student's reading level at the beginning of the school year compared to the end, you will see growth. A person would not be able to see that growth on a standardized test.

Lucy said she was expected to provide research-based interventions to improve student outcomes, but she was never offered any professional learning geared towards interventions. Lucy had to figure out what types of interventions would work for her students. If it were a particular type of program that costs money, Lucy would have to figure out how to gather the funds to purchase the program. This also would tie into a barrier of having little to no support with classroom expectations.

Lucy said she received little support from the special education administrator assigned to her school. The administrator would be responsible for dealing with special education-related matters for the school. If there were an IEP meeting, the administrator

would have to be notified and have room on their calendar to attend. Lucy said that there was never any room for making mistakes. She explained that if you made errors, you were expected to make corrections without assistance. According to Lucy, what made it worse was that she didn't receive any training on writing an IEP in her undergraduate studies. She said that IEP writing was something that colleges and universities have missed the mark with when developing their preparation programs. Lucy said, "How was I supposed to improve if I did not receive any support or training with writing IEPs?" This lack of support continued until she decided to leave.

She also did not receive support from the administration in her school. If there was a problem with a particular student in her classroom, Lucy was expected to fix the issue without help. If administrators saw that a student was not engaged, the administrators would ask her what she needed to do to ensure that the student was engaged. "No matter how often I asked for help, I was told it was my responsibility to figure out how to fix the problem." According to Lucy, this was frustrating.

Connor Results

Results related to experiences of special education inclusion teachers who have left the profession. Connor was a co-teacher for Grade 7 at the middle school where he taught language arts. Another co-teacher covered the math classes for the Grade 7 special education students. He did not have to do any searching for his job. "There was not even a real interview process." Connor wanted to do something more individualized than teaching. He was interested in working with children with autism in a one-on-one setting. He was a paraprofessional at various schools as he was going to school to finish his degree. He also was a front office clerk at the middle school, where

112

he would eventually teach. While holding these various positions, Connor said, "I did

not think I wanted to be a classroom teacher after seeing what they had to endure daily."

He planned to look at some behavioral support agencies outside of the school setting.

When the principal at the school knew Connor was going to leave his job as a front office

clerk, the principal presented him with an offer. He told Connor he had a special

education co-teach position open for the following school year. He convinced Connor it

would be a great experience. Connor said the principal was convincing, so he agreed to

take the job. He knew he needed one, so he thought, why not. Accepting the job also

meant Connor would have to go through an alternative certification pathway to teach

since he was not certified. He had just finished college, but his degree was in Liberal

Studies, and the education focus did not have a student teaching component.

Connor described some of the teaching responsibilities regarding caseload

management, progress monitoring, behavior management, small group remediation,

grading assignments, lesson planning, counseling with students, and teaching special

education and general education students. He said, "there was no reasoning for how the

caseloads being split between the teachers." He had all Grade 7 special education

students on his caseload since he taught Grade 7 language arts. The types of special

education students he monitored were students with learning disabilities, some with

emotional behavior disorders, and one with an intellectual disability. "Some of the high

points of my first and second year were the relationships I built with some of the staff and

students." Connor described those relationships as a critical factor in helping him

overcome the low points he experienced. He said the low points focused on large

amounts of paperwork, learning new programs to manage the paperwork, lack of support

from the administration, and a lack of time to reach his students academically and emotionally.

Connor explained that his first year was challenging because he was required to learn the IEP computer program where the IEPs were to be written. He also needed assistance with the writing of IEPs. "It was something I never learned in school, so I thought there would be some training on the job." According to Connor, the training he experienced was very little. He met with other new teachers during various district training, but Connor said, "training was quick and left little room to ask questions." "Expectations and mandates were coming from the Program for Exceptional Children office, but very little help was offered," Connor explained that some of the veteran staff members at his middle school were lifesavers. Those staff members were the people to help him get his paperwork organized and develop a well-written IEP.

Connor said he was good at classroom management, explicitly providing structure for challenging behaviors. He even went to help some teachers who struggled with classroom management, which was an example of going above and beyond his duties and responsibilities. What frustrated Connor the most was the paperwork, which took away from helping and assisting the students in the way he thought they needed. Connor would pull a small group during homeroom to work on remediation. Throughout the year, he explained that he could not pull students for remediation consistently because he had to use the time to catch up on paperwork. Connor even tried to come into work early to complete some of the paperwork, but no matter how early he was, more time was needed. Connor said that the difficulty with workload and time management caused some issues with his ability to connect with his students' emotional needs. He recalled

when his student was in trouble for pulling the fire alarm at school. He could sense something was wrong with the student but could not pull him aside to talk with him. "The student had to go to an alternative educational setting." The incident weighed heavily on Connor.

Connor tried to avoid conflict as much as possible with other staff members. If he saw others needed help, he would go out of his way to help them. According to Connor, his principal was not a very hands-on leader, so Connor had no negative or positive interactions with him. If Connor did his job, he did not hear much from his principal. He only once received a message from the principal about needing an IEP for one of the students on his caseload. He needed it immediately because the student's parent called, complaining that she never received the IEP. Connor said he calmly explained the situation about how the mother was given a copy, but she lost the IEP. It was not that he did not provide her with a copy. "The principal was understanding, and the situation was resolved without issue." So, Connor said he was indifferent to his feeling about school leadership.

Results related to how special education inclusion teachers perceived their support before they left the profession. Connor explained how he sometimes was paired with a general education teacher that was not always accommodating. "We had conflicting personalities, so the co-teaching situation with some was not the best." "It wasn't the best for the students because the environment wasn't conducive to learning." Although, Connor said those situations were few and far between and did not impact his decision to leave the teaching field. Most of his teaching experiences were positive. He explained that the other teachers developed strong relationships, which made the co-

115

teaching experience less stressful. The teachers were helpful when Connor had deadlines

to meet and paperwork to complete during class. "They always gave me the time I

needed to finish what needed to be done."

Connor was a new teacher and was assigned a mentor in the building. His mentor

was the academic coach for the school. Connor said, "having the academic coach as my

mentor was sometimes good for venting, but that was it." He said the academic coach

did not know anything about special education-related issues. Since the coach did not

have special education experience, Connor could not ask her for help. He could not ask

for help from the school administration as well. Connor said he did not have any issues

with administration, but he described them as hands-off with special education-related

issues unless a serious problem arose. According to Connor, these issues did not make

his job easier, but they were not the main reasons for his leaving.

A special education coordinator from the central office was assigned to Connor's

school. The coordinator oversaw special education-related issues and concerns.

According to Connor, anytime he would email the coordinator about a question he had

with paperwork, or the computer program used for IEPs, she would tell him to ask

another teacher. Connor said he would have been lost if he did not have other veteran

teachers' help. "People at the central office are supposed to help, yet the help was

nonexistent." When Connor did not have the help of other teachers, he had to be self-

taught. He still struggled with the lack of support he received being a new teacher.

"When something was done wrong, it was my fault, even though I wasn't trained in any

manner." He said the professional learning he received was insufficient for the job he

was required to do. According to Connor, the professional learning did not have anything

to do with what he needed to know. A lack of support mainly contributed to Connor's

decision to leave. He said he does not regret his decision to move on to another job. He

worries that the lack of support will continue for other jobs he may have as he ages.

Results on the impact of classroom experiences on the decision to leave the

field. Connor mainly had positive experiences in the classroom. He was able to make

connections with the students and staff. The one issue he did have was with the large

amounts of paperwork that had to be completed. "I felt like I could not serve the kids

how I knew they needed to be served," said Connor. With the amount of data that needed

to be collected for each student and large caseloads, Connor decided to leave the field.

He said that maintaining paperwork was impeding his life outside of teaching. There was

more Connor felt he could do with teaching his students, but much of Connor's time was

consumed with paperwork.

Also, with his kids with an emotional behavior disorder, Connor felt he missed

cues where he could intervene during troubling circumstances. He was usually able to

pull kids aside to have talks with them individually. If special education students were

getting a discipline referral from the regular education teacher, Connor would try and

intervene to prevent his students from getting in trouble. He knew the importance of

keeping his kid in school as much as possible to avoid learning loss. He said that when

paperwork started to impede his ability to talk with his kids regularly, some began to get

in trouble in class. He specifically spoke about two of his students who were written up

multiple times for various disciplinary infractions. "They eventually committed level

four offenses, which meant they had to go to a county hearing to decide their best

placement educationally." The two students Connor discussed were found guilty of the

offenses and were required to finish the school year at an alternative school placement. The incident with his two students has always weighed heavily on Connor. "If maintaining paperwork was not so heavily focused on, then maybe I could have helped those kids with a better outcome." Managing large amounts of paperwork greatly influenced Connor's decision to leave the field.

Three specific barriers prevented Connor from doing his job effectively. His barriers were a lack of time, unrealistic expectations, and a lack of support. Connor explained that there needed to be more time to complete IEPs, hold meetings, grade papers, and teach effectively. "We had to complete the writing of IEPs during planning, but our planning time was busy with other things." Connor tried to write IEPs during class time with his kids, which took away from instruction time. Connor developed a strong relationship with his co-teachers, so they understood when he had to complete paperwork. His co-teachers would pick up the slack in delivering classroom instruction. Having to write IEPs did not include finding time to write lesson plans, monitor behaviors, plan lessons with teachers, meet with parents or professional learning opportunities required during planning time. Connor said that professional learning usually was something he could never apply to his work in the classroom.

Connor said he also had a difficult time keeping up with *rainbow folders*. According to Connor, they were folders that contained important information for each child with special needs. They contained psychological testing, achievement data, and progress monitoring of IEP goals. Connor said he would get work samples from each child on her caseload weekly. Those work samples needed to be analyzed and charted on graphs. He would then use that data to decide what his student must be instructed on in

class. The issue was that Connor could not pull his kids to work on their goals during class. He said they were supposed to find the time to work on their goals in the academic classes, but some of the goals were way below grade level. According to Connor, they would miss crucial instruction if they took the time to work on goals.

As for unrealistic expectations, one of Connor's most significant issues was his students having to take standardized tests. Connor said he was required to write IEP goals based on the instructional levels of his students. "Some of those children were in the 7th grade but were reading on a 3rd grade level." He wondered how she was supposed to help a Grade 7 student on a Grade 3 reading level pass the standardized test at the end of the school year. The standardized test would have been on a Grade 7 level since that was the child's grade at Connor's school. He explained that kids could be successful if someone looked at their individual growth. He said a person would not be able to see that growth on a standardized test.

Connor was expected to provide research-based interventions to improve student outcomes, but he was never offered professional learning. Connor had to figure out what interventions would work for his students. If it were a particular program that costs money, Connor would have to figure out how to gather the funds to purchase the program.

Connor said he received little support from the special education administrator assigned to his school. The administrator would be responsible for dealing with special education-related matters for the school. If there were an IEP meeting, the administrator would have to be notified and have room on their calendar to attend. Connor said that there was never any room for errors. If you made errors, you were expected to make

corrections without assistance. According to Connor, what made it worse was that he didn't receive training on writing an IEP in his undergraduate studies. He said that IEP writing was something that colleges and universities have missed the mark with when developing their preparation programs. Connor said, "How was I supposed to improve without support?" This lack of support continued until he decided to leave.

He also did not receive support from the administration in his school. If there was a problem with a particular student in his classroom, Connor had to fix the issue without help. Dealing with issues on his own was especially true when dealing with behaviors. Connor said, "The administrators did not want to handle discipline if it was a special education student. They would often send them back to class with no consequences." According to Connor, this was frustrating.

Chapter VI

ANALYSIS

Introduction

The first cycle of coding used for this study was In Vivo Coding (Saldaña, 2016). I grouped three to five sentences of the transcripts starting from the beginning. I then derived codes from the data using each participant's exact language and terminology (Saldaña, 2016). The codes were three to five-word phrases taken directly from the interview. This type of coding helps a researcher obtain an in-depth understanding of the stories told by each participant (Saldaña, 2016). The codes were listed on a text editing page and then cut and pasted into outlined clusters of chronological life events (Saldaña, 2016).

Pattern coding was employed for the next cycle (Saldaña, 2016). The summaries from the first coding were grouped into a smaller number of categories. Emergent themes, configurations, or explanations were identified between participants through the process of Pattern Coding (Saldaña, 2016). Lastly, codeweaving was used as a post-coding technique to integrate keycode words and phrases into a narrative form (Saldaña, 2016).

Themes

The following is a list of the themes identified from the interview data:

- SEITs on why they chose to teach:

This theme developed from each participant describing how they began teaching. All of the participants explained how they were not looking to work in a school setting. Some wanted to work in a one-on-one setting, while others started as paraprofessionals because they needed income. Not one participant expressed an innate desire to teach.

- Preparation for the job:

The participants discussed how their undergraduate studies prepared them to teach as a career. One participant majored in liberal studies, and the other three participants majored in education with various concentrations. Some of the participants had to go through alternative routes in getting certified to teach if they did not complete their practicums. All the participants said that their core classes did not prepare them to teach. This includes those who went through a formal education program and those that went an alternative route. They said that any class with hands-on activities was beneficial, but those were rare. They all said they preparation programs need to focus more on IEP writing and holding meetings. The biggest help for these participants was substitute teaching and being a paraprofessional. Having that experience gave them a better understanding of what the job would entail if they became fulltime teachers.

- Workload:

The participants expressed having a lot of paperwork to complete. The paperwork was so extensive that they had to work when they were at home when they could not finish the work at school. The paperwork got in the way of instructing the students. The participants would also come in to work early and

stay late just so they did not have to bring a lot of work home. Deadlines for

paperwork seemed to be more important than working with the students,

according to the participants. This created a damper on the personal lives of each

participant.

- Teacher effectiveness:

  It was difficult to be effective during instructional time because it was spent doing

  other things. According to the participants, this made it difficult to build lasting

  connections with their students. It also caused some student behaviors to worsen

  over time. The participants felt that they were unable to give their students the

  time and support they needed to be successful. This is how the theme of job

  effectiveness developed from the analysis of the data.

- Teacher support:

  All the participants described receiving little to no help from administration.

  When help was requested, the participants felt like they were brushed off. The

  participants all spoke about having to depend on other teachers and veteran

  teachers for support. Issues concerning teacher support developed from these

  points.

In *Table 7*, I matched direct quotes from each participant to support the five themes

identified from my analysis of the transcripts. Those themes included Job Choice,

Preparation, Workload, Job Effectiveness, and Job Support. This table provides direct

support on why these themes were chosen.

Table 7

Participants #1-4

Themes	Darcy	John	Lucy	Connor
Job Choice	There was not any reason for me to decide to teach. It was something that I had just fallen into. No one in my family was ever a teacher.	I did not have any intention of going into teaching. It was something that I just picked to major in when I got to college. I took a job teaching because my wife was in school, and we needed an income.	I was a paraprofessional before I became a teacher. I never intended to become a teacher for any reason. Being a paraprofessional was just a job close to my home. Someone told me that I should go through an alternative certification method to teach because I was good at it, so I did.	My mom was a paraprofessional, but that was not why I went into teaching. I did not have a reason for choosing to teach. It was something that just happened.

Preparation	I thought my university courses were ineffective in preparing me to enter the field of teaching.	I thought my college courses were ineffective in preparing me for the classroom. There was nothing they could teach to prepare me for the situations I would face.	University courses could have been more effective in preparing me to teach. I was not prepared for my first year.	I learned very little from the courses that helped me in my first year. The only classes that were helpful were more of the hands-on ones that had us lesson planning.
Workload	Progress monitoring, IEP writing, lesson planning, behavior monitoring, and daily meetings all contributed to an environment that was not conducive to teaching. My work would have to be taken home.	Monitoring behaviors took up a large chunk of time. When I was not monitoring behaviors, I was writing IEPs, collecting data on goals, and conferencing with parents. It was all too much.	Teaching the students was not the issue. The mounds of paperwork were the problem. The administration cared more about getting their paperwork deadlines completed than the quality instruction given to the students.	All the required paperwork was too much and took away from teaching the students. Work was done at home, and I would come in early.

Job Effectiveness	I felt my teaching effectiveness lessened over three years because of the constant micromanaging and an unmanageable workload of documentation and paperwork.	I could not do my job effectively because I felt like I needed to be given more support. Policies kept changing, and the amount of paperwork stayed the same. I could not provide for my students the way I thought they needed.	I felt like my hands were tired. I worked on deadlines for Central Office during the instructional time because they had to get done. This took away from the most critical aspect of my job: teaching.	The progress monitoring, IEP maintenance, and other forms of documentation prevented my kids from getting the education they needed. So, I felt less effective than necessary for the job.
Job Support	I was micromanaged, told I needed to improve without constructive feedback, and received poor scores on my teacher evaluation without any support. I relied on help from other teachers.	I felt little support from the administration. They made my job more difficult and took little regard for my safety when I was injured trying to restrain a student.	The administration provided little support. I mainly stopped interacting with the administration after asking for help with a student. He told me he needed to return to class since he was a special education student. He did not want to know why I needed help.	I had to depend on other teachers for help. I was required to learn new programs and hold IEP meetings quickly in my first year. When I had questions or needed help, the administration was nowhere to be found. Veteran teachers had my back and assisted me tremendously.

Note: Themes derived from data analysis of participants

Discussion of Themes

   Reasons for choosing to teach. According to responses from the participants, each teacher said they did not have a particular driving factor for choosing teaching. They could not connect with intrinsic or extrinsic motivators as reasons for entering the field as a special education inclusion teacher (SEIT). In other words, no personal emotions were involved in becoming a SEIT or any external factors such as sufficient salary or location of the school to their home. For example, Darcy went to school to become a technician in the medical field for a particular area of interest. Once she graduated, Darcy had difficulty finding a job in her field. She needed to work and start bringing in income. According to Darcy, "I just needed some money; it did not matter the job or the level of money." A friend told her about a paraprofessional job at her local school. Darcy applied and worked as a paraprofessional. Eventually, she got her teaching certification because her coworkers convinced her to teach. Darcy said, "teaching just kind of fell into my lap." "It was not something that I ever considered doing." She never even had to interview. Not having to interview was an experience for Lucy.

   Lucy had a dual degree in Sports Medicine and Education. She wanted to do something in Sports Medicine but could never finish the certification process. Lucy moved to Central Georgia and needed to find a job while her kids were in school. A friend suggested she apply as a paraprofessional at the local middle school. Lucy said, "I did not have a strong desire to teach or work in a K12 school setting". She applied for the job, was interviewed, and was accepted days later. The staff thought she would make a great teacher, so they convinced her to apply to an alternative certification program.

Lucy completed the certification and became a SEIT. Lucy stated, "Teaching was never something I considered doing." "I struggled in school growing up and did not have the best memories." She wanted to do something with her Sports Medicine degree but somehow ended up teaching special education students at a middle school in Central Georgia.

The last two participants expressed similar thoughts to both Lucy and Darcy. John went through a formal education program with a practicum at the end. When he finished, he realized teaching was not something he wanted to do as a profession. John said, "I wanted to do more individualized work with kids." "I realized teaching was not something that I felt passionate about." He needed a job because he and his wife needed an income since she was attending law school. He was able to find a job at the local high school as a special education teacher. He stated he was hired to fill the teaching position.

Similarly, Connor never really thought about teaching as a profession. He received his degree in Liberal Arts and worked for the local middle school as a paraprofessional because he needed a job. His mom was a paraprofessional, so John decided to do the same. He planned on being a paraprofessional until he finished college. Like John, Connor said, "I wanted to do something more individualized with kids." "I did not want to do whole classroom instruction because I did not think I was good at it." He ended up finishing college and taking a SEIT position because he thought it was worth trying. Staff members at the school convinced him to take the position because they felt he was highly effective. All the participants expressed similar reasoning on why and how they came to teach.

Preparation for the job. Questions related to preparation led to similar responses between participants, regardless of the method of teacher preparation. Some of the key phrases and words every participant used were "did not help," "can't learn to teach from books," "not enough hands-on practice," and "did not help with writing IEPs." Lucy and Connor had to go through an alternative certification path to become teachers. Darcy and John majored in education and completed their student teaching before they graduated from their respective universities.

John and Darcy's concentration was in special education. They both expressed the same sentiments about their teacher preparation programs. John said his program helped him know special education law, but that was about it. He said they often discussed various readings and textbooks and took paper and pencil tests, but collaboration between students was rare. Darcy said her classes related to the rules and regulations of special education were helpful, but she does not remember much of anything else. They both did not have any practice in writing IEPs. Their programs primarily focused on lesson planning. They did not even have any classes on how to deal with behaviors or challenging students. Darcy and John had to complete a student teaching assignment for an entire school year. They said the student teaching was helpful because they received hands-on experience and were given feedback regularly. Lucy and Connor expressed similar experiences with their preparation programs, although they went down different pathways to become teachers.

Lucy received a dual degree in sports medicine and education. She worked as a paraprofessional before becoming a teacher. Even though Lucy had a degree in education, she never completed the student teaching component. She was required to go

through an alternative route for certification as she was working as a paraprofessional. Like Lucy, Connor worked as a paraprofessional as he completed his degree in Liberal Studies with a concentration in Education. Connor was offered a special education teaching position as he worked in the school system. He was going through an alternative route to certification before he left the field. The alternative route to certification was because he did not do a student-teacher placement during his undergraduate studies. Connor and Lucy had similar thoughts on their preparation to Darcy and John. Connor and Lucy did not have any classes regarding special education policies or procedures. Connor and Lucy were not given any practice with writing IEPs or what was included in an IEP. Lucy said, "Nothing could have prepared me for walking into the classroom as a teacher on my first day." "Pulling information from textbooks certainly did not prepare me." John said, "most of my professors had not been in the classroom in years." "Their teachings did not match what was happening in the classroom." John's statement was a sentiment shared by all the participants.

All the participants had some level of experience. Some were able to complete their student teaching placement, while others were paraprofessionals before they became teachers. All stated they did not learn much from the undergraduate studies preparing them for teaching. Most of the classes were not helpful and all believed they would have benefited from more hands-on activities.

Job workload. All the participants expressed some frustrations with the workload they were expected to maintain. Although, it had nothing to do with the teaching of students. They all said they enjoyed working with their students, even the ones with challenging behaviors. The issue was they could not give them their full

attention because of the paperwork they were required to maintain. Some even used the phrase "massive amounts of paperwork." Darcy talked about when she had to complete IEPs during classroom instruction because there was no other time to finish the work. She said, "Luckily, my co-teachers understood and allowed me to finish paperwork during class." John, Connor, and Lucy talked about multiple times when they had to finish paperwork on a student during classroom instruction. John said, "The deadlines to complete the paperwork always seemed more important to the administration than teaching the students." Some other things included lesson planning for more than one subject, documenting IEP services provided daily for each student, and ensuring accommodations were provided daily. These tasks do not include the forms having to be filled out every week for Central. Darcy said, "there were times when we had to fill out four different forms with the same information on each." "It was time-consuming and took away from what we were being paid to do, which was teach students." Some common words and phrases used by each participant were tired, stressful, not what I wanted to be doing, wasteful, no time, impact on home life, having to take work home every day, and something had to give.

Not only did the participants express difficulties with maintaining the paperwork, but each discussed all the content meetings they had to attend. John, Darcy, Connor, and Lucy had more than two subjects they had to plan for every week. Content meetings occurred on the same day for each school. Some schools may have had meetings in the mornings or afternoons, but all sessions happened weekly. The participants expressed their concerns about having to split time between content meetings. Darcy and John said they went to the content meetings that were more important for their kids. "If we chose

one meeting over another, then we had to hope that the other teacher would send us their lesson plans." John stated, "It felt like we had to fly by the seat of our pants if we did not plan in one subject area."

The participants had to manage challenging behaviors on occasion. Each participant had to monitor behaviors, develop behavior plans, and monitor behavior goals. Connor said, "behavior monitoring was an extremely arduous process that did not always make sense." "There was a lack of help in knowing how to develop the behavior plans, so I often spent lots of time just figuring out the forms." A student hit John a few times, even with an implemented behavior plan.

The time spent on the paperwork and other tasks required of these participants took away from working directly with the students. John said, "Over the school year, the relationships I built with the students diminished because my focus was on deadlines and paperwork." Lucy said, "The mounds of paperwork were overwhelming to the point of having to take it home." "I also did it during the school day, which took away from providing for my students." Darcy and Connor used the terms and phrases difficult, time-consuming, and student decline in achievement when discussing the impact of all the paperwork needed for their job.

Effectiveness. Teacher effectiveness was discussed with the workload during the interviews of all four participants. When Darcy, John, Connor, and Lucy talked at length about the workload of their jobs, it led to discussions of how effective they thought they were at teaching. Darcy said, "the amount of paperwork we had to manage took away from effectively teaching my kids." "I knew what they needed, and what I was able to give them was not it."

All the participants said the critical factor of teacher effectiveness was time. They needed time to build relationships with the students and maintain those relationships. Connor said, "Without having the time to build relationships, kids become less receptive to my class and me." Darcy talked about a time when her assistant principal evaluated her. She was given some low scores in student engagement. Darcy remembered getting frustrated because she needed help with one student and realized she did not know how to reach him. "I did not have any help or suggestions on how to reach the student," she said. Darcy began to question her effectiveness. She did not know how to manage her time and develop a list of priorities. "If we did not meet the deadlines for all the paperwork, we got a letter in our file." She started to doubt her abilities, which pushed her to leave. John, Connor, and Lucy expressed the same feelings. They believed their effectiveness in teaching lessened over time. John said, "I did not know how to manage my time because everything was important." He did not know what took priority over other tasks. These were the main reasons for all four participants leaving the teaching field.

Micromanaging seemed to be an issue impacting effectiveness according to the participants. They expressed how everything thing they did was scrutinized and analyzed. Connor said, "The negatives were enhanced, and I rarely heard anything positive about my teaching." "I started to think that I was not good enough," Lucy remembered having to complete weekly lesson plans to turn in to the assistant principal. The assistant principal did not always agree with how she planned her lessons and wanted some corrections done weekly. "It felt like she didn't trust my abilities." "She only came into my classroom occasionally, yet she knew how my lessons should have been

planned?" The frustration started to lead to a feeling of ineffectiveness. John and Darcy expressed similar concerns throughout their last year's teaching.

Rarely did the participants remember anything positive about their evaluation conferences with the administrator. John said, "I only remembered sitting in those conferences and hearing everything I was doing wrong." "I wasn't engaging the students; I didn't do whole group instruction long enough; it was always something." Darcy and Lucy talked about similar situations when they received feedback on their teacher evaluation conferences. Lucy said she never felt like she was doing the right thing, and Darcy said her administration never complimented her for anything. Connor felt defeated because of the lack of positive reinforcement he received from his administrators.

Perceived support. The participants discussed how they perceived support for their teaching positions at length. Some of the common terms and phrases used between the participants were *nonexistent*, *very little support*, *did not help*, *depended on veteran teacher support*, and *had to train myself*. There was a lot to learn as a special education teacher. Since all the participants described the deficits in their undergraduate studies, they expected to receive some level of support on the job.

According to Darcy, the professional development they were required to attend at the beginning of the school year was unrelated to special education. "I was more concerned with learning GoIEP and how to write an IEP." "None of the professional development classes addressed IEP writing or other special education-related issues." GoIEP was the online platform where she had to develop the IEP for each student. Lucy, John, and Connor all expressed similar situations. John said he had only one professional

development session on writing IEPs. "There was no follow-up training or anyone to turn to if we needed help." Each participant had a lead special education teacher at their school as support. The problem was all 4 participants said the lead teacher had a caseload of their own to manage. The lead teacher had classes to teach all day. Lucy said, "It was hard to expect the lead to be of assistance when she had her things to take care of." "The lead did not have time during the day to help us with questions or concerns." The participants depended on the building's veterans and other special education teachers. Connor said, "If other teachers did not step up and help, I don't know what I would have done."

John, Lucy, Darcy, and Connor all talked about having a special education coordinator responsible for a school zone. The coordinator was located at the central office but reported to their school to ensure things ran smoothly. The issue became the coordinator's absence and unavailability to ask for help. Connor remembered when he asked the coordinator for help with a specific problem. "Her response was she did not know." "There wasn't anything about finding an answer for me or finding someone that could help." The other participants had similar issues with their coordinators. Most of the coordinators spoke with the lead teacher at the school. Darcy said, "They did not make time for most of the teachers, so we had to depend on support from each other to make it through." All the participants said the support from each other was beneficial.

All the schools had well-established mentorship programs for the teachers. John, Darcy, and Connor were all assigned to teacher mentors without experience with special education-related matters. Lucy was the only participant paired with a special education teacher. Lucy said it was helpful because she had someone with whom she could discuss

special education issues or concerns. The other participants did not have that opportunity. They said it was nice to have someone to talk about job related concerns, but they could not help with specific special education concerns. "It was not helpful for what I had to do on the job," said Darcy. Even Lucy noted a downside to the program was not enough time allotted to meet with her mentor. Darcy, John, and Connor expressed the same issues with time management. Since all the administrators tended to avoid special education unless a problem arose, the mentorship program was supposed to assist those teachers in need. According to John, "It was only like having someone to shoot the breeze with; that was it"

Besides Darcy and some of her struggles with her assistant principal, none of the other participants indicated their having positive or negative interactions with their administrators. Lucy had discussed a struggle with her administration, but it was not enough to completely deter her. They all said their administrators avoided special education unless a specific problem was addressed.

Theme worth noting. There was a theme that was worth noting from this study. This theme was not combined within the themes that were just discussed because it does not answer any of the research questions. I felt the need to include it because it is information that could help a reader take this study further. All the participants interviewed disclosed having some type of disability. Those disabilities ranged from anxiety, attention deficit disorder, and deaf/hard of hearing. Another participant talked about having a learning disability.

Chapter VII

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Introduction

This study was guided by three theoretical frameworks, The Human Capital Theory of Occupational Choice, The Labor Economic Theory of Supply and Demand, and The Multidimensional Theory of Burnout. The Multidimensional Theory of Burnout conceptualizes burnout in three core components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Maslach (2015) explains *burnout* as an individual stress experience embedded in complex social relationships. The Labor Economic Theory of Supply and Demand suggests an individual will work in a position if the overall compensation package makes it an attractive job (Montrosse & Young, 2012). This theory states compensation is not limited to salary and benefits but includes any aspect of work influencing one's desire to enter, stay, or leave (Montrosse & Young, 2012). Lastly, The Human Capital Theory of Occupational Choice finds individuals making systematic assessments of the net monetary and nonmonetary benefits from different occupations leading to systematic decisions throughout their career to enter, stay, or leave a profession (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). The nonmonetary benefits include working conditions, support of peers and supervisors, compatibility of hours and schedules with family and leisure needs, availability of adequate materials, student learning attitudes, and parental support (Montrosse & Young, 2012).

In Chapter I, I discussed the problem and purpose of this study. Being a special education inclusion teacher (SEIT) causes stressors (conditions triggering stress) to build

over time (Tilos, 2019). These stressors develop through increased workloads, high stakes testing for children with disabilities, and teacher performance evaluations. When a SEIT leaves a teaching position because of stressors, their negative feelings toward the job can impact the recruitment of future candidates (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). These teachers' negative thoughts and feelings can spread throughout districts and communities (Montrosse & Young, 2012). The negative thoughts can have an even more significant impact on more individuals that leave the profession (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). High turnover rates raise a red flag for future candidates or those already employed. This study aims to give school districts insight into why SEITs leave the field. The three theoretical frameworks were explained as a method for understanding SEITs' reasoning for leaving their job. In Chapter II, I reviewed the literature related to the history of special education, the preparation of special education inclusion teachers, and literature about the theoretical frameworks identified. I described the methodology in Chapter III, which included the procedures, data credibility, and validity checks performed throughout this study. I provided a detailed description of each participant in Chapter IV, along with descriptions of the schools they left, and my observations of each school. In Chapter V, I reported the findings from the interviews with each participant. Lastly, in Chapter VI, I analyzed the results and reported the themes that developed from the coding of the interviews.

In this chapter, I summarize the problem and the theories that form the main components of this research. The themes developed from the interviews are connected to the frameworks and previous research from Chapters I and II. Finally, the study's

limitations, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research are discussed later in this chapter.

Methods and Procedures

This study was conducted through a qualitative narrative inquiry. Participants were pulled from an urban school district in Central Georgia by emailing and phone calling through an open records request. The required profile for this study was to have four participants between the ages of 22 and 30 who left the teaching field. Each was to be a special education inclusion teacher. I used the Seidman (2019) three-part interview series (90 minutes each) to develop trust with the participants. A fieldwork journal was maintained throughout the research process, including field notes from the interviews and a codebook (Maxwell, 2013). The responses to the interview questions were transcribed and coded in three phases using MAXQDA, a data analysis software for qualitative and mixed-methods research. Once the field notes and interview responses were transcribed, the results were used to answer the research questions for this study.

Research Questions

The goal of this research was to develop an understanding of how the experiences of SEITs shaped their decisions to leave the field. The three research questions guiding the study were:

RQ1: What were the experiences of special education inclusion teachers who have left the profession?

RQ2: How do special education inclusion teachers, who have left the profession, perceive their support as a special education inclusion teacher?

RQ3: What impact did special education inclusion teachers' classroom experiences have on their decision to leave the field?

Interpretations of Findings

Connections were derived between the research findings and theoretical frameworks of this study. The research questions are answered based on the results taken from the interviews. This section is organized by research questions, followed by the themes and their connection to the frameworks and literature discussed in Chapters I and II of this study.

RQ1: What were the experiences of special education inclusion teachers who have left the profession?

Job choice. The results of this study revealed that the participants interviewed said they "fell into the profession." Three participants were paraprofessionals before they became teachers. One of the participants went through formal teacher preparation with a year-long practicum at the end of his program. Each participant had their own story regarding how they became special education inclusion teachers, yet all said teaching was not an interest. Two of the participants just needed a job at that time in their lives. One of the participants accepted a teaching job just because it was the only source of income for him and his wife. Another participant could not find work in her field of study, so she became a paraprofessional and then decided to teach because she needed a job.

When the data were transcribed and analyzed, convenience was one factor related to job choice. All four participants chose to teach for convenience. Teaching was not a desired occupation or one each deliberately sought. The participants chose this path

because they needed a job, and all but one did not even have to interview for the position.
The idea of convenience aligns with two theoretical frameworks discussed previously.
Those frameworks are The Human Capital Theory of Occupational Choice and The
Labor Economic Theory of Supply and Demand. The Human Capital Theory of
Occupational Choice states individuals make systematic assessments of the net monetary
and nonmonetary benefits from different occupations leading to systematic decisions
throughout their careers to enter, stay, or leave a profession (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019).
All four participants entered their jobs out of convenience and did not express a strong
desire to teach. One went through formal training with a practicum, while the rest did
have some educational background, but did not student teach. Each participant expressed
a desire to move in a direction different from whole-class instruction. There were schools
near where they lived, and they decided to apply. The convenience of having experience
working in the schools or having formal training and needing a source of income drove
these individuals to teach.

The Labor Economic Theory of Supply and Demand suggests an individual will
work in a position if the overall compensation package makes it a job worth pursuing
(Montrosse & Young, 2012). It is difficult to say if this theory impacted the participants'
decisions to enter the teaching field. Even though they may not have desired a job in
teaching, they all entered the job because they needed a source of income at the time. All
the participants were hired quickly, some even on the day they were interviewed. The
overall compensation package of the job did not seem to be considered according to the
responses from the participants. If someone takes a job teaching just for convenience,

they might not become a career teacher (Montrosse & Young, 2012). Montrosse and

Young (2012) found those without an innate desire to teach left the field faster than those

with a natural desire.

The implications of someone choosing to enter the field of teaching for only

convenience's sake can harm a school community. According to Gracia et al. (2021),

choosing a job based on convenience is only a small fraction of what is needed to be

content with one's job. Most individuals choose a job based on three or more factors, and

convenience could be one of them (Gracia et al., 2021). Satisfaction can decline quickly

when three or more reasons for choosing a job are not present for an individual (Gracia et

al., 2021). School systems are facing teacher shortages across the country, with some

reducing the requirements for becoming a teacher (Gracia et al., 2021). School systems

need to determine what will attract more people to the profession with the proper

qualifications (Gracia et al., 2021). When they can figure out the most highly ranked

reasons for people looking at teaching as a profession, then school systems can figure out

ways to improve in those areas. Once they can improve in those areas, more individuals

may consider teaching a desirable profession (Gracia et al., 2021).

Preparation. The participants expressed similar experiences regarding their

teacher preparation programs. Three of the participants worked as paraprofessionals

before they became teachers. Two were going through formal education programs as

they worked as paraprofessionals. One had to complete an alternative certification

pathway when offered a teaching job. The last participant went through a formal

program to include a year-long student teaching placement. He met those requirements

before he applied and accepted a teaching job as a special education inclusion teacher. All of them had some type and form of preparation.

Participants described their preparation programs as not beneficial compared to their classroom experiences. The classes provided little insight into what they would experience when entering the classroom for their first year of teaching. The participants said they did not have any practice with writing IEPs or how to deal with challenging behaviors. One individual said she did have some classes regarding special education laws. The others did not have a course on law because their concentration was not in special education during their undergraduate studies. Every situation they encountered in the classroom was different and something they could not learn from a book. As it related to the preparation programs, each participant expressed some issues with their professors. The length of time their professors had been out of school was an issue of concern for all four participants. Being away from a school setting for a lengthy period can impact how professors approach curriculum for teacher preparation programs (Leiter & Maslach, 2015).

Student teaching placement was helpful to one participant because he did receive constructive feedback. In a study by Sharp (2019), teachers reported firsthand experience was the most valuable aspect of their teacher preparation. Teachers claim most of what they know about teaching comes from firsthand experience, including student teaching (Sharp, 2019). Therefore, more colleges and universities are looking at changing their program requirements to give more and more time to classroom experiences (Sharp, 2019).

The Multidimensional Theory of Burnout involves a person's conception of self and others. Could the participant's perception of the effectiveness of their teacher preparation program be the catalyst to burning out and leaving the field? Maslach (2015) states the absence of a proper foundation of knowledge and support can lead to persistent feelings of inadequacy resulting in one's internal struggles of burnout. If someone feels unprepared for the task, they develop a sense of inadequacy and negative thoughts (Maslach, 2015). Those thoughts will then create cynicism regarding the workplace and a reduced appreciation of personal accomplishments (Maslach, 2015).

Workload. The participants expressed similar views regarding the workload associated with their teaching jobs. Not only do special education teachers have to create a lesson plan for one or multiple subject areas, but they must manage a caseload of students. Attending multiple content meetings, writing or amending IEPs, keeping data on progress monitoring goals, developing and implementing behavior plans for some, meeting with parents, grading papers, and helping with general education matters all contributed to an extensive workload. The participants said the job caused too much stress, especially without the support system that should have been in place. John, Connor, Lucy, and Darcy noted the workload started to impede classroom instructional time and hampered their individual home lives. Taking work home resulted in less time to spend with family. Each noted experiencing high emotional exhaustion from sensing their inability to balance work and family life. Emotional exhaustion resulted in feelings of detachment and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 2015). These participants felt they could not adequately do the job they knew they needed to do.

144

According to Maslach (2015), this is a prime example of when burnout may occur and is a basis for The Multidimensional Theory of Burnout.

According to Brittle (2020), the average teacher works 53 hours each week with 78% of teachers indicating they did not have enough planning time to address the standards required to be taught. Of those participating in Brittle's study (2020), 80% said teaching impacted their personal and family lives to a point they left the educational field.

RQ2: How do special education inclusion teachers, who have left the profession, perceive their support as a special education inclusion teacher?

Job support. Similarities were noted in the participants' responses regarding perceived job support. All the interviewees stated having received little to no help from school-level or central office administration. Some participants came into their jobs at a disadvantage by not having a firm grasp of special education-related matters. The participants said they hoped for more support, but most felt ignored in seeking assistance. Some said they would ask the administration questions and get pushed aside with a response such as "I don't know." Another participant said she needed help with a student exhibiting poor behaviors. When she asked the principal, he said the student was in the special education program and he did not want to deal with it. All participants of this study revealed they depended on veteran teachers for help in writing IEPs, working with students exhibiting challenging behaviors, ensuring accommodations were met, and planning lessons. There was a one-hour training on writing IEPs for the participants, but little to no support after the sole training session. The veteran teachers understood what the four participants were experiencing and provided the most support.

The mentorship programs in the schools needed to be implemented correctly. All the participants did say a mentor was assigned to them during the first year of teaching, but it was with a teacher not having special education experience. The mentor could not help with special education-related questions, so it was mostly just someone to "shoot the breeze with," as one participant said. One participant did have a mentor with a special education background. She noted it was helpful to have someone with special education knowledge.

Maslach (2015) stated that without the proper foundation of knowledge and support, feelings of inadequacy can persist in what begins the internal struggles of burnout. So, with these teachers lacking the support they felt was needed, the concept of burnout became another contributing factor to burnout (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019).

El Helou et al., (2016) discussed the need to develop a strong mentorship program within the school setting. El Helou et al., (2016) found a mentorship program should be built strategically by matching mentors with mentees with similar backgrounds. A more productive working relationship can be built when matching appropriately is considered (El Helou et al., 2016). El Helou et al., (2016) matched mentors having similar academic backgrounds, hobbies, and interests. El Helou et al., (2016) found mentees experienced less fatigue and emotional distress throughout the year as compared to those who were not assigned a mentor. They were less emotionally fatigued and could handle stressful situations more productively since they had someone who could empathize with their needs (El Helou et al., 2016).

RQ3: What impact did special education inclusion teachers' classroom experiences have on their decision to leave the field?

Job effectiveness. All the participants felt their effectiveness on the job lessened over time. Some of the information in this section can be linked to other themes discussed previously. Job effectiveness can be linked to preparation, workload, and support (Chingos & Peterson, 2011). If there are deficits in some or all these areas, one might feel inadequate at their job (Maslach, 2015). Feelings of inadequacy happened with John, Darcy, Lucy, and Connor. All the job responsibilities started adding up and consuming their work and home lives. The participants would describe scenarios of completing paperwork because of deadlines during classroom instruction. They knew the students needed the proper instruction, yet they worried about not getting the paperwork in on time for fear of getting *written up*. Sometimes the only option was to work late or bring work home. It was a cycle they needed to learn how to fix. No one helped them with time management or tried to lessen the load they were experiencing. Again, the concept of The Multidimensional Theory of Burnout ties into the feelings of inadequacy these participants experienced (Maslach, 2015). The final steps in burnout were feelings of detachment and reduced personal accomplishment or ineffectiveness (Maslach, 2015). The buildup of a lack of preparation, a large workload, and a lack of support flowed into a feeling of being ineffective (Maslach, 2015). Feelings of being ineffective led to burnout and contributed to why the participants decided to leave the field (Maslach, 2015).

Effective teachers plan carefully, use appropriate materials, communicate goals to students, maintain a reasonable pace, assess student work continuously, and use multiple teaching strategies (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). When large amounts of paperwork and unnecessary distractions hamper the teacher's ability, feelings of ineffectiveness can develop (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Feelings of ineffectiveness can eventually lead to teacher burnout (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019).

Limitations

There are a few limitations to this study. One limitation is having only interviewed those who have left the field of teaching. I did not consider those who stayed and how their experiences compared to those having left. It may have been beneficial to interview the administrators of these schools to acquire more insight into why it is not easy to fill special education teacher positions or why these teachers left. There may have been additional reasons for these teachers leaving the job than what was expressed in the interviews. Did they exhibit a consistently poor performance? Did they have a negative attitude towards regular routines during the school day? It would be beneficial to interpret additional context to the situations.

Another possible limitation is the country had been experiencing a pandemic for the past three years. Many people do not feel comfortable meeting in person because of the health-related potential risks. The interviews for this study took place using an internet-based platform which can be less personalized. If the interviewees did not feel connected to me as the interviewer, it could have changed how they responded. They

could have been less willing to open up since they did not know me and could not see my body language in person.

I sampled one region in one state out of the entire country. While it may be difficult to generalize the results to various school districts across the country, the process of the interviews could still be used. There are two specific threats discussed by Maxwell (2013), researcher bias and reactivity. These threats are significant for qualitative research. A qualitative researcher's awareness of the subjectivity they may bring to the study is known as bias (Maxwell, 2013). Bias is when a conclusion contains data fitting the researcher's existing theory, goals, or preconceptions (Maxwell, 2013). According to Maxwell (2013), it is virtually impossible to eliminate the researcher's beliefs and theories from their study. It is essential to understand how a researcher's values and expectations may influence the conclusions of a study (Maxwell, 2013). I am a special education teacher in Georgia teaching for sixteen years predominantly as an inclusion teacher and as an itinerant teacher for a short period of time. It was not easy to contain my thoughts and feelings when I had similar experiences as the participants. I could empathize with their struggles regarding the job, but I continue to teach. Every effort was made to keep my thoughts and feelings from impacting the study by keeping journals and field notes. Biases were controlled by dissecting the data when analyzed to ensure my biases were not influencing the participants' answers.

Implications for Practice

There are three main implications for the use of this research. The participants interviewed for this study discussed some of the concerns they had with their preparation

to teach. They all went down slightly different pathways to obtain certification but had the same general concerns. Many required classes did not address special education-related matters, special education law, or any training on writing IEPs. The participants expressed concerns about a lack of training in addressing the challenging behaviors exhibited by students. One participant had a special education law class but explained nothing else about his program was beneficial. In a study conducted by Berry and Shields (2017), burnout rates were measured and compared to teacher preparation. The teachers who had the opportunity to learn about special education law and IEP writing exhibited fewer signs of burnout. This was compared to teachers that did not have specific training related to special education matters. Berry and Shields (2017) also looked at burnout and professional development. Those teachers that received professional development related to special education concepts exhibited fewer rates of burnout and were more confident in their abilities (Berry & Shields, 2017).

The participants who went through a formal student teaching assignment said part of the program was helpful in receiving constructive feedback and acquiring experience working in a classroom. Those who pursued an alternative path to certification worked as teachers while finishing the respective program. Those individuals expressed a concern of being inadequately prepared for the job. The only factor benefiting them was to have worked as a paraprofessional before becoming teachers. According to Tilos (2019), every preparation program should offer rigorous clinical experiences that expose teaching candidates to the students and challenges they will encounter in the districts and schools they are most likely to teach.

The factors related to the preparation of teachers mean school districts and college and university programs may need to look at their curriculum to address any shortcomings (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). There may be a need to address special education-related matters in all programs regardless of a teacher candidate's pathway. Practice with writing IEPs and understanding what needs to go in each section is essential (Larson & Kyle, 2014). When these teachers work at a school district, the district should provide professional learning tailored to special education needs. Potential teacher candidates lacking sufficient training should acquire additional support from their school district. Special education refresher training would be beneficial even if the teacher previously received adequate training. Radford (2017) found that through survey results, SEITs needed more training in co-teaching strategies. This includes co-teach training in their college or university. It also includes professional learning refresher classes when they are on the job. What Radford's (2017) study revealed was that those teachers who had adequate professional development and preparation in co-teaching experienced more confidence and job satisfaction (Radford, 2017).

Another implication for using this research would be for school districts to look at the expected workload of their special education teachers. The participants from this study talked about how the workload impeded their abilities to teach their students. The paperwork often got in the way of time spent working directly with students. Some even said they would be required to input the same data on four separate documents. School districts could look at the workload placed on special education teachers and decide what is necessary and what is not required (Gilmour, 2019). It would be essential to eliminate

any redundancy. Eliminating redundancy would free up time for the teachers to work more with their students (Gilmour, 2019).

Lastly, a final implication would be to discuss more ways school districts can provide better support for teachers. Mentorship programs are a great way to furnish support if implemented appropriately. Many of the participants said they were paired with a mentor who was not in special education. Those mentors were incapable of helping the teachers with any questions regarding special education policies or procedures. Only one of the participants from this study was paired with a special education teacher. She described the process as extremely helpful compared to the other three participants. The other three participants needed help finding something useful about their mentorship program. School districts need to look at their special education teachers and determine who is a certified teacher support specialist. A teacher support specialist is vital in supporting the classroom teacher in acquiring the skills needed to be confident and knowledgeable in the classroom. A special education teacher would have a greater knowledge base that would support SEITs in a more effective manner. The school district may encourage those teachers to get certified if there are not enough certified. If one special education teacher is certified in each school building, the new SEITs can be matched with that mentor. This pairing is crucial according to Feng and Sass (2018). When you can be paired with someone who is empathetic and understands your struggles, you are more likely to work through any difficulties. Feng and Sass (2018) also reported that new SEITs paired with veteran teachers report greater job satisfaction.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on my findings and analysis, I have developed three recommendations for future research. This study focused on the classroom experiences of special education inclusion teachers to improve retention. One suggestion is to compare those who chose to teach based on their innate desire to do so with those who decided to teach for mere convenience. Is there a difference between the two factors? Teachers who recognize innate desire may stay in the teaching field longer than the other group mentioned.

Another piece of information stemming from the interviews was each participant indicating their personal diagnosis of having a disability. One had anxiety, two were diagnosed with ADHD and dyslexia, and the last participant was deaf/hard of hearing. Something that might be of interest in the future is to compare teachers with a disability to those with no disability. There could be some underlying reasons why this specific group of special education teachers decided to leave.

Lastly, conduct a study of those SEITs staying or leaving the job. Conducting two sets of interviews may provide discerning data to the researcher as to why the respective teachers stay in, or leave, the profession. The results of the analysis may reveal distinct differences in thoughts and ideas or similarities.

Conclusion

I focused on special education inclusion teachers in an urban setting who have left the profession. Previous research on attrition rates of SEITs has focused on the internal struggles occurring when one decides to leave their job. Poor working conditions have

been associated with feelings of inadequacy and a lack of support from the administration.

All the participants in this study experienced inadequacy due to a lack of support and difficulty managing large amounts of paperwork. They did their best to proceed with the job and help their students. The issue was the feelings of inadequacy, lack of support, and trouble maintaining paperwork all contributed to the concept of burnout and were the reason for them leaving the field. While this study focused on one area of the country, it can be replicated in other communities. What is important to remember is the interviews from these teachers provide one side of their work environment. The administrators and other teachers from these schools may have different thoughts or feelings. We need to remember the teacher shortage crisis communities are facing is real (Cancio et al., 2018), particularly in math and special education (Donahoo et al., 2017). Reading the participants' stories in this study will provide a glimpse into what they have experienced and why they chose to leave. Gaining insight into those having left the field will help local, and school personnel make improvements to the experiences of SEITs when they are in the classroom.

I have explained in this study, in detail, the struggles that SEITs face on the job. School districts will need to start looking at the amount of work required of SEITs. There are several people involved when it comes to the inner workings of a school and a school district. People are not always on the same page, so the redundancy of paperwork can be an issue. It is difficult for SEITs to teach when they have a lot of paperwork deadlines to meet. What makes it even more challenging is when they must fill the same

information out on a form more than once. Different people may ask for the same

information but written out in different formats. If communication and expectations are

made clear then maybe some of the redundancy we see in school districts can be reduced.

State leaders as well as local leaders need to respect the personal lives of teachers.

SEITs should not be bringing work home daily. When a SEIT is bogged down in

paperwork and deadlines, it impacts their personal lives. School leaders need to figure

out ways to lessen the burden on teachers, so they can tend to their personal lives. This is

the only way that they can come to school every day refreshed and ready to manage tasks

throughout the day. According to Brittle (2020), this can be accomplished by assessing

workloads to see if they are having a negative impact on staff. Once the impact is

assessed, an action plan can be created. Brittle (2020) explained how developing an

action plan reduced burnout rates at some schools from her study. This also goes with

having leaders that are compassionate and understanding. Leaders must be empathetic to

their teachers if they want to build those lasting connections.

Teacher preparation programs could also be a factor in retaining SEITs. The

participants of this study described their programs as being a nonfactor in their teaching

experiences. The participants explained that there was not enough direct experience in

their classes. They did not have practice writing IEPs, conducting meetings with parents,

or dealing with difficult behaviors. Only some of the participants finished their

practicums, which they said did help. Other participants' experiences came from being

paraprofessionals before they became teachers. They all said the firsthand experience

was extremely helpful, but there was not enough of it. Teacher preparation programs

need to figure out how to give teacher candidates the experience needed to do the job successfully (Feng & Sass, 2018). If the teacher candidates know what is expected of them, then they may be more likely to stay on the job (Feng & Sass, 2018).

Lastly, the teachers from this study felt ineffective. They felt that they were not able to provide effective instruction for the students that they taught. Teachers need a level of autonomy when it comes to classroom instruction. When they are always being told what to do or how to teach it can become monotonous and draining. School districts need to trust the teachers that they hire are experts in their area of instruction and know how best to run their classrooms (Berry & Shields, 2017). Also, make sure that mentors are paired with teachers based on similar qualifications. Special education teachers should be paired with special education mentors. It is difficult to pass knowledge along when your background is in different areas (Berry & Shields, 2017).

These suggestions are just some of the areas that school systems need to focus on when trying to retain SEITs. If we focus on the needs of the teacher by lessening some of the burdens, retention should improve. If we do not consider these suggestions, then retention of SEITs will continue to be a problem across the country.

References

Americans with disabilities act of 1990. (n.d.). *SpringerReference*.

    https://doi.org/10.1007/springerreference_183707

Anderson, D., Cameron-Standerford, A., Bergh, B., & Bohjanen, S. (2019, March 01).

    Teacher evaluation and its impact on wellbeing: Perceptions of Michigan teachers

    and administrators. Retrieved from https://www.ingentaconnect.com

Berry, A. B., Petrin, R. A., Gravelle, M. L., & Farmer, T. W. (2011). Issues in special

    education teacher recruitment, retention, and professional development:

    Considerations in supporting rural teachers. *Rural Special Education Quarterly,*

    30(4), 3-11. doi:10.1177/875687051103000402

Berry, B., & Shields, P. M. (2017). Solving the teacher shortage. *Phi Delta Kappan,*

    98(8), 8-18.

Billingsley, B., & Bettini, E. (2019). Special education teacher attrition and retention: A

    review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, *89*(5), 697–744.

    https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654319862495

Bishop, A. G., Brownell, M. T., Klingner, J. K., Leko, M. M., & Galman, S. A. (2010).

    Differences in beginning special education teachers: The influence of personal

    attributes, preparation, and school environment on classroom reading practices.

    Learning Disability Quarterly, 33(2), 75-92. doi:10.1177/073194871003300202

Brittle, B. (2020). Coping strategies and burnout in staff working with students with

    special educational needs and disabilities. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 87*,

    102937. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2019.102937

Brownell, M. T., Ross, D. D., Colón, E. P., & Mccallum, C. L. (2005). Critical features

    of special education teacher preparation. *The Journal of Special Education, 38*(4),

    242-252. doi:10.1177/00224669050380040601

Brownell, M. T., Sindelar, P. T., Kiely, M. T., & Danielson, L. C. (2010). Special

    education teacher quality and preparation: Exposing foundations, constructing a

    new model. *Exceptional Children, 76*(3), 357-377.

    doi:10.1177/001440291007600307

Brunsting, N. C., Sreckovic, M. A., & Lane, K. L. (2014). Special education teacher

    burnout: A synthesis of research from 1979 to 2013. *Education and Treatment of*

    Children, *37*(4), 681–711. https://doi.org/10.1353/etc.2014.0032

Cancio, E. J., Larsen, R., Mathur, S. R., Estes, M. B., Mei Chang, & Johns, B. (2018).

    Special education teacher stress: Coping strategies. *Education & Treatment of*

    Children, 41(4), 457–481. https://doi.org/10.1353/etc.2018.0025

Chingos, M. M., & Peterson, P. E. (2011). It's easier to pick a good teacher than to train

    one: familiar and new results on the correlates of teacher effectiveness. *Economics of*

    Education Review, 30(3), 449-465. doi:10.1016/j.econedurev.2010.12.010

Dillon, E., & Silva, E. (2011). Grading the teachers' teachers: Higher education comes

    under scrutiny. *Phi Delta Kappan, 93*(1), 54-58. doi:10.1177/003172171109300109

Donahoo, L. M., Siegrist, B., & Garrett-Wright, D. (2017). Addressing compassion

    fatigue and stress of special education teachers and professional staff using

    mindfulness and prayer. *The Journal of School Nursing, 34*(6), 442-448.

    doi:10.1177/1059840517725789

El Helou, M., Nabhani, M., & Bahous, R. (2016). Teachers' views on causes leading to their burnout. *School Leadership & Management*, *36*(5), 551–567. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2016.1247051

Feng, L. (2011). Teacher placement, mobility, and occupational choices after teaching. *Education Economics, 22*(1), 24-47. doi:10.1080/09645292.2010.511841

Feng, L., & Sass, T. R. (2018). The impact of incentives to recruit and retain teachers in "hard-to-staff" subjects. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 37*(1), 112–135.

Feuer, M. J., Floden, R. E., Chudowsky, N., & Ahn, J. (2013). *Evaluation of teacher preparation programs: Purposes, methods, and policy options*. Place of publication not identified: Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse.

Find the best K-12 schools - U.S. news education. (n.d.). Retrieved From https://www.usnews.com/education/k12.

Gracia, E. P., Rodríguez, R. S., Pedrajas, A. P., & Carpio, A. J. (2021). Teachers' professional identity: Validation of an assessment instrument for preservice teachers. *Heliyon*, *7*(9), 20-30. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e08049.

Georgia Department of Education. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.gadoe.org/.

Georgia Professional Standards Commission. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.gapsc.com/

Gilmour, A. F. (2019). Has inclusion gone too far? *Education Digest, 84*(6), 23–32. Retrieved from https://login.ezproxy.library.valdosta.edu

Greenberg, J., McKee, A., & Walsh, K. (2013). *Teacher prep review: A review of the nation's teacher preparation programs*. Washington, D.C.: National Council on

Teacher Quality.

Hanushek, E., Kain, J., & Rivkin, S. (2001). *Why public schools lose teachers*.
https://doi.org/10.3386/w8599

Herrmann, Z. (2018). Rethinking teacher recruitment. *Educational Leadership, 75*(8),
18–23.

Individuals with disabilities education act (IDEA). (n.d.). *SpringerReference*.
https://doi.org/10.1007/springerreference_69963

Ingersoll, R. M., & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs
for beginning teachers. *Review of Educational Research, 81*(2), 201-233.
doi:10.3102/0034654311403323

Kaff, M. S. (2004). Multitasking Is multitaxing: Why special educators are leaving the
field. *Preventing School Failure, 48*(2), 10–17.

Kang, Y. (2011). Preservice special education teachers' perception on occupational stress
and coping strategies of special class teachers. *The Journal of Inclusive Education,
6*(1), 45-63. doi:10.26592/ksie.2011.6.1.45

Larson, A. E., & Kyle, D. W. (2014). Introduction to clinical partnerships in teacher
education: Perspectives, practices, and outcomes. *Peabody Journal of Education,
89*(4), 415-418. doi:10.1080/0161956x.2014.938587

Leiter, M. P., & Maslach, C. (2015). Job burnout. *Wiley Encyclopedia of Management,*
1-2.

Leko, M. (2018, November 30). Literacy instruction for adolescents with learning
disabilities: Examining teacher practice and preparation. Retrieved from

https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1218036

Loewus, L. (2021, June 4). *Why teachers leave-or don't: A look at the numbers*.

Education Week. Retrieved from

https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/why-teachers-leave-or-dont-a-look-at-the-

numbers/2021/05.

Maslach, C. (2015). *Burnout: The cost of caring*. Los Altos, CA: Malor Books.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand

Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Merriam, S.B. (2018). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and

analysis*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Milner, H. R., & Lomotey, K. (2014). *Handbook of urban education*. Routledge.

Montrosse, B. E., & Young, C. J. (2012). Market demand for special education faculty.

*Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education

Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*, *35*(2), 140–153.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406412444763

O'Doherty, T., & Harford, J. (2018). Teacher recruitment: Reflections from Ireland on

the current crisis in teacher supply. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *41*(5),

654–669. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2018.1532994

Olson, D. R. (2014). *Jerome Bruner: The cognitive revolution in educational theory*.

London: Bloomsbury.

Park, H. I., Jacob, A. C., Wagner, S. H., & Baiden, M. (2013). Job control and burnout: A

meta-analytic test of the Conservation of Resources Model. *Applied Psychology*,

63(4), 607–642. https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12008

Patton, M. Q. (2009). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Perez, L. G., Uline, C. L., & Johnson, J. J. F. (2019). *Teaching Practices From America's Best Urban Schools: A Guide for School and Classroom Leaders*. Routledge.

Radford, J. (2017). Burning out: The effect of burnout on special education. *Brigham Young University Education & Law Journal, 2017*(1), 99–123.

Rehabilitation act of 1973. (n.d.). *SpringerReference*. https://doi.org/10.1007/springerreference_180493

Richards, M. P., Stroub, K. J., & Guthery, S. (2020). The effect of school closures on teacher labor market outcomes: Evidence from Texas. *AERA Open, 6*(2), 233285842092283. doi:10.1177/2332858420922837

Robinson, S. P. (2011). JTE: Leading educator preparation into the future. *Journal of Teacher Education, 62*(5), 427-428. doi:10.1177/0022487111415982

Ronfeldt, M., & McQueen, K. (2017). Does new teacher induction really improve retention? *Journal of Teacher Education*, *68*(4), 394–410. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487117702583

Rotatori, A. F., Obiakor, F. E., & Bakken, J. P. (2011). *History of special education*. Bingley, UK: Emerald.

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Schneider, J. (2017). Marching forward, marching in circles: A history of problems and

dilemmas in teacher preparation. *Journal of Teacher Education, 69*(4), 330-340. doi:10.1177/0022487117742904

Seidman, I. (2019). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Sharp, L. (2019, November 30). The preparation of novice special education teachers for instructional planning and strategies: Viewpoints among teacher educators and preservice teachers. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1265908

Stasio, S., Fiorilli, C., Benevene, P., Uusitalo, M. L., & Chiacchio, C. D. (2017). Burnout in special needs teachers at kindergarten and primary school: Investigating the role of personal resources and work wellbeing. *Psychology in the Schools, 54*(5), 472–486.

Thornton, S., Cruz, B. C., Thornton, S. J., & Cruz, B. (2010). Teaching social studies to English language learners. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203894347

Tilos, T. (2019). Creative solutions to the special education teacher shortage. *Leadership, 48*(3), 32–35.

Tropea, J. L., & Winzer, M. A. (1994). The history of special education: From isolation to integration. *History of Education Quarterly, 34*(4), 489. doi:10.2307/369282

Whitford, B. L., & Villaume, S. K. (2014). Clinical teacher preparation: A retrospective. *Peabody Journal of Education, 89*(4), 423-435. doi:10.1080/0161956x.2014.938590

Will, M. (2020, November 19). *5 things to know about today's teaching force*. Education Week. Retrieved from https://www.edweek.org/leadership/5-things-to-know-about-todays-teaching-force/2018/10.

Williams, J., & Dikes, C. (2015). The implications of demographic variables as related to burnout among a sample of special education teachers. *Education 135*(3), 337-345.

Winzer, M. A. (2014). *From integration to inclusion: A history of special education in the 20th century*. Washington: Gallaudet University Press.

Appendix A

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Script

Welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is Justin Schanck and I am a graduate student at Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Georgia. I am conducting my study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctorate in Educational Leadership. This study will be conducted in three separate interviews with each being roughly 90 minutes. The first interview will focus on your life history, specifically what it was like growing up in your family. The second interview will focus more on your current life as it relates to the content of the topic for this study. The last interview will require you to reflect on the meaning of your experiences described in the second interview. I would like your permission to tape-record the interviews, so I may accurately document the information that you present to me. If at any time you wish to stop the recordings or the interviews themselves, please do not hesitate to let me know. Your responses to the questions will always be confidential and they will remain confidential after this study is completed. Your responses are used to develop a better understanding of why special education inclusion teachers decide to leave the field of teaching. The purpose of this study is to give school districts insight into why special education inclusion teachers leave the field. At this time, I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this study. I am the responsible researcher,

166

specifying your participation in the research project: Improving the retention of special education inclusion teachers: Understanding their experiences in work and preparation in an urban setting. You and I have both signed and dated each copy, certifying that we agree to continue with the interview process. You will receive a copy and I will keep a copy in a separate location from your responses.

Remember, your participation in this process is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop or take a break, please let me know. You may withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any concerns or questions before we begin? Then with your permission, we will begin the interview.

Interview #1

- Demographic questions:

    o Age: _____

    o Sex: _____

    o Ethnicity: _____

    o Undergraduate School: _____

    o Undergraduate Degree and Major:_____

    o Graduate School: _____

    o Graduate Degree and Discipline:_____

    o Highest Degree Earned: _____

    o Number of Years as a Special Education Inclusion Teacher: _____

    o Grade Level(s) Taught: _____

- How would you describe yourself in three words and why did you choose those words?

- Where were you born?

- Where did you grow up?

- Tell me about the family you were raised in.

- What types of jobs did your parents or guardians hold as you grew up?

- Describe to me their work ethic?

- How influential was your family in shaping who you are today?

- Was there a particular family member that you were close with compared to others? If so, describe to me your relationship with that person.

- Was there anyone outside your immediate family that you treated like family? If so, who was the person and how would you describe your relationship.

- What was school like for you starting with elementary school and moving through high school?

- Who were some influential people from elementary school? Why were they influential?

- Who were some influential people from middle school? Why were they influential?

- Who were some influential people from high school? Why were they influential?

- What were times when you were successful in school?

- Were there times when you struggled in school? If so, please describe to me those situations.

- What were some extracurricular activities that you participated in throughout your school years? How did they help you both personally and in school?

- How were your classes structured in elementary, middle, and high school?

- How did your elementary, middle, and high school handle the placement of special needs students?

- What were the names of some of the most influential teachers in your life and why were they influential?
  - Did they have an impact on your attending college?
  - If yes, how would you describe that impact?

- How did you decide to attend your college or university?

- Can you describe for me how you decided on what your major would be in college?

    o Was it always going to be education, or did you start down a different pathway?

    o What made you choose your pathway?

    o Did anyone influence the pathway that you initially chose? If so, who and why?

- How did your upbringing impact your decision to become an educator?

- What was your concentration in education?

- If you did not major in education, then how did you get into the field?

- Did you apply for an alternative pathway to certification when you were done with college?

- Describe to me your teacher preparation program.

- How was the program designed for the student regarding content classes and practicums?

- What did you take away from the content classes that you were able to use in your classroom?

- How useful were the practicums in getting you prepared to teach on your own?

- Describe to me the structure of your practicums.

Interview #2

- What year did you graduate college?

- When did you begin to look for a job? Did the process start as soon as you graduated?

- Describe your outlook on your job search. Did you feel confident in your ability to find a role you would be successful in?

- What was the process of searching for a job in teaching?

  o What were your motivations in searching for a teaching job?

- Were there certain characteristics that attracted you to certain schools?

  o If so, what were those characteristics?

- How many jobs did you interview for and describe to me what those interviews were like?

  o What did you describe as your strengths?

- Describe your hiring process for the first school that you taught at?

  o What were the factors that led you to accept that role?

- What was your title upon your first-year teaching, including grade level?

- What other titles have you held in your teaching career?

- Give me a general overview of the responsibilities you had as a new teacher.

- Walk me through your first year as a teacher. What were some of the high points and what were some of the low points?

- Tell me about an important goal you set for yourself in the past and how successful you were at accomplishing that goal.

- The following questions are about your experience as a special education teacher.

    o For how many years did you teach within a special education department?

    o How many years in general education?

    o Can you explain to me the process in your department/school for receiving a caseload and what you must do for your caseload?

    o What experiences can you describe regarding classroom teaching?

    o Where are they generally positive experiences, or negative?

    o How did those experiences impact your decision to leave teaching?

- Give me an example of a time when communicating with administration or staff was difficult. Give me an example of how you handled that situation.

- Think of a day when you had many things to do and describe how you scheduled your time.

- Tell me about a time you made a quick decision that you were proud of.

- Tell me about a time that you did something particularly creative when you were a special education teacher.

- What experience have you had with miscommunication with a staff member or administration? How did you solve the miscommunication problem?

- Tell me about a time that an administrative policy change may have held up your ability to do your job successfully.

- What was your experience when dealing with other teachers that exhibited poor performance or did not meet your standards of working successfully?

- What types of decisions did you have to make where you did not involve administration?

- Describe a time when you made a mistake that is an example of an area that you need to improve.

- Think of a problem that you had to deal with during your last special education teaching role. Tell me exactly what happened and how you handled it.

- Describe any negative experiences you had regarding your teaching environment.

- Describe any positive experiences you had regarding your teaching environment.

- Did the teaching environment at your school foster high morale or low morale and why?

- How did you perceive your support as a special education teacher? Support from administration, teachers, mentors, parents, and/or students?

  o How could the support that you received be improved?

  o Did your school have a mentorship program for first-year teachers?

    ▪ Do you perceive it to be helpful?

    ▪ If they did not have one, do you think it may have helped you navigate your first year of teaching?

  o How did perceived support impact your decision to leave the field of teaching?

- Give me an example of a time when you were motivated to work.

- Give me an example of a time when you may have been unmotivated to work.

- Walk me through your final year as a teacher. What were some of the high points and what were some of the low points?

- Why did you decide to leave? Was leaving a difficult decision? If so, why was it a difficult decision?

- What were some major obstacles that you had to overcome at your last teaching job? How did you deal with them?

- What are some things that have made you angry? How did you deal with those situations?

- How would you define the part of your life when you were teaching?

- Upon reflection, what are some things that you may have changed about your teaching experiences?

- What are some things that could have been done to change your mind and continue teaching?

- What are some suggestions that you may have for the school district to have better success in retaining teachers?

- Compare your first year of teaching to your final year of teaching. What would you identify as the main differences?

- Looking back at your undergraduate and graduate-level educational experiences, are there additions, changes, or deletions you would suggest to the curriculum if given the opportunity? What would they be?

- What advice would you give to teachers who currently still teaching?

- Is there anything that you would like to discuss further or clarify from our three

  interviews?

Interview #3

This interview will be used to reflect on the meaning of the topics that were discussed from the second interview. It will allow us to delve deeper into some of the experiences discussed by each participant.

- How would you define the part of your life when you were teaching?

- Upon reflection, what are some things that you may have changed about your teaching experiences?

- What are some things that could have been done to change your mind and continue teaching?

- What are some suggestions that you may have for the school district to have better success in retaining teachers?

- Compare your first year of teaching to your final year of teaching. What would you identify as the main differences?

- Looking back at your undergraduate and graduate level educational experiences, are there additions, changes, or deletions you would suggest to the curriculum if given the opportunity? What would they be?

- What advice would you give to teachers who currently still teaching?

- Is there anything that you would like to discuss further or clarify from our three interviews?

Interview #4

Lucy

- How did your impression of teaching change once you went from being a paraprofessional to a teacher?

- How did teaching at Middle School affect your family life?

- You described your students as being overwhelmed. How could you tell that they were overwhelmed at times? Were there certain behaviors? How did that affect the classroom environment?

- Do you think your parents had any role in your becoming a teacher? If so, why, or why not?

- Did the teachers or your parents treat you any differently knowing you had ADHD? If so, how?

- What was the interview process like at your school? What kinds of questions did you have to answer? How did you feel when it was done?

- What was the TAP program like? How were the classes structured?

- What would happen if an IEP lapsed?

- How did you come up with the work samples required for each student?

- How did you develop the goals to progress monitor for each student?

- When you talk about being in constant communication with parents, give me some examples of how you would communicate with them.

- Did you ever feel the added pressure of having to make sure the new teachers were taken care of?

- Where was communication lacking in terms of being able to do your job effectively?

- Was there a better way that your caseloads could have been set up? How?

- Is there anything that could have been done to improve your co-teaching experience? If so, what could have been done?

- What were some of the barriers that prevented you from doing your job effectively?

- What were some of the requirements that you believe should be taken out of the special education job?

- Why do you think PEC teachers are given so many extra responsibilities?

- What do you think school districts could do to lessen the amount of testing in schools?

- Do you feel that PEC kids were given a fair shot on standardized testing? Was there anything more that inclusion teachers could have done to improve the testing outcomes of PEC students?

- Are administrators responsible for why special education inclusion teachers are leaving the field? If so, how are they responsible?

- How did planning time for your various subjects work?

- How did you manage your emotions if you felt like a general education teacher did not want you in their room?

- Sometimes it was difficult to obtain all the login information for the various platforms to review student data. This was particularly important for writing

IEPs. Was there anything else that may have hampered your ability to write an

IEP?

- How difficult was it to maintain rainbow folders?

- What were the requirements for maintaining rainbow folders?

John

- How did you develop the "always focus on the positive attitude" mentality?

- What role did your youth group play in shaping who you are today?

- What are the most important qualities of a PEC teacher?

- How did faith impact your ability to teach?

- What could teacher preparation programs do to improve the recruitment and

  graduation rates of special education inclusion teachers?

- Do you remember some of the interview questions asked when you were hired?

  If so, what were some of those questions?

- How much did the behaviors in your class impact your ability to teach?

- Were behaviors the most consuming part of your job? What were some of the

  student behaviors that you experienced?

- How did you develop goals for your students?

- How or when did you find time to progress monitor and complete data collection?

- Did anyone teach you specific interventions that you were supposed to use in your

  classes? How did you learn about interventions and which ones would be the

  most impactful?

- Besides the moment when the child injured you, were there other moments that you did not feel supported? If so, describe some of those moments.

- What could have been done to alleviate some of the stress so you did not come home and cry on certain days?

- How do you think the support for you and other teachers could have been better?

- How did content planning work?

- What were some of the major barriers that made it difficult for you to do your job?

- How did you overcome those barriers?

- How did COVID impact your ability to teach?

- How did classroom structure impact your ability to do your job?

- Is there anything that could have been done to fix some of the communication issues? If so, how could the communication issues have been fixed?

- Do administrators need to set more boundaries with teachers? As far as having more respect for personal lives? What are some of the ways that boundaries could be established?

- Is there anything that could have been done to improve time management skills? If so, what could have been done?

- How did restraining some children impact your mood and ability to teach?

- Do you feel that PEC kids were given a fair shot on standardized testing? Was there anything more that inclusion teachers could have done to improve the testing outcomes of PEC students?

- How difficult was it to maintain rainbow folders?

- What were the requirements for maintaining rainbow folders?

Darcy

- What could teacher preparation programs do to improve the recruitment and graduation rates of special education inclusion teachers?

- How did you develop goals for your students?

- How or when did you find time to progress monitor and complete data collection?

- Did anyone teach you specific interventions that you were supposed to use in your classes? How did you learn about interventions and which ones would be the most impactful?

- What could have been done to alleviate some of the stress you experienced?

- How do you think the support for you and other teachers could have been better?

- How did content planning work?

- What were some of the major barriers that made it difficult for you to do your job?

- How did you overcome those barriers?

- How did COVID impact your ability to teach?

- Is there anything you would have done differently as a special education inclusion teacher?

- How difficult was it to maintain rainbow folders?

- What were the requirements for maintaining rainbow folders?

Connor

- How did your impression of teaching change once you went from being a paraprofessional to a teacher?

- On average, how long did you spend on paperwork?

- Has to be Deaf/Heard of Hearing impacted any aspect of your ability to teach? If so, how?

- How long did it take you to write an IEP?

- How did content planning work?

- How difficult was it to plan for many different content areas?

- How did you develop goals for your students?

- How or when did you find time to progress monitor and complete data collection?

- Did anyone teach you specific interventions that you were supposed to use in your classes? How did you learn about interventions and which ones would be the most impactful?

- What could have been done to alleviate some of the stress you experienced?

- How do you think the support for you and other teachers could have been better?

- What were some of the major barriers that made it difficult for you to do your job?

- How did you overcome those barriers?

- How did COVID impact your ability to teach?

- Is there anything you would have done differently as a special education inclusion teacher?

- Did you ever feel the added pressure of having to make sure the new teachers were taken care of?

- Where was communication lacking in terms of being able to do your job effectively?

- Was there a better way that your caseloads could have been set up? If so, how?

- Is there anything that could have been done to improve your co-teaching experience? If so, what could have been done?

- What were some of the barriers that prevented you from doing your job effectively?

- What were some of the requirements that you believe should be taken out of the special education job?

- Why do you think PEC teachers are given so many extra responsibilities?

- What do you think school districts could do to lessen the amount of testing in schools?

- Do you feel that PEC kids were given a fair shot on standardized testing? Was there anything more that inclusion teachers could have done to improve the testing outcomes of PEC students?

- Are administrators responsible for why special education inclusion teachers are leaving the field? If they are responsible, then why?

- How did you manage your emotions if you felt like a general education teacher did not want you in their room?

- Sometimes it was difficult to obtain all the login information for the various platforms to review student data. This was particularly important for writing IEPs. Was there anything else that may have hampered your ability to write an IEP?

- How difficult was it to maintain rainbow folders?

- What were the requirements for maintaining rainbow folders?

Appendix B

Appendix B

Field Note Template

Details (Who/What/When/Where/How)

Set the Scene/Background Story (Brief How/Wh

Reflections

Emerging Questions/Analyses

Appendix C

Appendix C

Valdosta State University Doctoral Program in Leadership
Letter of Invitation to Participate in Research

Improving the retention of special education inclusion teachers: Understanding their
experiences in work and preparation in an urban setting.

Dear_____

I invite you to participate in a research study conducted by myself, a student at the
Valdosta State University, Doctoral Program in Leadership. My faculty chair is Dr.
Michael Bochenko, the Educational Leadership Coordinator at Valdosta State University.

The purpose of this study is to give school districts insight into why special education
inclusion teachers leave the field of teaching. You will be interviewed during three
separate sessions through an online platform, or at a venue of your choosing. The first
interview will focus on your life history, specifically what it was like growing up in your
family. The second interview will focus more on your current life as it relates to the
content of the topic for this study. The last interview will require you to reflect on the
meaning of your experiences described in the second interview. With your permission,
the interviews will be recorded. You can stop the recordings or the interviews
themselves if needed. Your responses to the questions will always be confidential and
they will remain confidential after this study is completed. Your responses are used to
develop a better understanding of why special education inclusion teachers decide to
leave the field of teaching. There are no alternatives to the experimental procedures in
this study. The only alternative is to choose not to participate at all.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.   If you choose to participate you
may choose to discontinue participation at any time. Questions regarding the purpose or
procedures of the research should be directed to **Justin Schanck** at
jpschanck@valdosta.edu. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State
University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research
Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible
for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or
questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB
Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Sincerely,

Justin Schanck

Appendix D

Appendix D

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
For the Protection of Human Research Participants

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

Protocol Number: 04234-2021   **Responsible Researcher(s):** Justin Schanck

Supervising Faculty: Dr. Michael Bochenko

Project Title: *Improving the retention of special education inclusion teachers.*

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations **category 2**. If the nature of the research changes such that exemption criteria no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research study.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- *Upon completion of the research study collected data (email address list, phone list, transcripts, etc.) must be securely maintained (locked file cabinet, password protected computer, etc.) and accessible only by the researcher for a minimum of 3 years. At the end of the required time, collected data must be permanently destroyed.*

- *Exempt protocol guidelines **permit** the recording of interviews provided the recording is made for the purpose of creating an accurate transcript. Upon creation of the transcript, the recorded interview session must be deleted immediately from all devices. Exempt guidelines **prohibit** the collection, storage, and/or sharing of recordings.*

- *As part of the informed consent process, interview recordings must include the researcher reading the consent statement, confirming participant understanding, and establishing their willingness to take part in the interview. Participants must be offered a copy of the research statement.*

☒ *If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.*

Elizabeth Ann Olphie   10.20.2021

Elizabeth Ann Olphie, IRB Administrator

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-253-2947.

Revised: 06.02.16

190

Appendix E

Appendix E

Interview Date and Times

Connor Interview 1 – 2/23/22 – 63 min time length

Connor Interview 2 – 3/10/22 – 65 min time length

Connor Interview 3 – 4/4/22 – 105 min time length

Connor Interview 4 – 8/5/22 - 65 min time length

Lucy Interview 1 – 2/10/22 – 66 min time length

Lucy Interview 2 – 3/16/22 – 50 min time length

Lucy Interview 3 – 3/24/22 – 98 min time length

Lucy Interview 4 – 8/5/22 - 65 min time length

Darcy Interview 1 – 2/1/22 – 123 min time length

Darcy Interview 2 – 2/11/22 – 112 min time length

Darcy Interview 3 – 3/4/22 – 100 min time length

Darcy Interview 4 – 9/12/22 - 60 min time length

John Interview 1 – 2/22/22 – 60 min time length

John Interview 2 – 3/17/22 – 65 min time length

John Interview 3 – 4/2/22 – 88 min time length

John Interview 4 – 9/12/22 - 60 min time length