ABSTRACT

Title of Document:	REASONS TO TEACH: PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS, LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS, AND ALTERNATIVE PREPARATION
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As the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) *Act of 2001* and high-stakes accountability have come to define the work of teachers, one wonders if *teaching* is becoming more or less attractive. Teaching in today's classrooms is arguably very different from teaching in classrooms from previous decades and generations. Moreover, the creation and proliferation of alternate routes to teaching has expanded the opportunities for more people to become teachers – late entrants, career changers, etc. The emergence of alternative pathways to certification and the policy-driven changes from the NCLB Act such as the system of sanctions and rewards linked to student performance prompt an updated investigation on the extent to which prospective teachers' reasons to teach have or have not changed from prior eras as documented by previous scholarship completed *before* the enactment of NCLB.

This study contributes to the literature on reasons to enter teaching and the persistence of those reasons for career changers in an alternative teacher preparation program called the Alternative Certification for Science and Mathematics (ACSM)

Program, which is a partnership between Colton County Public Schools and a nearby university. Data for this study were gathered over the span of participants' entire first year in the classroom through interviews, questionnaires, and application materials. Consistent with some previous studies, the study found that participants in ACSM express model influences, experiential influences, programmatic influences, race- and gender-related reasons, and vocational reasons to teach. In addition, data revealed that reasons to teach did not change in significant ways from what participants initially expressed.

However, some changes were evident in the data. For example, vocational reasons to teach for participants become much more specific over time, and by the end of their experiences teaching, participants cite the importance of relations with students rather than instruction of students. Also, while some participants in the study initially cite race as a reason to teach, by the end of their first year teaching, more participants express the influence that race had on their experiences with students in the classroom.

REASONS TO TEACH: PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS, LOW-PERFORMING
SCHOOLS, AND ALTERNATIVE PREPARATION

by

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Dedication

For all of the individuals who have made the decision to teach and for those who will make that decision in the future.

And for my mother and father, who are the best teachers I ever had. You taught me how to work hard, pursue my dreams, and live a purposeful life.

Acknowledgements

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During my time as a doctoral student, I have benefitted from a supportive network of close friends and family. No matter what I was going through, I knew I could always turn to people around me for strength and encouragement. I especially thank my parents, Michael and Christine Walsh, for *showing* me the meaning of hard work throughout my life and instilling in my brothers and me the importance of education. All three of my brothers, Tom, his wife Marilyn and my niece Katherine, Dan, and Jeff, were a wonderful source of support, as they have always been throughout my life.

And, finally, I thank Drew Morettini, who always stood by my side and who became my husband while I wrote this dissertation. I could always count on Drew to make sure I had a smile on my face no matter how hard this process was. His love and support were unwavering, and I owe the completion of this study to him and his constant belief that I could do it.

"To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred: who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin"

– bell hooks (1994, p. 13).

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Chapter I: Introduction

The impetus for this study can be traced to Zeichner's (2005) argument that research in teacher education should "play a greater role in illuminating how we can do a better job of preparing candidates who will choose to teach in the schools where they are most needed, will be successful once they arrive, and will stay there" (p. 747). Approximately three and a half million teachers are distributed across more than 98,000 public schools in the United States, teaching roughly 49 million students (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Teaching is difficult work and, in the United States, teaching carries relatively low-compensation and lower societal status than many other lines of professional work (Nieto, 2005). Still, teachers comprise one of the largest populations of the work force in the United States.

So, who are these individuals? What are the circumstances under which they decide to join the ranks of our nation's teaching force? Further, what are their reasons for teaching? Such questions warrant broad interest in the work of teachers and those who aspire to teach. Nieto (2005) describes public schools and the work of teachers:

> The rapid turnover of new teachers, the changing demographics in U.S.
> classrooms, the widely touted "achievement gap" between White students
> and students of color, and the national insistence on "highly qualified
> teachers" all contribute to a situation where retaining the best teachers and
> encouraging others to enter the profession are essential. In the end, the
> answers to these questions say a lot about who we are as a nation, what we
> value and believe in, and how we educate our young people. (p. 1)

As a nation, we value civic participation in a democratic society and the right of every child to be able to actively participate in our society. Arguably, teachers do some of the most critical work in preparing young people to engage in a democratic society. Conducting research on teachers is a worthy endeavor because, although the work of teachers in our country has changed over the last hundred years, the moral importance inherent to the work of teaching remains constant.

The Shifting Terrain for Teachers

Since the turn of the twentieth century in which the "one best system" of public education and schooling was developed (Tyack, 1974), teaching has become a female dominated profession. The U.S. Department of Education estimates that 75% of practicing teachers are women, and 80% of today's teachers are White (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Lortie (1975) explains that for many women, teaching has traditionally been an attractive job because of the synchronicity of their children's school schedules and their own work schedules. Specifically, teachers are off in the evenings, on weekends, on holidays, and during summers, just like school children. For women with children, or for women planning to have a family, teaching has traditionally been a good fit because of time compatibility, and teaching was historically one of the few professions available to women. In addition, Lortie (1975) claims that other attractions to teaching are the interpersonal nature of teachers' work with children, material benefits, and service to children and society.

Today, one could argue that the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, 2002), high-stakes testing, the increase of teacher accountability, and increased surveillance of the work that teachers do has changed the landscape of teaching. While some (Imig & Imig,

2006; Ravitch, 2002) argue that NCLB is undergirded by the essentialist agenda promoted almost a century ago by William Bagley, and in particular through the Carnegie study on teacher education (Learned & Bagley, 1920), NCLB has brought teacher accountability to the forefront of discussions on teaching and education in U.S. schools. Valli and Buese (2007) found that with the passage of NCLB, teachers' work has increased and intensified. In particular, they found "rapid-fire, high-stakes policy directives promote an environment in which teachers are asked to relate to their students differently, enact pedagogies that are often at odds with their vision of best practice, and experience high levels of stress" (p. 520). What's more, under NCLB, schools face a system of rewards and sanctions linked to student performance on standardized tests. Therefore, schools across the county engage in such work as aligning curricula with yearly state tests, mainstreaming special needs students in general education classrooms, and establishing yearly benchmarks for student performance (Valli & Buese, 2007). In addition, as a way to ensure proficient student performance on high-stakes testing, some teachers work individually with students or with groups of students before, during, and after the school day. As a result, today's teachers find themselves not only working to meet the instructional needs of all their students, but also continuously collecting and reporting data on student performance in the hopes of demonstrating adequate yearly progress (AYP) on top of ensuring the safety of students in their classroom, communicating with parents/guardians, lesson planning, assessment, grading, attending district and grade level meetings, and the myriad other tasks involved in classroom work.

Moreover, current political rhetoric seems to place some degree of blame on teachers for U.S. school children's performance compared to that of students in some

countries in Europe and Asia. With the increase, intensification, and expansion of the work that teachers do, in addition to widespread criticism of their work, teachers in today's classrooms arguably face more challenges than ever before. As testing, accountability, and higher levels of stress come to define the work of teachers since the passage of NCLB, one wonders if teaching is becoming a more or less attractive profession. Changes in the nature of teaching prompt an updated investigation on the extent to which prospective teachers' reasons to teach have or have not changed from previous scholarship completed in this area *before* the NCLB Act (Crow, Levin, & Nager, 1990; Fielstra, 1955; Freidus, 1989; Gordon, 2000; Haubrich, 1960; Hood, 1965; Mori, 1966; Wood, 1978; Young, 1995). To better understand the work that teachers do today, and the context in which they teach, I discuss how modern day schools evolved from the idea of the common schools of the New England colonies.

The Modern School Movement

In the common schools of the 19th century, young, single, Protestant, and middle-class White women had a significant presence because common schools were perceived as extensions of the family unit in nurturing environments (Fraser, 2007; Urban & Wagoner, 2004). The presence of men appeared in administrative and disciplinary roles to ensure that women's influence in classrooms would not emerge too powerfully. Following the Civil War, the federal government instituted a system of free public education in the newly formed country as a means of control over intractable Southern states (Tyack, 1974; Urban & Wagoner, 2004).

After the Civil War, ex-slaves developed the idea of universal education for their children, and freed men and women took it upon themselves to secure the funds for their

schools with assistance from the Freedmen's Bureau, northern missionary societies, and some southern Whites (Anderson, 1988). It should be noted that schools continued to be segregated, with Black children attending different schools than White children. In addition, Catholic immigrants became distrustful of the Protestant influences of public schools on their children during the early part of the twentieth century, so Irish Catholic immigrants in many urban cities took it upon themselves to organize schools through their churches (Tyack, 1974).

Eventually, schools took the large, comprehensive form of today's schools, as this form of schools was the one best system according to elite businessmen at the time. Referred to as the modern school movement, it represents the country's transition from the independent common schools of the 1860s, through the Civil War, and to the tax-supported, large, comprehensive, and segregated schools that appeared at the end of the 19th century. The modern school movement lasted until the early 1900s with efforts toward *centralizing* and *expanding* the American public school system to reach new populations – and to assimilate those populations – and with increasing numbers of students attending school for more years (Tyack, 1974; Urban & Wagoner, 2004). With this new one best system, the idea of a national education agenda and spirit was born into society by the beginning of the twentieth century with the formation of the modern school (Urban & Wagoner, 2004).

At the turn of the twentieth century, technological changes and industrialization helped spur a massive migration of rural and immigrant peoples to urban areas. With this, more and more children populated urban cities (Urban & Wagoner, 2004). Some education reformers (e.g., Horace Mann, Elwood Cubberly, William H. Dooley, Paul

Hanus) became concerned that industrialization and the conditions of cities, with children wandering the streets, would contribute to the breakdown of the family (Tyack, 1974). Compulsory education laws requiring children under the age of 10 to attend school were enacted to keep children away from the perceived atrocities of urban dwelling. The rationale for compulsory education was that children should stay off the streets, out of trouble, and out of the workforce, by being required to attend school. With the legally required attendance of so many children came an increased demand for schools and for classroom teachers.

Manufacturing and industrialization as well as compulsory education laws began to shape the nature of urban American life, and more schools were built to educate the nation's youth (Kaestle, 1983; Tyack, 1974). In order to keep school budgets manageable, education reformers and administrators began to employ more and more women teachers, in large part, because they accepted lower salaries than men did (Kaestle, 1983; Ogren, 2005). The women employed as teachers were almost always White, unmarried, Protestant, and working-class (Tyack, 1974). The increased demand for women teachers precipitated formal *training* for teachers.

Teacher "Training"

Urban and Wagoner (2004) describe a *gendered* hierarchy in schools at the turn of the twentieth century, with positions as superintendents and principals reserved for men from elite pedigrees, and positions as teachers or "assistants", as they were called, reserved for working-class women and for men on a temporary basis (Fraser, 2007). Education reformers liked the idea of nurturing and peaceful classrooms organized by women (Ogren, 2005), and superintendents and education reformers sought the low costs

of hiring women to teach in the ever-growing school system (Kaestle, 1983). As the number of teachers grew, so did the desire to better train teachers. In the 1830s, Horace Mann enthusiastically supported the establishment of normal schools – a term originated in France that meant teachers ought to be trained to high standards or norms (Fraser, 2007; Kaestle, 1983).

As the popularity of formal schooling for children grew throughout the country in the mid-nineteenth century, so did the perceived need for a systematic method of preparing the growing teaching force (Labaree, 2008). Evidence of the need for formal teacher preparation can be traced to a report from Wisconsin's superintendent of public instruction, Azel P. Ladd in 1853: "That a school of this character is needed, the difficulty of obtaining good teachers for our schools is the best evidence…Until we have an institution of this kind, we cannot reasonably expect the character of our schools to be satisfactory" (in Ogren, 2005, p. 27). During the mid-nineteenth century, some states supported the establishment of normal schools while other states decided that existing academies could do the job of teacher training (Kaestle, 1983). Still, the education or *training* of teachers, as it was described at the time, came to the forefront of a national teaching agenda and normal schools became popular sites for teacher training (Fraser, 2007).

Early standards for state normal schools drew on several ideas: the academic instruction of different branches of knowledge, the principles of instruction and learning most appropriate for the academic disciplines, the moral influence of the teacher, and the opportunity to observe and practice sound teaching methods (Ogren, 2005). Following the Civil War, the number of normal schools increased. By the end of the 1860s, thirty-

five normal schools existed in sixteen different states. As more normal schools were built and centered on the principles outlined above, the National Education Association formally recognized normal schools and made the Department of Normal Schools one of its first departments. While some men comprised the teaching force, teaching largely remained a viable line of work for single, working-class women during the early 1900s. In fact, Gitlin (1996) argues that normal schools' efforts to professionalize teaching actually contributed to the gendered hierarchy that lingers in today's schools.

This analysis of the relationship between schools and society suggests that the nature of teaching has changed since the conception of the common school and the "one best system of education" (Tyack, 1974). Today, arguably fewer social constraints dictate who chooses to teach, and teaching today comprises women *and* men, although the vast majority of teachers are still women (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The racial/ethnic background of teachers has also become slightly more diverse in recent years, although it should be noted that desegregation actually displaced many Black teachers as White teachers were hired to teach in integrated schools. While White women still choose to teach at higher rates than any other group, more people besides White women are teaching today.

For many young, single women in the past, teaching was one of a few options for staving off married life and creating a personal intellectual outlet. Hence one's reasons to teach were largely a function of gender and society. Changes in society are reflected in who is choosing to teach in more recent years. As society has changed, the composition of the teaching force has changed, although not as dramatically as the composition of our nation's student body.

Changing Student Demographics

The nature of teaching today operates in a different demographic context than in the past (Peske, Liu, Johnson, Kauffman, & Kardos, 2001). Due to increased immigration, higher birth rates, and legislation to improve the education for students from low-income areas, students with disabilities, and English language learners, schools today, as compared with schools from 30 years ago, serve a much larger and a much more diverse student population (Johnson & Kardos, 2008). Thirty years ago, approximately 20% of our nation's student population came from racially and culturally diverse groups (Hodgkinson, 2001) compared with today's student population in which over 40% of our nation's student population comes from racially and culturally diverse groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). While a teacher's race or ethnic background does not need to match that of his/her students, research indicates the importance of having racially and culturally diverse teachers in our nation's classrooms (Clewell & Puma, 2003; Dee, 2001; Foster, 1990; King, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1994; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). For example, Foster argues that African American teachers are able to communicate with African American students "about the personal value…and the political consequences of choosing academic achievement" (1990, p. 15) as opposed to failure and low performance in schools. With this in mind, research suggests that culturally diverse teachers are invaluable to the success of our nation's increasingly diverse student population.

Based on the trends of changing student demographics, by the year 2035 about 57% of our nation's total student population will comprise children of color (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Moreover, the social context of teaching is becoming more demanding than

ever before as the number of low-income children in our country continues to grow (Banks et al., 2005). Teachers are also dealing with an increase in immigration and the number of students whose first language is not English. New demands on education ought to increase the attention given to those who decide to teach our nation's ever-increasing diverse student population. Research shows that "the cohort of teachers now retiring often chose teaching by default, never seriously weighing the benefits and limitations of other lines of work" before choosing to teach (Johnson & Kardos, 2008, p. 446). As it appears now, changes in society, such as industrialization, social policies, and political movements, along with changes in the character of teachers' work have a direct impact on the reasons to teach for people who have historically chosen teaching and those who enter the teaching force today.

Changes in Scholarship

Reviews of literature on reasons to teach reveal that this area of scholarship previously garnered the attention of educational researchers, but more recently, interest in this topic has diminished. With teacher turnover on the rise (Zumwalt & Craig, 2008), matters of teacher induction, teacher attrition, and teacher retention have become the focus of research while there is less research on why people choose to teach in the first place. More research should explore the connection between the reasons different teacher populations decide to teach and issues of retention. Given that teacher retention and teacher attrition remain issues in the composition and quality of our nation's teaching force, studying prospective teachers' reasons to teach in today's NCLB-driven accountability climate is informative to the educational research community and teacher education programs.

Alternate Routes to Teaching

The development of alternate routes to teaching became a highly politicized topic beginning in the mid-1980s in New Jersey when education itself became highly politicized (Carlson, 1992). In 1983, the report *A Nation at Risk* caught the attention of all parties vested in American education, from parents, teachers, and administrators to prospective teachers, teacher education schools, and faculty, by claiming that the United States was losing its global competitive edge because of a "rising tide of mediocrity" in the nation's public schools (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 9). *A Nation at Risk* identified perceived deficits in American students' knowledge and, hence much of the blame ultimately fell on teachers, their lack of subject-matter content knowledge, and teacher education programs. Despite (delayed) counter-arguments (Berliner & Biddle, 1995) to the report which circulated among the teacher education community, *A Nation at Risk* circulated through the public, and as a result, it affected teachers, schools, administrators, and teacher education programs by *speculating* that classrooms lacked teachers who were competent and knowledgeable in their subject area

Emboldened by the publication of *A Nation at Risk,* alternate pathways to teaching began in New Jersey in 1984. The development of alternate routes to teaching was largely a political maneuver by then Governor Tom Kean and then Education Commissioner Saul Cooperman who argued, "the professional knowledge base for teaching was sparse enough to be acquired in a few days" (Carlson, 1992, p. 73). Many agree that alternate routes function, at least in part, as a means to attract professionals with subject matter or content knowledge into teaching and as a way to decrease the number of teachers working under emergency certificate licenses (Feistritzer, 2008;

Hawley, 1990; Zumwalt, 1996). Still, the politicizing of alternate routes in New Jersey in the 1980s has polarized some in the teacher education community (Carlson, 1992).

Aside from politics, the rationale behind alternative pathways, or alternative certification programs (ACPs), to teaching was to take individuals with subject-matter expertise and professional experience who did not pursue teacher preparation as undergraduates and fast track these individuals into positions as certified classroom teachers (Urban & Wagoner, 2004). ACPs strive to: (1) diversify the teaching pool, (2) increase the effectiveness of the teacher population, (3) reduce the number of teachers working in classrooms with emergency certificates, and (4) address teacher shortages in critical needs areas such as science and mathematics. This study focuses on what I define as an early-entry ACP, meaning candidates enter the classroom and assume full teacher responsibilities – all the tasks associated with being in charge of a classroom of students – after a few weeks of university coursework and an internship.

Most ACPs require a bachelor's degree to enter the program; program providers indicate that most (79%) ACP participants teach with salary and benefits during their program, while the rest of ACP participants are employed part time (Feistritzer, 2008). In theory, by reducing the cost of teacher preparation, ACPs could attract more diverse teacher candidates than traditional teacher preparation programs. Despite the criticisms of alternative preparation for teachers (Roth, 1986), 45 states and the District of Columbia have at least one alternate route, or set of guidelines, in place for alternative certification programs to follow (Duncan & Ochoa, 2011).

Although alternative certification programs have been criticized for their relative brevity, several studies (Dill, 1994; Feistritzer, 2005; 2008; Natriello & Zumwalt, 1992)

argue that they do attract more males, more minorities, and older people than the population of teachers who obtain certification via the traditional route. For example, according to Feistritzer and her National Center for Education Information (2005), 67% of alternatively certified teachers are White, 13% are Black, and 14% are Hispanic/Latino. ACP candidates can also be compared with the data on the national newly hired teacher demographic in which 80.8% of all newly hired teachers in the United States are White, while 8.3% are Black, 7.4% of newly hired teachers in the United States are Hispanic/Latino (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). In addition, Johnson and Kardos (2008) argue that teachers hired today are more diverse in age and experience than teachers in the past, which could be attributed to the increasing emergence of alternate routes to teaching. A more diverse group of people choosing to teach at different times in their lives suggests that more varied reasons to teach now exist.

The Problem Space

The educational research community should develop a greater understanding of whether and to what extent today's test-driven accountability context ushered in with the passage of NCLB, alternate routes to teaching, and changing student demographics affect peoples' reasons to teach so that teacher education programs can address these ideas to ensure that talented individuals enter and stay in classrooms where they are greatly needed. Research (Feistritzer, 2008; 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2005) reveals that more and more teachers are becoming certified through alternative routes, so it behooves education researchers to engage in research about such programs and the individuals who choose ACPs.

In fact, data collected by Feistritzer and her National Center for Education Information (2008) indicate that approximately 50,000 newly hired teachers each year come through ACPs. There is some evidence, as indicated earlier, that ACPs attract higher proportions of people of color than traditional preparation programs (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Dill, 1994; Feistritzer, 2008; Natriello & Zumwalt, 1992). On the other hand, there is some evidence (Veltri, 2010) that well-known alternative programs, such as Teach For America, may not be diversifying the teaching force. In 2009, only 11% of TFA corps members were Black and only seven percent were Latino, percentages that closely mirror those of traditional programs (www.teachforamerica.org).

In addition, growing concern has continued to focus on what Ladson-Billings (1990) has called the "demographic imperative", which is the mismatch between the diversity of the nation's student population and the relatively monocultural teacher population. The growing percentage of non-white students in the American public education system requires that teacher education programs not only re-evaluate how prospective teachers are prepared to work with students of diverse populations, but also how, through targeted recruitment and selection, they might diversify the existing teacher candidate pool so that it better reflects the multicultural U.S. student population. The demographic imperative is therefore an invitation for teacher education programs to bridge the "chasm between the school and life experiences of those with and without social, cultural, racial, and economic advantages" and requires fundamental changes in the ways teachers are recruited and educated (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p.7).

Reasons to teach for ACP participants were explored in studies conducted *before* the current accountability context (Crow et al., 1990; Freidus, 1989), but since the

passage of the NCLB act, few studies have explored this area. The participants in this study are candidates enrolled in an early-entry alternative certification program that strives to, first, improve the quality of middle school science and mathematics teachers in a local school district and, second, respond to the demographic imperative to diversify the teaching force in a specific school district. This program, referred to as the Alternative Certification for Science and Mathematics (ACSM) Program, recruits and prepares diverse candidates for state certification by working in a low performing, high-needs middle school in Colton County.

The literature on reasons to teach often uses the word "motivations" instead of "reasons". The word "reasons" is used here because it more accurately depicts candidates' verbal expressions of why they choose to teach than the word "motivation", which implies an internal cognitive or affective state that is beyond the scope of this study.

Overview of the Study Context

This study examined the expressed reasons to teach for prospective teachers enrolled in an early-entry alternative preparation program called ACSM in which candidates assumed full teacher responsibilities within a number of weeks of starting the program. The study had one overarching research question, namely: What were the reasons to teach for candidates in an early-entry alternative preparation program? As described in the third chapter, this research question was explored through the analysis of several data sources including admissions data collected by the program, participants' answers to a series of open-ended questionnaires, and interviews before, during, and toward the end of their first year in a classroom.

The study participants were candidates enrolled in an early-entry alternative certification program for middle school science and mathematics teachers called the Alternative Certification for Science and Mathematics (ACSM) program. The ACSM program is a federally funded Transition to Teaching program partnership between a university and the nearby district of Colton County Public Schools (CCPS). As an outgrowth of the focus on STEM education and STEM teacher education programs, ACSM focuses on preparing middle school science and mathematics teachers to work in the high-needs, low-performing middle schools of CCPS.

Key programmatic features define ACSM. For example, since ACSM is federally funded through the U.S. Department of Education's Transition to Teaching grant, the program is able to subsidize tuition costs for participants. In addition, participants with a 3.0 or higher GPA from their undergraduate studies can, upon successful completion of ACSM, take an additional nine credits of coursework at the university to earn a master's degree. Participants in ACSM, as in other early-entry ACPs, work as the teacher of record in a classroom shortly after beginning the program. Each ACSM participant is also given a mentor from the university who works individually with the participant during their first year teaching. During this first year teaching, participants work half time and earn a half time teacher's salary with full medical benefits. Finally, ACSM is a total of 13 months, unlike some other programs that can be shorter or last up to two years.
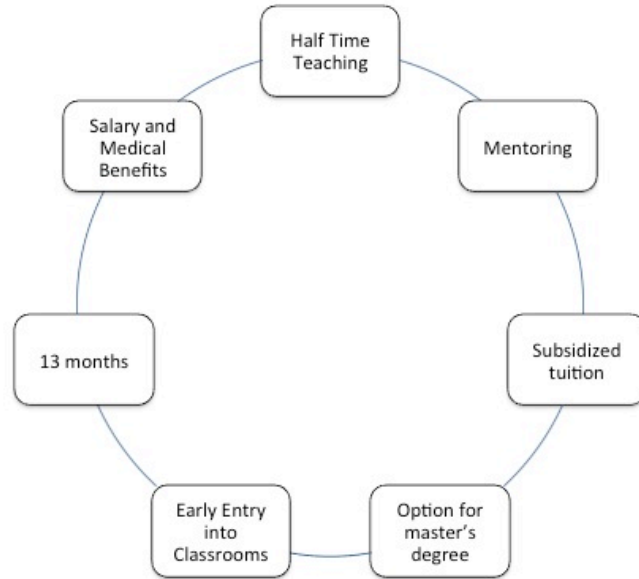
Figure 1.1 ACSM Program Features

One goal of ACSM is to attract candidates with local ties to Colton County, since evidence suggests such individuals are more likely to stay in local schools than outsiders (Boyd et al., 2005), and it is reasonable to assume that candidates with local ties or ties to commensurately diverse communities are more likely than outsiders to relate positively to CCPS students. As a result, and in contrast to many traditional teacher preparation programs, ACSM deliberately recruits and selects teacher candidates who come from the same or similar communities as the students in CCPS, who are more likely to stay in the classroom, and who specifically want to teach in middle schools in CCPS, a predominantly African-American and increasingly immigrant Latino county that borders a large metropolitan area in the mid-Atlantic. This is achieved in large part through concentrated recruitment efforts that focus on radio campaigns that reach the desired demographic as well as word of mouth referrals to ACSM.

Research Questions

With data from participants' application materials, a series of open-ended questionnaires, and a series of individual interviews, I sketch the landscape of participants' reasons to teach prior to their first year in the classroom, and I describe the ways in which those reasons change over time as participants work and learn under the constraints of high-stakes testing and increased teacher surveillance. Participants' application materials – Statements of Purpose, resumes, and program interview notes – serve as the initial point of data collection for reasons to teach, and each open-ended questionnaire and interview generates data at subsequent points in time.

Participants' Statements of Purpose were analyzed and coded for reasons to teach. The open-ended questionnaires and interviews asked participants to explain their reasons for teaching in their own words. Gathering data at three different points in time during the academic year allowed for the analysis of persistence – how reasons to teach *change* over time as participants became more familiar with the work of teaching in today's era of accountability. The questions my data collection and analysis answer are:

- What do ACSM participants cite as initial reasons to teach?

- In the midst of their experiences, what do ACSM participants cite as reasons to teach? How do participants express that personal, program, economic, and teaching contexts affected those reasons?

- At the end of their experiences, how do ACSM participants describe their reasons to teach? How do participants express that personal, program, economic, and teaching contexts affected their reasons to teach?

All data were arranged on two levels for individual participants at the different points in time and for the group at different points in time. Organizing data this way allowed for the comparison between participants and for comparison over time, which enabled me to sketch the reasons to teach as prospective teachers move through their first year of teaching in a high-needs classroom. Overall, this arrangement of the data allowed me to discuss individual participants at different points in time, as well as the sample of participants as a whole over the course of an entire academic year.

Through this study, I explore insights, differences, similarities, and beginning answers to questions such as, do participants' initial stated reasons to teach change over time? What accounts for changes? How do certain contextual factors of a teacher's first year in the classroom impact his/her reasons to stay in the profession? These are the sub-questions of my study of reasons to teach for people in an early-entry alternative preparation program.

Significance of the Study

Zeichner (2005) discusses a research agenda for teacher educators in *Studying Teacher Education: The Report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education.* Echoing the "general belief in the desirability of a diverse teaching force" (Cochran-Smith, 2005, p. 7), Zeichner argues for research that documents the recruitment and preparation of teachers to successfully teach the diverse students in U.S. public schools.

ACSM's recruitment methods go beyond traditional teacher education recruitment and selection methods to seek out teacher candidates who demonstrate a commitment to working in the high-needs middle schools of Colton County. Hence this study is part of a larger effort in education research to Zeichner's (2005) research on non-traditional

recruitment and selection of teachers. Recruitment efforts as implemented include ACSM staff attending career fairs at nearby universities and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), holding information sessions, running multiple radio campaigns on stations with diverse audiences, advertising on the web (e.g., the ACSM website, Craigslist, Idealist.org, Monster.com, Facebook), reaching out to unemployment offices and career centers, and attending district-run recruitment sessions. Because of targeted recruitment efforts, ACSM has been able to recruit a relatively diverse pool of prospective teachers more commensurate with the student population of Colton County.

Many teacher educators and members of the educational research community claim that the definition of high-quality or effective teachers involves the development of a diverse teaching force that more adequately mirrors the diversity of our student population (Villegas & Lucas, 2004). Zeichner (2005) writes, "the status quo in the preservice preparation of teachers has fallen short in recruiting a diverse teaching force and preparing teachers to teach diverse learners" (p. 747). A study on reasons to teach for early-entry alternative certification participants that work in high-needs schools can deepen understanding of the supports needed to pursue teaching in this context and the development of effective teachers.

Zeichner (2005) argues that research in teacher education should "play a greater role in illuminating how we can do a better job of preparing candidates who will choose to teach in the schools where they are most needed" (p. 747). Educational research has demonstrated that teachers can make a positive impact on their students' learning. Given the "growing number of alternative preparation programs" (Cochran-Smith, 2005, p. 12),

this study responds to calls for research on people who aspire to teach and who commit to working in high-needs schools where their talents are greatly needed.

Educational research has demonstrated that teachers are among the most significant factors in the quality of public education (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). Policymakers and researchers frequently use the term "teacher quality" to emphasize the critical influence of teachers on how and what students learn and how students *experience* education. The *No Child Left Behind Act* (2002) supported the assumption that "teacher quality matters by guaranteeing that all students have highly qualified teachers who receive high quality education" (p. 40). In more recent discussions of the re-authorization of the *No Child Left Behind Act,* the term highly-qualified is replaced with effective. While two definitions of teacher quality appear in the literature – one linked to student achievement and the other linked to teacher qualifications – all invested parties could reasonably agree that teacher quality or effectiveness matters when it comes to students' educational experiences. Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005) explain:

> Nationwide there is emerging consensus that teacher quality makes a
> significant difference in schoolchildren's learning and in overall
> effectiveness. Politicians, policymakers, and researchers of all stripes
> increasingly use the term 'teacher quality' to emphasize that teachers are a
> critical influence (if not the single most important influence) on how,
> what, and how much students learn. (p. 40)

In the current NCLB-driven accountability context, alternative teacher preparation programs and traditional teacher preparation programs alike are charged with filling teaching positions with highly qualified or effective individuals. Therefore, implications

of this study provide insights to decision-makers at all levels — from policy formation to local implementation — about prospective teachers' decisions for choosing the career (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Alternative preparation programs should use the findings from this study to continue to build high quality pathways to teaching in the current accountability context and develop the knowledge base on who prepares to teach (Cochran-Smith, 2005).

Conclusion

In this chapter, the problem space for the study was established and defined through a discussion of the changing nature of teachers' work and changing student demographics in U.S. public schools. Teachers working in today's schools face challenges related to a continuously changing student population, high-stakes assessments, and increased surveillance on teachers' work.

In today's accountability context, greater demands are made of teachers. Partly in response to Zeichner's (2005) calls for research on recruiting a more diverse teaching force, this study explores the reasons to teach for individuals alternatively certified by the ACSM program in partnership with a State Department of Education. Who are the individuals that aspire to teach through an early-entry alternative preparation program in a high-needs school district? What are their reasons to teach? How, if at all, do these reasons change during the first year of teaching? Further, by collecting data on how reasons to teach might change during the course of an individual's first year in the classroom, we can respond to the charge to illuminate how teacher educators can do a better job of *supporting* teachers who work in the schools where they are needed most by exploring the experiences of first year teachers in high-needs teaching contexts.

In the next chapter, I synthesize the literature on reasons to teach by telling the story of how the research has changed over time, beginning with one of the earliest formal studies in 1932 through more recently published studies; attention is given to studies that specifically explore the reasons to teach for career changers. I also identify gaps in the literature that create the theoretical space to which this study contributes.

Chapter II: Review of the Literature and Theoretical Framework

This literature review examines the findings from studies conducted on reasons to teach, describes the conversations taking place on this topic, and reveals gaps in our knowledge that this study addressed, particularly in relation to the reasons to teach through an early-entry ACP that prepares individuals to work in high-needs schools. The comparative analysis of the literature focuses on the relationship between data collection instruments, analytic approaches, and the studies' findings.

This study benefits in many ways from the hindsight of looking back on over 70 years of research. For example, I took the themes traditionally found in the literature and identified four themes that I believe will advance further explorations in this topic and that more appropriately fit the needs of this paper. Those themes are: (1) extrinsic reasons, (2) vocational reasons, (3) idealized images of teachers, and (4) personal life change. I established these four themes and organized the literature review around them because they are more apparent in the literature than the themes traditionally used. These themes informed, but did not constrain, the development of the questionnaires and interview protocols used in this study. Moreover, I kept these themes in mind as I read the entire corpus of data for this study; but these themes were not used as a priori codes for data in this study.

Extant Research Approaches and Findings

Before the movements for racial and gender equality of the 1960s and 1970s, teaching was one of a handful of viable professional career options for women, and yet, most of the earlier studies on reasons to teach proceed with the assumption that a career in teaching was chosen out of an individual's unconstrained volition, as opposed to the

lack of other feasible options. That is, many of the earlier researchers indicated that the decision to teach was a function of individual vocational and/or extrinsic reasons (Eliassen, 1932; Fielstra, 1955; Haubrich, 1965; Hood, 1960). Vocational reasons in this study describe reasons to teach that situate teaching as a calling or a vocation. They include the desire to touch the future, the desire to engage in meaningful work, and thinking that teaching is a personal calling. A thorough review of the literature in this topic reveals that many researchers have employed similar methods – particularly survey methods – and have come to similar findings: vocational reasons, idealized images of teachers, and extrinsic factors such as job security and time for family prompt many prospective teachers to consider teaching (see Appendix I).

Researchers typically use surveys to collect standardized data on large samples of participants (Berends, 2006). As a result, survey studies appear frequently in research that explores reasons for teaching for prospective teachers in large teacher preparation programs such as UCLA (Fielstra, 1955), The University of Utah (Hood, 1960), Michigan State University (Mori, 1966), and Florida State University (Pop, 2008). An initial literature search yielded over 30 studies on reasons to teach in which surveys were the primary instrument for data collection.

Quality parameters for the studies were developed to ensure that the literature reviewed in this study meets certain standards. The parameters, which narrowed the number of studies, were that the study was published in a peer-reviewed journal or edited book and that the author(s) included a discussion of their research approach. In order to sketch the landscape of the literature on this topic, the literature is organized thematically according to the methods used by the researchers rather than chronologically. This

thematic organization has a two-fold purpose: to demonstrate the need for individual interviews with open-ended questionnaires as the primary data sources in this study and to identify specific needs for more longitudinal, interpretive work in this field.

Open-ended exploration: Typological analysis and personal life history. In one of the earliest studies in this area of scholarship, Eliassen (1932) administered an open-ended survey question asking 677 practicing teachers to reflect on their reasons for choosing to teach. Eliassen analyzed these data through open-coding procedures and determined that idealized images of teachers and vocational reasons prompted participants to teach, specifically because of participants' positive valuations of the work of teaching children. Eliassen's study set the precedent for examining reasons to teach by developing categories that became a priori in future studies.

For example, Wood (1978) explored the reasons of 52 prospective teachers to choose teaching in the 1970s, when teaching positions were scarce, and Wood predetermined his categories based on Eliassen's findings and engaged in closed-coding of his data gathered through an open-ended survey. Open-ended surveys, like Wood's (1978), lend themselves to typological analysis or closed-coding (Hatch, 2002). According to LeCompte and Preissle (1993), in typological analysis the researcher divides the entire data set into groups or categories on the "basis of some canon for disaggregating the whole phenomenon under study" (p. 257). Theory, research objectives, and/or common sense generate groups and categories (Hatch, 2002). An early stage of typological data analysis is to read the entire data set and divide the data into categories. Both Eliassen (1932) and Wood (1978) engaged in what Hatch and LeCompte and Preissle would describe as typological analysis.

Wood (1978) approached his research in a similar manner as Eliassen (1932) by administering an open-ended survey instrument to participants. While Eliassen studied *practicing* teachers' reasons to stay teaching, Wood studied *prospective* teachers' reasons for teaching. Wood administered his open-ended survey to prospective teachers in an introductory education course at SUNY College of Old Westbury. Wood's findings indicate that a personal change in participants' lives *precipitated* the consideration of teaching as a career. Wood (1978) contextualized these findings by describing the participants in this study, many of whom attended SUNY College of Old Westbury as returning students who raised families and had children before finishing college. Therefore, the average age of a student at this college was older than those at many other undergraduate institutions. The expressed reason for entering the profession, *personal experiences with children,* seems germane to students who may have been influenced by having their *own* children to embark on a career in teaching other people's children. The explanation for Wood's findings could be that he studied an older population of prospective teachers than the population found at other undergraduate institutions (Fielstra, 1955; Haubrich, 1960; Hood, 1965; Mori, 1966), and that older prospective teachers with children of their own want to teach for different reasons than younger prospective teachers who do not have children.

Several years after Wood's (1978) study, Eick (2002) conducted a study similar to Eliassen's and Wood's respective studies and administered open-ended surveys to participants; Eick's participants were practicing teachers. Using a personal life history approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994), Eick explored 19 career science teachers' reasons for choosing teaching, some who made the decision to teach early in college and

some who decided to teach science later in their higher education pursuits. Also referred to in the literature as "personal experience narratives" (Denzin, 1989), personal life history is a data-generating strategy that assumes that an individual's experiences impact their future decisions and choices (Butt, Raymond, & Yamagishi, 1988; Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). By encouraging participants to write about their personal experiences with choosing to teach in autobiographical papers in their own words, Eick generated claims based on participants' experiences and perspectives on the world.

Because personal life histories can influence teacher thought and can change over time (Hawkey, 1996; Nias, 1989), Eick (2002) compared participants' original autobiographical papers with second autobiographical papers, written years later, on choosing to teach through a process of contextual and categorical analysis (Maxwell, 1996) in which he analyzed and coded papers using broad categories that identified past personal experiences. Eick then developed themes from participants' first and second papers and placed them in a matrix to analyze consistency and change. The findings from this study suggest reasons to teach remain somewhat consistent; prospective teachers who entered college as science education majors were encouraged to teach because of the opportunity to shape students' lives and to help students understand science while those who decided to teach at a later stage in college indicated they wanted to teach so they could continue to learn science and to ameliorate students' science understandings. Both of these findings suggest participants are inspired to teach through a sense of vocation. This study contributes to the conversations on reasons to teach because despite *when* a person decided to teach, the reasons to teach were similar for early deciders and later deciders. Compared with Wood's (1978) study, Eick's participants were younger and few

had children of their own. Therefore, the population of *participants* in a study on reasons to teach is influential on the findings of a study.

  Closed-response survey studies and statistical analyses. Just as typological analysis and closed coding procedures were conducted with data gathered through open-ended survey instruments, researchers in this field have typically conducted statistical analyses on data collected through closed-response survey instruments. In one of the earliest studies published on reasons to teach (Fielstra, 1955), a closed-response survey was developed and administered to participants, and the data were analyzed through descriptive statistics. Studying reasons to teach in this way became the prevalent approach in the 1950s through the 1970s, before researchers began to engage more frequently in qualitative inquiry, fieldwork methodologies, and open-ended exploration of this topic due to "the critique of statistical hypothesis testing and experimentation and the growing interest in 'naturalistic' methods that was unfolding in psychology" (Schwandt, 2000, p. 206).

  Descriptive statistics. Methodologies that entail administering closed-response survey items to prospective and practicing teachers about their reasons to teach were the only form of data collection employed in this area of scholarship from Fielstra's study in 1955 until Wood's study in 1978. Fielstra (1955), along with Haubrich (1960) and Hood (1965), collected survey data from prospective teachers by instructing participants to rank order or rate a list of pre-determined reasons for choosing teaching as a career. Fielstra administered a paper and pencil closed-response survey to a sample of 230 undergraduate prospective teachers enrolled in an introductory education course at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). Fielstra's participants were given a list of 11 pre-

determined reasons for choosing to teach and were instructed to rate each pre-determined reason with a number indicating the strength of influence for each reason on the survey. Participants rated responses with a zero through 10 rating scale.

Fielstra (1955) did not discuss the source of the list of reasons given to participants, however one could reasonably assume that the predetermined list of reasons is based on the common perception that teachers choose their career because of a sense of vocation, extrinsic factors, and idealized images of teachers, which were part of Eliassen's (1932) study. Fielstra reported that participants' reasons to teach were vocational factors and idealized images of teachers. Fielstra was the first educational researcher to use closed-response surveys to study this topic, and so other researchers were able to build on his approach to develop predetermined categories for coding surveys (Haubrich, 1960; Hood, 1965). Over time, the categories that Eliassen and Fielstra identified became the predetermined categories for coding subsequent survey data that explored reasons to teach.

Haubrich (1960) and Hood (1965) followed Fielstra's approach to studying reasons to teach by using closed-response surveys and instructing participants to rank-order a list of reasons to teach selected by the researcher. Both researchers found that participants chose to teach for extrinsic reasons, such as job security, and vocational reasons, such as the desire to work with children. In sum, descriptive statistics were the analytic approach for determining the findings of many closed-response surveys.

The majority of findings from these studies reveal that prospective teachers chose teaching because of vocational and extrinsic reasons (Fielstra, 1955; Haubrich, 1960; Hood, 1965). Fielstra (1955) reported that, in part, idealized images of teachers,

vocational factors, and extrinsic factors prompted participants to teach. One could

speculate that by using predetermined categories for data analysis with similar groups of

participants, findings are likely to be similar.

Inferential statistics. Shifting the research focus on this topic to an exploration of

the values inherent in teaching, Mori (1966) set out to examine the critical interplay

between attitudes toward the occupational values of teaching and reasons for choosing

the profession and to differentiate the relationships by gender. Mori was the first

researcher in this area of scholarship to investigate how attitudes toward the occupational

values of teaching influence prospective teachers. The author administered a survey to a

sample of 556 prospective teachers enrolled in a required education course at Michigan

State University. The survey asked participants to rank order the values inherent in

teaching that were the most influential in their decision to choose the career. Although

this study offered a new direction for studying variables related to reasons to teach, the

survey methods employed are quite similar to the previously described closed-response

survey studies (Fiesltra, 1955; Haubrich, 1960; Hood, 1965).

With data analyzed through inferential statistics, Mori noted that, in general, "the

female prospective teachers seemed to have more favorable attitudes toward the

occupational values of teaching than did the males" (1966, p. 178). However, for both

men and women, only three values were evaluated as highly influential on the decision to

teach: "satisfaction from the development and improvement of students," "opportunity to

pursue teacher's interest in a favorite subject," and "opportunity for self-expression and

utilization of capabilities" (p. 178). Mori's findings suggest that vocational reasons

influence a decision to teach. Moreover, the fact that prospective teachers think teaching

provides an opportunity for self-expression indicates that some of the participants wanted to teach because of an idealized image of teacher.

Like Mori (1966), Roberson, Keith, and Page (1983) conducted inferential statistics, but these authors engaged in more sophisticated statistical analysis, such as path analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA), on the national longitudinal data set of high school seniors in 1980: High School and Beyond (HSB). Specifically, these authors looked at the data for high school seniors who indicated a desire to teach. The authors conducted periodic follow-up studies with these 688 participants to see if they actually pursued a career in teaching. Next, the researchers developed 18 variables to use for a path model to attempt to explain the decision to teach and compared the data for participants who indicated a desire to teach with participants who aspired to other professions, with variables such as race, family background, ability, self-concept, gender, high school grades, parental influence, teacher influence, the importance of success, good income, job security, important and interesting work, the desire to work with friendly people, and occupational aspiration.

Roberson et al. (1983) found that participants who aspire to teach have lower high school grades than those participants who choose other professions and that they are not as influenced by job security as reported in previous studies. The authors report a correlation between those who aspire to teach and the desire to work with friendly people, which was not a finding in previous studies. This study contributes to the research on reasons to teach by concluding that the workplace environment of teachers prompts some people to teach.

Like Roberson et al. (1983) and Mori (1966), Richardson and Watt (2006) used inferential statistics to analyze closed-response survey data on reasons to teach. The authors (2006) used the factors culled from previous research (Richardson & Watt, 2005) to develop and validate their Factors Influencing Teaching Choice scale (FIT-Choice)[1]. This framework indicates that a person selects a profession based on what they expect the profession will entail and what they value as an individual (Eccles, Adler, Fuuterman, Goff, Kaczala, & Meece, 1983). Richardson and Watt claim that the FIT-Choice scale determines the "strength of influence for a range of reasons from individuals choosing teaching as a career" (2006, p. 27).

This study explored the reasons to teach for 1,653 teacher candidates at three Australian universities in Sydney and Melbourne using the FIT-Choice scale. Each factor from the FIT-Choice scale was measured using multiple indicators in a Likert-scale format. Mean scores for each factor were calculated and displayed in the form of histograms. Analyses of variance (ANOVAs) tested for statistically significant differences (alpha = 0.01), and the mean ratings for each factor were calculated and displayed in the form of bar graphs.

Richardson and Watt's (2006) work suggests that, like prospective teachers in the United States, some prospective teachers in Australia teach because of vocational reasons. This could be due to the similar schooling contexts in both countries. For example, in the United States and Australia, states govern public schools, and, in both countries teachers in the past were *trained* in technical schools, and teacher organizations were formed to protect the rights of teachers. Over time, teacher organizations in the two

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[1] Richardson and Watt (2005) assert the FIT-Choice scale provides a comprehensive and coherent model to guide systematic investigation into the question of why people choose to teach on the grounds that the scale is based on the Expectancy-Value framework.

countries worked to increase teachers' salaries and benefits. Richardson and Watt's work

demonstrates that there seems to be *common questions* about reasons to teach in these

two countries. With this, the significance of a study conducted on the reasons to teach

takes on new meaning inasmuch as the interpretations from this study could reach a

broader, international audience.

Interview studies: Narrative inquiry and discourse analysis. In the research on

reasons to teach, a relationship exists between data collection instruments and analytic

approaches as researchers have used statistical analyses to explore the reasons to teach in

many closed-response survey studies, and in interview studies, researchers have used

typological analysis, personal life history, narrative inquiry, and discourse analysis to

explore reasons to teach. In the next sub-section, I discuss the use of narrative inquiry and

discourse analysis as it applies to this research topic.

Narrative inquiry. More qualitative approaches to research appeared in the

literature on this topic in the 1970s as the larger research community began to

acknowledge qualitative research and corresponding qualitative methods of data analysis

(Schwandt, 2000). Moreover, interview studies have contributed to the literature in this

area of scholarship with more recent studies conducted by both Shaw (1996) and Olsen

(2008). Shaw's (1996) study on the reasons to teach adds to the conversations in this

topic because she focuses on whether participants' racial/ethnic backgrounds are a

potential factor for teaching. Her study reveals reasons why two African American

teacher education graduate students, one male and one female, chose *not* to teach in favor

of pursuing a career in the professoriate. Data were gathered with prolonged interviews

with each participant individually, which included structured and semi-structured

interview protocols. The deterrents to teaching that this study suggests can be classified as extrinsic factors, such as relative low pay compared with other professions.

Shaw (1996) engaged in narrative inquiry as a methodological approach and, by describing the frequent interactions between participants and the researcher, she allows for the tellings and retellings of experiences, consistent with the practice of narrative inquiry research (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Such research involves activating deeper levels of relationships and trust as the researcher penetrates "several layers of access" (Measor & Sikes, 1992, p. 213). It also provides "condensations" of the participants' life stories (Shaw, 1996, p. 330). In her analysis, Shaw selected data from experiences that seemed "most germane to [participants'] development into people who would consider teaching as a career" (p. 330). This methodological approach differs from coding open-ended responses for reasons to teach inasmuch as participants' *life stories* are constructed *with* the researcher in narratives. These narratives reveal, through the participants' words and experiences, the reasons for initially choosing to teach and, in Shaw's study, for ultimately choosing *not* to teach. The case could be made that Shaw's findings were, in part, a result of the prolonged qualitative research in which she engaged with participants over time.

Discourse analysis. Similar to the personal life history approach Shaw (1996) used, Olsen (2008) studied the reasons for teaching for six female secondary English teachers who graduated from a teacher education program at a university in California. The participants were all working as first-year teachers during the time of data collection, and like Shaw, Olsen conducted interviews with participants as the primary method for data collection. Olsen conducted two rounds of semi-structured, hour-long interviews

during participants' first year of teaching English at the secondary level. The interview protocols sought to explore teachers' personal and professional histories, including their teacher education experiences, past and current work with children, perspectives on teaching and their school, and future career plans. In addition to individual interview transcripts, Olsen collected and analyzed different teaching artifacts, documents about participants' teacher education program, and published information about participants' school districts.

Olsen (2008) initially intended to explore issues of teacher identity development, not reasons to teach, by developing a model of teacher identity that included multiple components such as teacher education experience, current teaching context, career plans/teacher retention, prior personal experiences, prior professional experiences, and reasons for entry. As a by-product of conducting two rounds of semi-structured interviews with participants about their identities as teachers, Olsen found that the participants often referred to autobiographical stories about their *reasons for entry* when probed about themselves as teachers and their career expectations. In reviewing the data, he found that teachers talked more about their reasons for entry than any other component of his model for teacher identity development, so he discussed these reasons in his findings.

Olsen's (2008) engaged in discourse analysis as an analytic approach in three phases. First, he analyzed the interview transcripts of all six participants to create identity profiles. Then, he cross-checked the profiles against analytic categories including gender, prior employment, and current teaching context which produced patterns and themes that were analyzed a third time through his model of teacher identity development. As a

result, he identified six reasons for teaching as described by participants. Three of the six reasons correspond to gender, and the other three reasons relate to perceived personal compatibility with the nature of teachers' work. Not all the teachers discussed all six reasons, but at least three teachers discussed each reason, and "for all teachers, several of these reasons for entry combined with chance and circumstance to guide them into their teaching careers" (p. 27). Olsen maintains that reasons for entering teaching highlight "complex bundles of interactions among personal history, professional preparation, and current work" (p. 27). This study suggests that a teacher's reasons to teach remain a powerful force throughout his/her career. The literature on this topic has generated insights into expressed reasons to teach and, over time, the studies have begun to include a range of methodologies that have paved the way for my open-ended, interpretive study.

In most interview studies, participants' voices are lifted from the data to *develop* themes, and in survey studies the themes are developed a priori. One could argue that the researchers (Olsen, 2008; Shaw, 1996) who engage in interviewing as a means of data collection in the studies conducted on this topic are more interested in the *stories* of participants' reasons to teach, while researchers using surveys are more interested in exploring reasons that generally describe all prospective teachers.

Just as research methods have changed over time, it is important to keep in mind that the labor context of today has changed from that of 30 years ago (Peske, Liu, Kauffman, & Kardos, 2011), and consequently, the conditions surrounding reasons to teach have likely changed over time. As previously discussed, certain occupational choices were not available for women and minority groups in the past. As a result, teaching enjoyed a steady stream of new cohorts for several years. Today, other

professional opportunities exist for women and people of color, and what's more,

alternative pathways to teaching have opened the doors to teacher certification for people

who did not follow a traditional certification route in their undergraduate education.

Given the growing popularity of alternative certification programs (Feistritzer, 2008), the

next section discusses their development.

The Genesis of Alternative Pathways to Teacher Certification[2]

A close analysis of the genesis of alternative pathways to teacher certification reveals

that alternative certification is not something that appeared for the first time in the 1980s.

Historically, normal schools always created alternative pathways to teaching and have

operated with the knowledge that teacher education is, in part, a local endeavor. In fact,

researchers (Grossman & Loeb, 2008) document that normal schools recruited teachers from

the local area and "focused squarely on the school curriculum teachers would actually be

teaching" (p. 187). This long-standing practice represents an early form of locally based

programs, such as ACSM. Still, the emergence of ACPs is largely a function of the political

struggle for power and control over teacher preparation between government and higher

education (Carlson, 1992). To some extent, alternative certification programs were designed

to replace teachers with emergency or temporary licenses and fill the vacancies produced

from increased demand in the number of teachers due to, for example, class size reduction

and increases in retirement.

The general public became aware of alternative certification for teachers when the

idea came to the forefront of a highly politicized debate in New Jersey in 1984 as the state

faced a perceived teacher shortage in high-needs schools and looked for ways to reduce the

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[2] In this section of the chapter, the terms alternative pathways to teacher certification and alternative
certification programs (ACPs) will be used interchangeably.

number of teachers on emergency teaching certificates. In that same year, New Jersey became the first state to grant permanent teaching licenses to prospective teachers who had earned degrees in other fields, bypassed colleges of education, and received on-the-job training in the classroom (Klagholz, 2000). The claim was that through New Jersey's Provisional Teacher Program, the first alternative pathway to teacher certification, the quality and quantity of teacher candidates in the state would be enhanced (Feistritzer, 2008). As a result, debates ensued between proponents of New Jersey's alternative certification and proponents of the traditional university-based pathway to teacher certification.

Despite the debates, this program was successful in putting an end to emergency teaching certificates in New Jersey. Still, emergency certificates and teachers working out of the field in which they were prepared remained practices in other states. Grossman and Loeb (2008) argue that New Jersey's Provisional Teacher Program was one of the first widely recognized alternative certification programs for teachers and that the program prepares approximately 40% of all new teachers in the state. Moreover, this program has increased "both the diversity and average academic ability of New Jersey teachers, and its teachers have even higher retention rates than other teachers in the state" (p. 196). Despite these apparent successes in New Jersey, alternative pathways to teacher certification still face opposition from advocates of traditional university-based teacher preparation programs.

During the same time that publicity surrounded the debates in New Jersey, Texas and California launched alternative certification programs (Feistritzer, 2008). In Texas and California, alternative certification programs were adopted to address the high number of teachers with emergency certificates, to alleviate teacher shortages in secondary subject areas, and to increase the quality and diversity of the teaching workforce. For example, in

1984, California faced an 11,600 bilingual teacher shortage (Kerchner, 1984), and for the Texas State Board of Education, one of the chief concerns about teacher shortages was the lack of Black and Latino/a teachers among graduates of colleges and universities within the state (Dill, 1994).

As alternative certification programs grew within New Jersey, California, and Texas, advocates of traditional certification began to scrutinize them. For example, Robert Roth (1986), former president of the Association of Teacher Educators, argued, "non-traditional routes to enter into teaching pose a serious threat to teaching" (p. 5). The rationale for this argument was that all prospective teachers needed a body of knowledge before teaching, which was perceived to be missing from ACPs (Feistritzer, 2008). In response to this critique, Martin Haberman (1986), from the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, called opponents of alternative pathways to teacher certification "naïve" (p. iii) because the use of emergency teachers, along with out-of-field teaching assignments, resulted in individuals teaching subjects for which they had little or no content knowledge. Haberman argued that ACPs, which require professional coursework and on-site training and supervision, are "highly preferable to simply using emergency or mis-assigned personnel" (p. 15).

Advocates of different pathways to teaching continued to debate the locus of teacher preparation at the same time that some groups called for changes in traditional preparation programs (Feistritzer, 2008). For example, in 1986, the Holmes Group, an organization of deans of colleges of education, suggested a relationship between problems in teaching to the quality of liberal arts instruction. The Holmes Group proposed an extended teacher education program for students so as to strengthen students' foundations in liberal arts. Moreover, in

that same year, the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy took the idea of an extended teacher education program even further by proposing that a bachelor's degree in the arts and sciences become a *prerequisite* for the professional study of teaching. This idea would have required that all teacher education take place at the graduate level, which would have abolished the idea of traditional four-year teacher preparation. While the complete abandonment of traditional preparation never took place, alternative pathways to teacher certification did continue to proliferate in different states as teacher shortages continued and local districts were faced with the challenges of staffing classrooms with certified teachers.

At the same time that ACPs proliferated, traditional teacher preparation became the target of more scrutiny from the perceived ineffectiveness of traditional teacher education programs to prepare teachers to work with diverse student populations found in many high-needs schools (Zumwalt, 1996). For example, Cochran-Smith claims that, typically, traditional teacher education programs "do not yet have the capacity to address cultural and linguistic diversity" (2005, p. 22). Faced with the challenges of high-needs classrooms and a lack of preparation for working there, many traditionally certified teachers demonstrate an unwillingness to work in high-needs schools. High turnover from all programs combined with a lack of preparation to teach diverse student populations contributes to the revolving door in high-needs schools.

Over time, alternative certification programs grew in popularity for interrelated reasons: the relative brevity of the programs as compared with traditional four-year degrees; the view that traditional university-based teacher preparation programs were seen by some as lacking in merit, substance, and diversity; and, intractable teacher shortages in critical areas such mathematics, science, and special education (Feistritzer, 2008). Some early-entry ACPs,

such as ACSM, were developed in part to respond to these issues. According to U.S. Department of Education, alternative certification programs currently account for 29% of the nation's teacher preparation programs (Duncan & Ochoa, 2011). For the purposes of clarification, I use the term early-entry alternative certification program in this study to describe ACPs like ACSM that place individuals in classrooms as teachers of record in a number of weeks after the successful completion of coursework and a clinical experience, which is not characteristic of all alternative certification programs.

As the debate over the value of ACPs for teachers in comparison to traditional certification persists, researchers (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Zeichner, 2005) continue to call for high-quality teachers in all classrooms irrespective of the pathway a teacher took to become certified. Fenstermacher (1990) has even considered ways that "reputable forms" (p. 156) of alternative certification may have a positive impact on traditional forms of teacher education by encouraging experimentation and innovation in the ways in which teachers are prepared to meet the challenges of today's classrooms. Also, the variance of alternative programs should be noted; there are many different types of alternative programs now available to those who wish to teach. Moreover, Grossman and Loeb (2008) argue that it is time to move beyond the debate over *where* and *how* teachers are prepared and instead learn from the successes and challenges of the array of pathways into the profession to advance the field of teacher preparation. Grossman and Loeb's argument foregrounds the next section in this chapter that explores studies focused more specifically on career changers in teacher certification programs.

Studies of Career Changers

The studies included in this section were conducted on what the researchers called career changers. Freidus (1989), Crow et al. (1990), and Young (1995) examined the reasons to teach for career changers in graduate programs, not for participants in early-entry ACPs. As it stands today, early-entry alternative certification programs, such as the program in my study, are understood to be different from other ACPs and even more so from graduate programs that result in a master's degree; the main difference is that candidates assume full teacher responsibilities in early-entry ACPs after a number of weeks[3]. That said, the studies in this section are included because of their contribution to an overall understanding of why some people choose to teach later in life.

Freidus (1989) found that after dissatisfaction with a career in business, the participants in her study, two middle-aged men and two middle-aged women, chose to enter teaching as career changers. For the participants in her study, Freidus reports that the "desire for a career compatible with a ethos of caring" (p. 261) was the most significant reason for teaching. Like Wood's (1978) study with traditional teacher preparation participants, Freidus' study also reveals that a personal life change, such as career dissatisfaction, can be a catalyst to the decision to enter teaching for career changers.

In a similar study consisting of interviews and focus groups conducted with participants enrolled in a graduate program at Bank Street College, Crow et al. (1990) reported findings that echo Freidus'. For example, Crow et al. identify a pivotal moment, such as the birth of a child, which caused some participants to reassess their professional

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[3] Few studies exist on early-entry alternative certification programs and participants. Among those studies are Feistritzer (2005; 2006; 2008) and Grossman and Loeb (2008). Justification for the present study appears stronger given the few studies on this population of teachers.

goals and aspirations. Freidus and Crow et al. advanced the conversations on alternative certification candidates because, even though the participants in these studies are graduate students and cannot be identified as ACP participants, researchers in this field are able to gain a better understanding of reasons to teach for people who decide to do so later in life.

Five years later, Young (1995) examined the reasons for entry into teaching for 272 prospective teachers in what she described as a "highly selective graduate teacher education program in California in 1987 and 1988" (p. 281) on the grounds that all of the prospective teachers in this program held a baccalaureate degree and at least a 3.0 GPA in their previous academic coursework. This program is similar to the graduate program at Bank Street College that Crow et al. (1990) studied, however Young utilized survey methods for examining reasons to teach, which is consistent with the methods historically used for researching this topic. Young's survey included open-ended questions and fixed-response items and the findings stretch across the idealized image of teacher theme as well as the vocational theme, with slightly more data on vocational reasons to teach.

In a discussion of the results, Young (1995) described how the participants believed that they would be most fulfilled by working in a profession in which they can make a contribution to society by shaping the minds of children. Such prospective teachers have vocational orientations that will fit well with the social and moral mission of schools. In accord with other studies (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Freidus, 1989), Young found that at the point of entry into the profession, prospective teachers are willing to forego higher pay and status associated with jobs in the private sector in favor of the enterprise of education in this country.

Lessons from the Literature

Looking back on the body of literature reviewed here, it appears that there are certain trends for reasons to teach. For example, vocational reasons and an idealized image of a teacher or teachers were powerful reason to teach during the 1950s (Fielstra, 1955), while extrinsic reasons such as job security became the more dominant reason to teach for candidates in the 1960s (Haubrich, 1960; Hood, 1965); after this time, research in this topic became less prominent in the educational research agenda. In the 1980s, interest in reasons to teach as a research topic was renewed by the emergence of alternative pathways to teacher certification. For career changers in non-traditional routes to teaching, the most frequently identified reason to teach was a personal life change, such as the birth of a child, which prompted the individual to attain a work schedule more commensurate with their children's school schedule (Crow et al., 1990; Feidus, 1989; Young, 1995). In more recent studies, an idealized image of teachers and vocational factors appear to be the most frequently expressed reasons to teach (Eick, 2002; Olsen, 2008; Richardson & Watt, 2005; Richardson & Watt, 2006).

Another trend is the enduring use of surveys as a means of collected data. Survey research is one of the most utilized methods of research in this topic because of the large sample sizes survey research enables one to study. While survey research identifies reasons to teach for large sample sizes, survey-based methodology limits the research in a number of ways. First, the survey approach imposes researcher-generated categories upon prospective teachers. It assumes that pre-established categories capture reasons to teach and does not explore the contextual factors that career-changers might discuss in the way more open-ended, interpretive work might (Merriam, 1998). Next, researcher-generated

categories, even those found in other studies, do not acknowledge the changing economic

context of a given time and place in our country's history and the impact that might have

on prospective teachers' reasons to choose teaching. Moreover, the teaching contexts in

which these teachers are prepared to work have not been accounted for in extant studies,

which is a critique of the literature on this topic. Therefore, a combination of open-ended

questionnaires and individual interviews throughout an entire academic year might prove

informative in understanding the reasons to teach for career-changers and the contextual

factors that might impact those reasons during the first year working in classrooms.

Researchers accepted the themes that earlier studies identified as reasons to teach,

and research studies were built around exploring such reasons for different populations of

prospective teachers[4]. For instance, researchers built surveys using these reasons for

prospective teachers at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) (Fielstra,

1955), The University of Utah (Hood, 1960), and Michigan State University (Mori,

1966). In such survey studies, participants were instructed to select or rank-order their

reasons to teach from a list of predetermined reasons that explored the a priori themes of

extrinsic, intrinsic, and altruistic.

These three overarching themes appear throughout the body of research on

reasons to teach. Extrinsic reasons include the working conditions and material benefits

of teaching (Haubrich, 1960). Intrinsic reasons include satisfaction from the perceived

work of teaching (Eliassen, 1932), and altruistic reasons include helping children develop

moral values (Fielstra, 1955). These themes continue to be unchallenged in studies

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[4] A summary table of the literature and findings according to themes is located in Appendix I.

conducted in the United States and were in part supported by the attractions to teaching that Lortie (1975) explained.

While numerous studies contribute to the knowledge base in this area of scholarship, what seems to be missing from these conversations is how factors *not* reported in the literature could have influenced a person to teach. For instance, for an undergraduate who has not declared a major by a certain point in his/her studies, perhaps parental or guardian *pressure* to choose a profession and to become financially independent was influential. Researchers should consider how a person's *situation* could prompt him/her to teach and how the economy might influence a person's decision. Such data would likely be collected through qualitative methods such as interviews, which allow the researcher and participant to more deeply engage in conversation than a survey instrument allows. Furthermore, researchers such as Crow et al. (1990) conducted research that spanned an academic year, but they do not discuss if or how participants' reasons to teach *changed* during this time. In fact, few studies actually explore persistence and changes in reasons to teach and the contexts that contribute to an individual's decision to stay teaching or leave altogether.

Sinclair, Dowson, and McInerney (2006), who also recognized that most of the studies on reasons to teach do not acknowledge temporal changes in reasons for individuals, conducted a study with 98 prospective teachers at a large public university in Australia over the course of a semester; the similarities between the U.S. and Australia's schooling contexts are discussed earlier in this chapter. The researchers found that reasons to teach for many individuals do change over time, and the change is because prospective teachers became dissatisfied with teaching and decided against entering the

profession. Similarly, Shaw (1996) found that her participants, a Black male and a Black female, decided not to teach because they felt the pressure to make more money.

Furthermore, Kottkamp, Provenzo, and Cohn (1986) studied stability and change within teaching for Dade County Public School teachers in order to update the study that Lortie conducted in 1964[5]. In the Kottkamp et al. study, the researchers reported that teachers in Dade County in 1984 were not as attracted to the profession by intrinsic and extrinsic factors as were teachers in the county twenty years before that time and expressed more vocational reasons to teach. What's more, Zimpher's (1989) meta-analysis of decision-to-teach studies confirms Kottkamp, Provenzo, and Cohn's findings and concludes that, in general, reasons to teach have changed over time. For example, the teachers in the Kottkamp et al. study indicated they are less attracted to teaching because of extrinsic rewards than teachers were in Lortie's study. Moreover, a larger percentage of teachers in 1984 compared with teachers in 1964 reported dissatisfaction with their jobs. The researchers do not speculate on the cause of these changes, but they do suggest that "scholarly studies of schooling and reports of national commissions have somewhat changed the nature of teaching" (p. 566). The findings from Kottkamp, Provenzo, and Cohn's study in addition to Zimpher's meta-analysis help educational researchers gauge changes in reasons to teach across decades, but gaps still exist in how reasons might change over the course of an academic year.

The results of these studies, along with the findings from the Sinclair et al. (2006) study and Shaw's (1996) study, imply that changes in reasons to teach do exist, and they could be related to participants' age, gender, and racial/ethnic background. I argue that changes in reasons to teach could also be a function of factors related to teaching in high-

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[5] This study conducted by Lortie was published in 1975 in the book *Schoolteacher*.

needs schools and other personal, economic, program, and teaching contexts. By looking at the reasons to teach for early-entry ACP participants, and how or if these reasons change over time, I will develop a greater understanding of individual and group changes in reasons to teach.

In addition to this gap in the literature, reviewing the studies conducted on reasons to teach reveals a gap in our knowledge base because many of the studies were conducted before today's era of standards-based reform and test-driven accountability (Cuban, 2009). Future studies ought to explore *where* teachers want to work, in what *contexts* they envision teaching, and how or if their reasons to teach *change* over time as they become more familiar with life in the classroom. Moreover, many of the studies on career changers were based on participants enrolled in graduate teacher education programs (Crow et al., 1990; Freidus, 1989; Young, 1995), not necessarily ACP participants. The studies conducted on graduate program participants reveal findings similar to the studies conducted on traditional route participants (Fielstra, 1955; Haubrich, 1960; Hood, 1965; Mori, 1966; Wood, 1978). As a result, there is a theoretical space to which this study on early-entry ACP participants contributes.

A theoretical framework that acknowledges the contexts – such as the personal, economic, program, and teaching contexts – in which teachers prepare would advance the field and contribute to the development of robust alternative pathways to teacher certification. I argue that since some ACPs attract "more males, more minorities, and more older people than the population of teachers who obtain certification via the traditional route" (Feistritzer, 2005, p. iv), the reasons to teach for ACP participants

ought to be revisited and brought back to the forefront of the discussions on teacher preparation.

Theoretical Framework

This study contributes to extant research on reasons to teach by offering research conducted through a theoretical framework that takes into account the personal, programmatic, economic, and teaching contexts that might affect participants' stated reasons to teach over the course of their entire first year in the classroom.
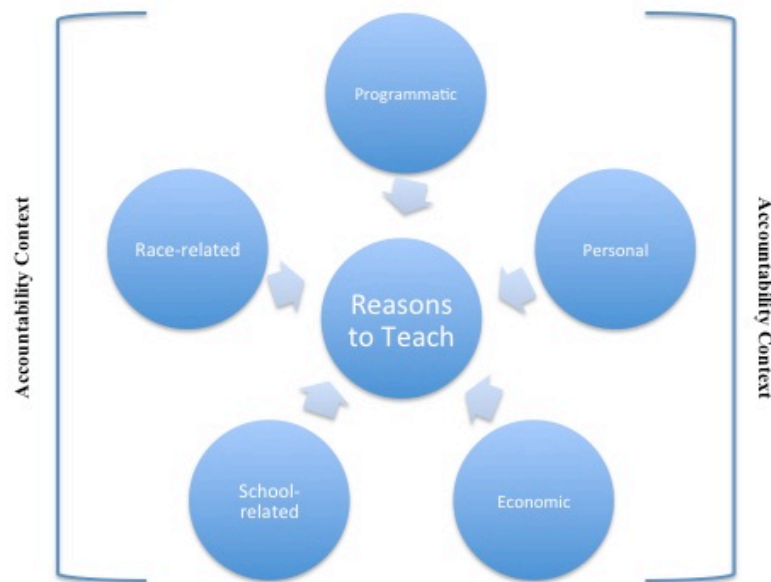
Figure 2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is informed by my reading of the literature. It guides the data collection instruments and data analysis procedures used in this study. The theoretical framework illustrates how personal, programmatic, economic, and teaching contexts might affect ACSM participants' reasons to teach over the course of an academic year within the larger test-driven accountability context in which schools and teachers now operate. In addition, given the ACSM program's intentional recruitment of

diverse individuals with ties to Colton County, the theoretical framework takes into account the role that race might play for individuals in ACSM to choose teaching.

This theoretical framework draws, in part, from Ginzberg's (1988) theory of occupational choice. Ginzberg defines occupational choice as a process that is largely irreversible. As Ginzberg claims, an individual reaches a career decision "not at any single moment in time, but through a series of decisions over a period of many years; the cumulative impact is the determining factor" (p. 360). Ginzberg asserts, "Compromise is an essential aspect of every choice" (p. 360). Individuals, therefore, make career choices by negotiating the advantages and disadvantages of different professions. Moreover, individuals, in part, choose an occupation based on their available options and the opportunity costs of choosing a certain profession. Occupational theory informs an understanding of the decision to teach as a complex process that may have taken several years for an individual to make; it also suggests the impact that personal and economic contexts might have on an individual's decision to teach.

Along with Ginzberg's (1988) theory of occupational choice, the idea that economic contexts impact reasons to teach for some individuals is corroborated by researchers' (Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991) work over three decades with more than 50,000 college graduates – some of whom chose to teach and some of whom chose not to teach. These researchers found that the supply of teachers among different regions was sensitive to the salary differential between teaching and other jobs, relative working conditions, and the personalization and efficiency of hiring procedures. Further, it is important to note the larger economic recession during the time in which the study took place. So, while an individual might not directly express how the economy

factored into his/her reasons to teach, it can be assumed that an economic recession has an impact on almost all individuals in the U.S. workforce. Therefore, economic contexts and the availability of other forms of employment play a role in some individuals' reasons to enter teaching.

Additionally, the theoretical framework of this study is informed by research (Nias, 1989) that asserts the affective and deeply personal reasons that impact individuals' choice of teaching. In fact, a reason to teach for some is the belief that teachers can personally influence the lives of their students. A growing body of research indicates teachers' perceptions of teaching and their actions in the classroom are grounded in their personal life histories and continue to be shaped in the context of schools (Bullough, 1998; Butt, Raymond, & Yamagashi, 1988; Cole & Knowles, 2000; Eick, 2002). Moreover, teachers regularly weigh their decision to remain in teaching through consideration of their personal effect on their students (Cole & Knowles, 2000). As such, personal and teaching contexts have been found to have an impact on reasons why people enter teaching and why they continue to teach or leave the profession altogether.

Similarly, programmatic contexts, such as the features of ACSM, are incorporated into the theoretical framework for this study. ACSM program features include subsidized tuition, a half time teaching model during the first year in the classroom, mentoring support, and the ability to work in high-needs, low performing schools, as ACSM explicitly prepares teachers to work in such schools. The following text is an excerpt taken directly from the ACSM project narrative.

[ACSM] teacher education coursework is designed to: Place diversity and

equity issues central throughout the [ACSM] teacher education program in

recognition that few college graduates, even those with some shared

background features, are adequately prepared to teach students in high

needs schools, among other things.

The theoretical framework for this study, therefore, informs the ways in which personal,

programmatic, economic, and teaching contexts impact ACSM participants' reasons to

teach over an entire academic year.

In addition to the ways in which personal, programmatic, economic, and teaching

contexts shape ACSM participants' reasons to teach over time, the theoretical framework

of this study is also informed by racialized experiences and relations. I examined the role

that participants perceived race – their own and/or their students'– to play in their

experiences. The relationship between race and teaching was not originally part of the

original framework; rather, it developed over time as participants' data were being

analyzed and it was becoming evident to me that race was a salient factor in some

participants' reasons to teach.

Just as the relationship between race and teaching guides the analysis of data,

especially the data of African American participants in this study, research related to

whiteness studies guides the analysis of data from this study's white participants. White

participants, with the exception of one, did not discuss race as a reason to teach or the

impact that race might play in their experiences in high-minority classrooms. There is a

body of literature that discusses this idea. For example, researchers (McIntosh, 2008;

Scheurich, 1993; Sleeter, 1993; 1996; Wise, 2008) maintain that white people fail to

acknowledge the racialized nature of their experiences, because, in fact, they do not experience racial marginalization, and white people benefit from the institutional racism that arguably pervades American life.

McIntosh's (2008) work helps explain why the white study participants might not have discussed race. McIntosh argues that white people have "unacknowledged privilege" in which they enjoy the advantages of their skin color. Others (Dalton, 2008; Scheurich, 1993; Sleeter, 1996; Wise, 2008) agree with McIntosh that as a result of white privilege, most white people are largely oblivious to race and the role that race plays in their life experiences. While researchers continue to call for the confrontation of white privilege in American life, it can be argued that white privilege continues to exist. Data from this study support the notion that white privilege is so pervasive it has become normalized for those who enjoy it.

In addition to white privilege, whiteness can be used to examine the impact of NCLB legislation on schools, particularly schools with high populations of students of color. Leonardo (2007), for example, argues that NCLB is an example of whiteness because of the sanctions that schools – students, teachers, and administrators – face when they do not meet adequate yearly progress. Many of these sanctioned schools, the author claims, have high proportions of students of color (Leonardo, 2007). Consequently, schools with high proportions of White students become the standard by which other schools are judged. Leonardo goes on to write that

> When the white referent of NCLB is not discussed, these communities
> [of color] receive the impression that they are failing non-racialized
> academic standards. The upshot is that the fault is entirely theirs, a

cornerstone of color-blind discourse that conveniently forgets about

structural reasons for school failure. On the other hand, when largely

white middle-class schools and districts meet or exceed their targets, they

receive a similar but beneficial message: that their merit is entirely theirs.

(pp. 263-264)

As a result, Leonardo (2007) argues that whiteness is "reified through NCLB" and

that the "educational construction of whiteness goes unnoticed" (p. 264). In this way,

whiteness contributes to the theoretical framework of this study through the examination

of participants' data and the ways in which NCLB affects the nature of teachers' work,

particularly for the teachers who work in high-minority, low-performing schools such as

those in Colton County.

Conclusion

ACSM, the early-entry alternative certification program from which this study

draws its participants, is shaped in part by a deliberate move to diversify the teaching

force in one school district and even more so by the charge to fill high-needs middle

school classrooms with highly qualified or effective teachers, who are members of the

local community and hence are more likely to remain in Colton County Public Schools

(CCPS). Not all alternative certification programs operate with the objective to diversify

the teaching force. A review of the literature on this topic revealed gaps in the knowledge

base that the study intends, at least in part, to fill. Moreover, the literature base informs

the theoretical framework that underscores the methodology of the study. Given the

importance of methodological rigor for the study, methodological decisions will be

described at length in the next chapter. Likewise, given the importance of participant

selection, a section in the next chapter is devoted to its discussion. Also included are

detailed descriptions of the context of the study, the specific phases of data collection and

analysis, the data sources that were analyzed to answer the research questions, the

timeline of the study, and the ethical principles that guided the design and

implementation of this research.

Chapter III: Research Methodology

The central question of this study is, "What are the stated reasons to teach for candidates enrolled in an alternative preparation program?" In asking this question, I explored how reasons to teach might change over time for prospective teachers spending a year in high-needs middle schools. In this study, I gathered data through multiple sources: participants' application folders, which included a Statement of Purpose and a resume of prior professional experience; a series of three open-ended questionnaires; and, and a series of three structured, open-ended interviews. Open-ended questionnaires were administered before, during, and toward the end of participants' first year of teaching in a middle school mathematics and science classroom. Structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with participants at three different points in time – before spending time as a prospective teacher in a classroom, halfway through an academic school year as a prospective teacher, and toward the end of the academic school year as a prospective teacher.

Data were collected at three different points in time for a few reasons. The first reason stems from a pragmatic choice on my part; these data are part of a larger study that collected data at the same points in time. By aligning my data collection with that of the existing larger study, I intended to streamline my own data collection process. A more compelling reason to engage in three phases of data collection relates to Moir's (1990) research from the New Teacher Center in Santa Cruz, California in which Moir identifies five phases of first-year teaching, which are anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, and reflection. These phases are not distinct, linear phases that new teachers experience at specific points in time. Rather, these phases are generalizations and ranges

for what new teachers experience in the classroom as novices. In fact, it could be argued that some first year teachers remain in the survival phase long after what Moir claims as the first six to eight weeks in the classroom and may not experience a sense of rejuvenation at all. Therefore, by collecting data at the beginning, middle, and end of participants' first year in the classroom, I sought to capture the range of phases that participants in this study might experience over time and how and to what extent initial reasons to teach persist.

Since different teachers experience these phases for different amounts of time, data collection that occurs before, during, and toward the end of teachers' first year in the classroom will incorporate participants' voices during the range of these experiences. Moir's (1990) research is not conclusive, but has been useful in helping to determine the timing of my data collection phases because it suggests that new teachers' experience changes over time. Collecting data at three points in time over the course of an entire academic school year allowed me to chart participants' changes in expressed reasons to teach as they spent more time in a high-needs middle school classroom.

Context of the Study

In naturalistic inquiry, the researcher begins with the understanding that social context is critical to the overall design of a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The context for this study is the ACSM program, which is situated at the intersection of a collaborative partnership between a large mid-Atlantic university and Colton County Public Schools (CCPS). ACSM, therefore, is a blend of both the university and local teaching contexts, and as such, the nature of the program acknowledges the argument

(Grossman & Loeb, 2008) that understanding a school district's particular challenges and constraints is critical in preparing teachers to work in Colton County Public Schools.
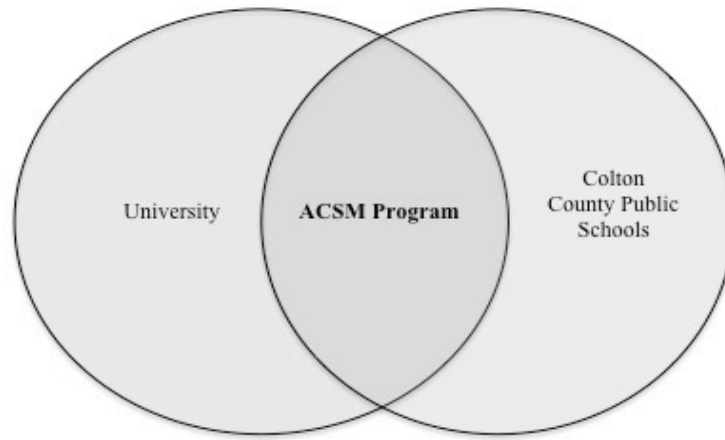
Figure 3.1 Context of the Study

ACSM represents a collaborative effort between a university and a nearby school district. The university context represents the coursework that participants take while teaching halftime. During ACSM, participants take a total of 25 university credits; ten of those credits are taken during the summer before they begin working in schools, and another 18 credits are taken while they work as teachers of record. The remaining three credits are taken the summer after participants' first year in the classroom. During the summer before participants begin to teach, the university context could be considered their primary context, but as they begin to work in schools, the context of Colton County Public Schools becomes primary. Participants in this study simultaneously act as employees of Colton County and students at a university; therefore, the context for this study is the overlap of these spaces. Further, ACSM is a very specific sort of ACP that prepares career changers and recent college graduates with experience in STEM fields to

become middle school mathematics or science instructors in Colton County Public Schools exclusively.

According to the school district's annual report, Colton County Public Schools is not only one of the largest districts in the state, but is one of the 20 largest school districts in the entire United States. Colton County Public Schools has over 120,000 students; the student population at CCPS consists of approximately 70% African-American and 20% Hispanic. In addition, over 20% of the student population is international, with students from approximately 150 counties speaking over 160 languages. More than half (53%) of the student population at CCPS is on free and reduced meals. In recent years, CCPS, like many large high-needs districts, has been unable to staff all classrooms with highly qualified or effective teachers, particularly in the areas of science and mathematics (Coffman & Muncey, 2008; Cooper, Dickstein, Hayen, Mira, & Nikundiwe, 2008). The staffing issue in science and mathematics in Colton County is particularly problematic, as almost half (43.7%) of the total student population scored less than proficient in the 8th grade mathematics state assessment, and even more (47.7%) of the total student population scored less than proficient in the 8th grade science state assessment.

Methodological Approach

This research study is qualitative in nature and is designed to build theory about participants in an early-entry alternative pathway to teacher certification called ACSM rather than test a well-developed theory about this population. In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the human instrument and collects and gathers data and uses tacit knowledge and findings from prior research to explore and analyze that data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data collection, therefore, included the administration and analysis of open-

ended questionnaires to participants coupled with analysis of application materials and transcripts from interviews with participants. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed for analysis in order to generate new understandings in this area of study. Protocols for the three interviews are included in Appendices E - G.

The interview questions asked participants to engage in story telling about their own experiences in schools as students, their experiences as prospective teachers, and their thoughts related to teaching in high-needs middle school classrooms. The questions included in the interview protocols represent substantive areas that I wanted to explore with study participants such as their own experiences in school; their current teaching context; what they perceive as the role(s) of teachers; the role, if any, that race played in their experiences; and, their image of effective teaching in a high-needs context. The ongoing analysis of interviews in each phase of data collection informed subsequent instruments, and in this way, the interviews built on each other. For example, perhaps as a function of my own whiteness, I did not initially include questions about the impact of race on teaching experiences. However, after I noticed participants voluntarily discussing the ways in which they thought race influenced their teaching experiences, I included questions about race in interview protocols two and three.

The development of this research design and the instruments for data collection reflect my commitment to social constructivism and the belief that meaning resides in the interactions between human beings (Schwandt, 2000). In this sense, I believe that human beings do not discover knowledge, meaning, and truth claims so much as we construct or make them (Crotty, 1998). That said, humans do not construct meanings in isolation but "against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language, and so forth"

(Schwandt, 2000, p. 197), and meaning is constructed by the interplay between human beings engaging with their human worlds (Crotty, 1998). Specifically, the interview protocols used in this study included open-ended questions which participants answered in their own words, calling upon shared understandings, language, and practices within the context of teaching in Colton County and participating in ACSM.

The open-ended questions in the interviews and open-ended questionnaires called upon study participants to express and explain their reasons for teaching in their own words, which is the sort of knowledge that this study values. Using participants' explanations of their reasons to teach, I drafted interpretations that participants were invited to read and respond to. As I developed analytic memos and findings, I asked participants to read drafts of findings and interpretations, check for the accuracy of their representation in the findings, and reflect upon and respond to my interpretations. In this way, I worked with participants throughout this study to construct meaning and knowledge and generate insights related to my research questions.

Participant Selection

Lincoln and Denzin (2001) claim that one of the major questions related to research design is asking what and who will be studied. The nature of this study required the engagement of participants throughout a 12-month data collection period. Participants, therefore, played a large role in the study, and so the selection of my participants, and my relationship to them, assumed special importance.

I gained access to the participants and sites selected for this study via my role in ACSM as Program Coordinator. During the design of this study, I worked as the Program Coordinator and played an active role in the recruitment and selection of candidates for

the program. My primary functions as Program Coordinator involved supporting

candidates throughout their first year in the classroom by, among other things, arranging

coursework for participants in order to complete the steps toward initial teacher

certification, facilitating program orientation, and by selecting and communicating with

university- and school-based mentors. In terms of data collection, it is important to point

out that any involvement I had in participants' experiences with ACSM called upon me to

advocate for participants in a non-evaluative role. The Principal Investigator and the Co-

principal Investigator developed and implemented participants' evaluations in the

program, while my role, as Program Coordinator, continued to be supportive, not

evaluative. That I had virtually no impact on candidates' *success* in the program or

coursework grades helped to mitigate any potential ethical dilemmas stemming from my

roles as researcher and Program Coordinator.

Participants were initially identified for this study by virtue of their enrollment in

ACSM, a program that seeks to recruit individuals with local ties to Colton County or ties

to a commensurately diverse community (Boyd et al., 2005; Cochran-Smith, 2005;

Zeichner, 2005). My criteria for purposeful sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of

participants in this study:

- Participant expressed willingness and ability to speak with researcher at
  length at three different times during the research study and to answer any
  follow-up questions that might result from the transcription of interviews;

- Participant has demonstrated willingness and ability to speak openly about
  his/her decision to apply to an early-entry alternative teacher preparation
  program.

As it turned out, I selected all participants that consented to participate in this study because doing so enabled me to explore a greater range of stated reasons to teach for this population. As a part of my participant selection, I also considered the anticipated relationships I might have with them by building rapport with all potential study participants, as I would with all the participants in ACSM otherwise in my role as Program Coordinator. Throughout the duration of this study, I tried to *maintain* a rapport with ACSM participants in general, and study participants in particular, by making myself accessible to them during their first year of teaching in a high-needs middle school mathematics or science classroom and supporting their growth as first year teachers. Table 1 summarizes ACSM participants with respect to age, gender, self-identified race/ethnicity, highest degree obtained, and previous professional work experience.

Table 1. Summary of ACSM Participants

Name (pseudonym)	Age when program began	Gender	Race/Ethnic Identity	Highest degree obtained	Previous Work Experience
Lex	25	Male	Nigerian – first generation	Bachelors	Private school math teacher
Stephanie	51	Female	White	Bachelors	Substitute Teacher
Michelle	38	Female	African-American	Masters	Mechanical Engineer
Heidi	26	Female	White	Masters	Private tutor
Randolph	49	Male	African-American	Masters	Financial Analyst
Grace	27	Female	Filipina -	Bachelors	Private tutor
Chanel	28	Female	Nigerian – first generation	Bachelors	Customer Service Representative
Jane	24	Female	Korean – first generation	Bachelors	Pharmacy Technician
Blake	23	Male	African-American	Bachelors	Recent college graduate
Lena	47	Female	White	Masters	Substitute teacher
Hope	34	Female	Ethiopian – first generation	Bachelors	Financial Analyst
Janice	61	Female	White	Doctoral	Science Teacher Educator
Steve	27	Male	White (Belgian)	Bachelors	Financial Analyst

Neither Lex nor Stephanie gave consent to participate in this study. In fact, Stephanie

withdrew from ACSM in November, but Lex successfully completed it. As a result,

neither of these participants was interviewed, but both participants' survey data were

included as they did consent to participate in the ACSM IRB-approved evaluation

system. Moreover, Heidi also withdrew from ACSM, but since she did consent to

participate in the study, Heidi's data from the first two rounds of interviews are part of the larger corpus of data as were responses on her first and second surveys.

In addition to the information provided on participants in Table 1, it is important to note the local identities of two participants, Michelle and Blake, who are both from Colton County, are graduates of Colton County Public Schools, and still reside in Colton County. Both of these participants brought with them familiarity with the nature of the community and ties to the public school system. And although Jane and Grace are not from Colton County, they are from neighboring communities. Jane and Grace grew up just a short distance away from Colton County. Likewise, Hope and Chanel did not grow up in Colton County, but after starting ACSM, both participants relocated to Colton County. All other participants grew up in other states but now live close to Colton County. Therefore, not all participants in this study align with ACSM and some alternative certification program expectations for local connections, for which Boyd et al. (2005) argue.

Data Collection

Data collection took place over the course of 12 months. Baseline data were initially collected on study participants from their application folder materials to the ACSM program. In the application folders, I examined participants' resumes of professional experience before choosing to teach. I also read each participant's Statement of Purpose to gain a better understanding of their expressed reasons to teach, and I reviewed ACSM faculty members' notes from participants' initial program interviews, which help determine a potential participant's admission into the program.

After looking through application folders, and before ACSM participants spent time in high-needs middle schools, I administered an open-ended questionnaire to the entire cohort, which at the time consisted of 14 individuals, that asked them to describe their own reasons for teaching. This first questionnaire was administered to participants on the first day of the ACSM program at Orientation in June 2011 before participants spent time as teachers in Colton County Public Schools. The questionnaire asked participants why they wanted to be a teacher and particularly why they chose ACSM. The questionnaires in the study were part of a larger IRB-approved evaluation system for the program. In response to this question, nine participants responded that they entered ACSM because of the structure of the program, a response that will be discussed in more detail later in chapter four. Participants focused on answering why they entered ACSM but did not discuss in much depth why they aspired to teach. Each program participant filled out this questionnaire, as the item was included in the ACSM program's IRB – approved evaluation system. I read through their responses to get a sense of their expressed reasons to teach. The remaining two questionnaires were included in the ACSM program's IRB – approved evaluation system; and the three interviews for this study were conducted with the 11 program participants who consented to be a part of this study.

The interviews, therefore, took place with 11 consenting participants who were willing to spend time with me talking about their reasons to teach. While the first questionnaire provided data on why participants chose ACSM specifically as their pathway to teacher certification, the interview portion of this phase of data collection, in addition to participants' Statements of Purpose and program interviews, do a better job of

exploring more deeply the initial reasons these participants express for wanting to enter teaching. The interview protocols were highly structured. But, they were also open-ended in the sense that I asked participants clarifying and follow-up questions.

Participants wrote a Statement of Purpose as part of their application to the program. The focus of the statement was: Why do you want to be a middle school teacher in Colton County? Most participants wrote about one or two single spaced pages to answer this question. In addition to participants' Statements of Purpose, I included ACSM faculty members' program interview notes on potential ACSM participants in my review of application materials. In order to be accepted into the ACSM program, all potential participants must interview and answer questions related to why they want to teach and how they would handle certain situations in high-needs classrooms. In addition, participants must demonstrate subject-matter mastery in a content-related interview that assesses potential participants' math or science content knowledge. I reviewed ACSM faculty members' interview notes on the participants in this study to further explore participants' stated reasons to teach. Overall the interview notes corroborate participants' written Statements of Purpose, responses to the first questionnaire, and what participants articulated in their first interview for this study.

As data were collected and initial impressions and tentative interpretations were being made, participants were asked to read draft summaries to check the interpretations I made from the data. In addition, I attended participants' Seminar course that met twice per month for the purpose of taking fieldnotes on what consenting participants discussed in relation to the research topic.

As it turns out, the nature of participants' Seminar course did not allow time for participants to discuss their reasons for teaching hence, no data were collected in the form of fieldnotes. My attendance at participants' Seminar course was not futile, however; the sustained time I spent with participants over the course of their entire academic year served as a way for me to build trusting relationships with them, which influenced the depth of their responses to my interview and questionnaire response items.

Table 2. *Research Questions with Corresponding Data Collection and Analysis*

Research Question	Data Collection	Data Analysis
RQ1: What do ACSM participants cite as intial reasons to teach?	Application folder materials (Statement of Purpose, resume) Questionnaire 1 Interview 1 Program Interview	Open coding Finalized coding Analytic memos
RQ2: In the midst of their experiences, what do ACSM participants cite as reasons to teach? How do participants express that personal, program, economic, and teaching contexts affected those reasons?	Questionnaire 2 Interview 2 Fieldnotes from Seminar	Closed coding Analytic memos
RQ3: At the end of their experiences, how do ACSM participants describe their reasons to teach? How do participants express that personal, program, economic, and teaching contexts affected their reasons to teach?	Questionnaire 3 Interview 3 Program Interview notes Statement of Purpose	Closed coding Analytic memos

Data Analysis

The analysis of data in this study was interpretive (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Hatch, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Interpretive analysis gives meaning to data in a way that other forms of analysis – such as surveys which pervade research on this topic – do not by making sense of situations, and generating insights, impressions, and inferences

(Hatch, 2002). Interpretive analysis of data for this study was achieved in part through analytic memos that captured impressions after each phase of data collection and analysis. The phases of data analysis in this study began with a close reading of the initial data set collected through application folder materials and responses to the first interview and open-ended questionnaire. Then, I engaged in open coding of the initial data set, developed a coding scheme, and wrote initial analytic memos.

The process of coding qualitative data involved the reading and re-reading of data and making selections from the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Findings from prior research helped me shape my questions and the theoretical framework for this study (Crow, Levin, & Nager, 1990; Eick, 2002; Fielstra, 1955; Freidus, 1989; Haubrich, 1960; Hood, 1965; Mori, 1966; Olsen, 2008; Richardson & Watt, 2005; Shaw, 1996; Tamir, 2008; Young, 1995). However, findings from prior literature were not used as the basis for my coding scheme.

The first round of data collection included study participants' Statement of Purpose, resume, the first round of interviews, the first open-ended questionnaire, and ACSM faculty members' notes on participants' interviews for admission to the program. Participants' Statements of Purpose were written in response to the question, "Why Do You Want to be a Middle School Teacher in Colton County?" Data were initially coded according to open coding procedures (Strauss, 1987). Specifically, I read the entire first data set and went through the data line by line and wrote down words or phrases that identified and named specific analytic dimensions and categories (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). The 30 initial codes I identified were:

- Acknowledges the difficulties in teaching
- Attracted to Colton County

- Attracted to low performing, high needs schools
- Attracted to middle schools
- Attracted to ACSM model
- Attracted to University
- Not attracted to Colton County
- Not attracted to low performing, high needs schools
- Wants to work with at-risk youth
- Parent
- Idealized Image
- Other individual
- Deterred by finances
- Extrinsic factors
- From geographic area
- Needed to find career
- Informal teaching experiences
- Negative experiences as a student
- Positive experiences as a student
- Teachers play an instructional role
- Race-related reasons
- Always thought about teaching
- Content-driven reasons to teach
- Decision was a relief
- Education is important
- Personal life change
- Searching for more meaning in a career
- Teacher is already part of identity
- Thinks he/she can make a difference
- Wants to be remembered as a teacher

Such an open-coding procedure allowed me to "entertain all analytic possibilities" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 151). After reading through the data and the codes multiple times, categories such as the influence of others, the influence of past experiences, and the idea that teaching is a calling were developed to capture more general theoretical issues. Specifically, the initial codes were refined, combined, and expanded into the following 20 codes that formed the basis for themes:

- Former teacher
- Parent
- Other individual

- Length of program
- Mentoring support
- Tuition support
- Middle school math and science
- Colton County Public Schools
- Job placement
- Credits toward master's degree
- At-risk students
- Experiences with youth
- Informal teaching experiences
- Positive/negative experiences as a student
- Other experiences
- Race- and gender-related reasons
- Lack of fulfillment/searching for more purpose
- Always wanted to teach/passion/calling
- Content-driven reasons
- Power of education

In subsequent rounds of data collection, I applied this coding scheme in more focused or closed coding and wrote more integrative analytic memos which explored relationships between codes and examined themes and issues (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). An excerpt from an integrative analytic memo dated January 3, 2012 is included in Appendix H. For example, I explored differences in how participants seem to relate to their students, either because of race, class, or prior experiences as students. Further, I decided to give race- and gender-related reasons its own code, and eventually a theme, rather than combine it with the codes in the vocational theme because of the fact that only African Americans initially expressed race as a reason to teach but over time, more and more participants expressed the influence that race had on their teaching.

In sum, finalized codes from the first round of data collection and analysis served as my coding scheme for the entire data corpus following two subsequent rounds of data collection, both involving interviews and open-ended questionnaires. In this way,

ongoing data analysis shaped subsequent data collection and allowed me to "identify, elaborate, and refine analytic insights from and for the interpretation of data" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 151). Over time, as previously mentioned, some participants started to talk about race more frequently than they initially did, particularly the White participants who, for the most part, did not initially mention race-related reasons to teach. The changing frequency of certain codes over time is discussed in chapter four.

In addition to coding data, analytic memos, such as the memo included in Appendix H, served as a way for me to make sense of the data, make some initial hypotheses that I checked against the entire data set in future rounds of data collection, and develop salient interpretations (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Denzin, 1994; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Graue & Walsh, 1998; Hatch, 2002). Analytic memos were critical in my thinking through the themes I developed in the data. Wolcott (1995) recommends that qualitative researchers begin writing "expanded pieces" (p. 100) in the early phases of data collection to get a sense of what ought to be written about and what form it might take. Memos as a means of capturing potential insights from systematic readings of the data helped me articulate the interpretations being made about the data (Hatch, 2002).

Recording salient impressions and potential interpretations in analytic memos took place during all phases of data collection. In order to complete this step of data analysis, I read the entire data set multiple times to ensure the impressions and interpretations I was developing had evidentiary warrant (Erickson, 1986). As I developed themes from the data such as model influences and experiential influences, I went back to the entire corpus of data and grouped segments of the data according to themes to more easily explore their meanings (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Analytic

memos served as the space to explore relationships between themes and to find avenues of inquiry for subsequent phases of data collection and analysis. Through exploring the relationships between themes in my analytic memos, I began to generate claims related to my research questions such as African American participants are more influenced by race-related reasons to teach than White participants are. Such claims ultimately became the basis for findings from this study and can be explained in part by the study's theoretical framework that includes race and teaching as well as ideas of whiteness and white privilege. Study participants were asked to engage in member checking, which is discussed later in this chapter, during all phases of data collection and analysis.

Data analysis was conducted through an interpretive lens shaped by the theoretical framework of the study. Within the identified themes, I explored categories of data included in each theme and considered if there could be "richer representations" of the theme (Hatch, 2002, p. 172). Across themes, I explored any "special relationships" (Hatch, 2002, p. 172) between or among emerging themes in the research and considered the possibility of new themes or the merging of one theme with another (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). For example, I identified that some themes emerged differently for participants according to the participants' race, particularly the themes of race-related reasons and vocational reasons.

Timeline of Study
Academic Year 2011-12

Member checks;
Relationships between Analytic Themes

Analysis of
Application
Folder materials;
Open-ended
questionnaire 1
Open coding

Interview 1
Open coding

Initial
Analytic memos

Interview 2;
Open-ended questionnaire 2
Closed Coding

Analytic memos

Interview 3;
Open-ended
Questionnaire 3
Closed coding

Analytic
memos

June 2011	July 2011	August 2011	September 2011	October 2011	November 2011	December 2011	January 2012	February 2012	March 2012	April 2012	May 2012	June 2012

Figure 3.2 Timeline of Study

Researcher Positionality and Bias

In all forms of qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to make explicit any biases or assumptions that may influence the exploration and interpretations surrounding a research topic (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). Since I functioned as the instrument for data collection, it is necessary to explicate my position as a researcher and my own reasons to teach as such reasons could affect the interpretations I developed in this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). My personal biases and assumptions about reasons to teach likely functioned as sources of tacit and propositional knowledge throughout this study. Still, any qualitative researcher would be remiss to neglect discussing the experiences and insights that have brought about certain research questions and any effort to engage in inquiry around those questions.

Personal and professional background. My first formal teaching position was as a kindergarten teacher in a classroom with a large English Language Learner (ELL)

population. In teaching ELL students, I came to understand the critical nature of teachers' work and the importance of making students feel *valued* in my classroom, which are my own vocational reasons to teach. My experiences with ELL students and their families illuminated the difficulty and satisfaction inherent in being a committed and effective teacher to all my students, especially those students who would seem disempowered by learning and living in a country that does not speak their own language.

During my time as a master's student in Philadelphia, I had the opportunity to work at a charter school whose mission was grounded in Freirean philosophy to empower students to read and critique the world around them (Freire, 1985). Working in this context helped me develop my own ideas about the power of pedagogy and the critical mission of teachers to help create a sense of social equity.

In addition to having public school teaching experience, I have worked as a college instructor for the past four years during my time as a doctoral student. While teaching college-level education courses to undergraduates, I came to learn that prospective teachers want to teach for a variety of reasons. Some saw a career in teaching as a pathway to a career in administration, guidance counseling, or education policy. Other students, who intended to pursue a long-term career in classroom teaching, expressed varied aspirations from wanting to teach in schools that resembled the schools they attended as students, to wanting to teach in urban settings, to wanting to teach in religious schools, and even to wanting to teach abroad. My experiences working with prospective teachers have helped shape my interest in this area of research.

Arriving at my decision to teach. My reasons to teach developed during my undergraduate years through my fascination with education courses at my undergraduate

institution. At the beginning of my sophomore year in college, I had space in my schedule for one more course. Unsure of what to take, a friend suggested I enroll in an education course with her. I enrolled in the course and found it to be much more engaging than other courses in which I was enrolled at the time. After the semester ended, I decided to enroll in more education courses. I was learning a lot about public education in the United States, I was challenging myself to think about pedagogies and purposeful planning, and I enjoyed visiting local schools and classrooms.

By my junior year in college, I declared an Elementary Education minor[6] leading to certification in grades PK - 6. I knew that in becoming a teacher, I was entering a profession that was not considered *prestigious* by certain family members, friends, and even some of my other undergraduate professors, but something about working with other human beings called to me. Stated differently, I was influenced by vocational reasons to teach. For example, I was enticed by the idea of engaging in a meaningful profession that was important to *me* and to the students I would one day teach.

Ethical Considerations

My position as a researcher brings certain ethical considerations to bear on the design of this research study. In co-constructing knowledge and meaning with participants, I asked participants to give of their time to this study and to my overall research efforts. This was indeed no small task for first-year teachers working in high-needs, low-performing middle schools. As a qualitative researcher, I considered my research efforts in relation to the lives of those with whom I worked. Therefore, core principles of ethical choices (Sieber, 1992) guided each phase of the research study. The core principles of ethical choices:

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[6] In the Commonwealth of Virginia, education cannot be a primary area of study in collegiate work.

- *Beneficence* – maximizing the good outcomes of the research while doing no harm to participants during and after the study.

- *Respect* – protecting the autonomy of participants with courtesy and respect for participants as human beings

- *Justice* – ensuring reasonable, non-exploitative, and carefully considered research procedures in the research study

In addition to conducting research that adheres to the core principles of ethical choices, I also worked to create an environment of mutual respect (House, 1990) between participants and myself as the researcher. I created an environment of mutual respect by making sure the participants understood my aims and interests as a researcher and by working toward understanding participants' aims and interests in engaging in this study.

Informed consent. Informed consent was obtained from participants willing to take part in this study. Before potential participants consented, I thoroughly explained the purpose of this study to all ACSM program participants, explained participation requirements, and asked potential study participants for any questions or concerns they had about the study. After establishing the pool of consenting participants, I met with them to discuss the interview protocols and the sort of information I would be asking them to provide during the study. Before each of the three individual interviews, I reminded participants that they had the right to withdrawal from the study at any time without risking any type of penalty.

Member check. My own subjectivity was tempered by *co-constructing* meanings and interpretations with participants' based on their responses to open-ended questionnaires and interviews, in accordance with a social constructivist stance. In

moving toward interpretation, participants were invited and encouraged to read through the impressions and interpretations being developed based from the data.

As data were analyzed and as impressions were documented, I invited participants to read drafts of the claims I generated to check for the accuracy of their representations as they appeared in the interpretations of the data. Participants were encouraged to edit the findings, question the findings, and add clarifying comments that would help ensure their accurate representation. They were made aware that at any point in the study they could call "recheck" meetings (Miles & Huberman, 1994) with me to discuss their role in the study and their feelings about the study as it was being conducted. These actions represented an effort on my part to ensure that participants were completely informed about the nature of the study and their role in it.

Limitations

Interviews are a compelling method for data collection when studying reasons for teaching because interviews give participants the forum to discuss, in their own words, their reasons for choosing to teach through an early-entry alternative certification program. Researchers maintain that a critical drawback of interviews is the tendency of participants to respond in a manner they perceive as most socially acceptable or desirable rather than communicate what they truly think or feel (Ho et al., 2006). In relation to the topic of reasons to teach, issues of self-reported data appear particularly problematic because of the social desirability that participants might strive for while providing data to the researcher. Moreover, as researchers engage in interviews, they should be cautious that they are not encouraging participants to give socially desirable or expected answers when responding to questions by reminding participants that *their* knowledge and

experiences are what is sought, and their anonymity will be maintained in the final report of the findings.

It could be that most prospective teachers want to teach for reasons related to extrinsic factors, vocational factors, idealized images of teachers, and/or personal life changes as extant literature indicates. However, some prospective teachers might want to teach for seemingly less socially acceptable reasons. Perhaps the idea of having a summer break from work-related responsibilities appeals to a participant. The participant might not reveal such data for fear of responding in a socially *unacceptable* or *undesirable* way.

Interview and survey data are inherently limited through their self-reporting, or self-disclosure, nature, and researchers drawing heavily from these methods must account for this limitation in their research design. Measures such as follow-up interviews that take place at different points in time can help with obtaining substantive interview data. The limitations of interview research conducted in this area of scholarship can be accounted for in other ways, also. For example, researchers can assess the authenticity of participants' responses by asking similar substantive, descriptive, and structural questions in different ways and assessing the consistency of participants' responses, which is what the interview protocols in this study do. Researchers can also account for issues of self-reporting by putting the participants at ease and assuring participants that *their* perspectives, not those of society, are critical to the goals of the research study.

Conclusion

This study builds on the literature base on reasons to teach. Gaps in the knowledge base in this topic have been identified, so the research questions that guide this study have the potential to yield findings and interpretations that will become a part

of the knowledge base in this area of scholarship particularly for participants in an early-entry alternative pathway to teacher certification. Given that teachers remain one of the largest populations of the work force in the United States (Nieto, 2005; Zumwalt & Craig, 2008), educational researchers should continuously work toward gaining better understandings of those who choose to teach. In working toward better understandings of teachers as a group, educational researchers can contribute to enhancing the quality of instruction that students in K- 12 public schools in the United States receive.

What's more, the United States Department of Education acknowledges that alternative pathways into teaching are becoming more prevalent in the preparation of teachers (Duncan & Ochoa, 2011). After reviewing the literature in this area, the argument can be made that, since *No Child Left Behind* (2002) and with the genesis and proliferation of alternative pathways to teaching, the research base on today's teachers should be updated. In an effort to do so, this study focuses on an early-entry ACP that aims to produce high-quality teachers who are more likely to remain in high-needs schools by recruiting and selecting individuals with local ties or ties to a commensurately diverse community (Boyd et al., 2005; Cochran-Smith, 2005; Zeichner, 2005). Warrant for the qualitative nature of this study lies in its localized context and the limited state of knowledge about early-entry alternative certification participants, their reasons to teach, and how certain contexts might impact those reasons to teach over time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Given the study's qualitative nature, I have accounted for the building and maintaining of positive relationships with research participants, and the findings of this study can help support the development of robust alternative pathways into teaching.

Chapter IV: Exploring the Data

The next chapter examines the findings yielded from the 12-month data collection process with participants to explore the three research questions that drive this study. The data are explored according to each of the three research questions and generative insights are offered for all three questions. To answer the first research question, what do ACSM participants cite as initial reasons to teach, I collected data from several sources: application folder materials (resume and statement of purpose), questionnaire one, interview one, and ACSM faculty members' notes from participants' program interview. This first research questions serves as the over-arching research question for this study. After all the data were gathered, they were organized into a matrix according to participant and data source. This allowed for the inductive analysis of data into categories and codes that were later synthesized into themes. The five themes synthesized from the data are: model influences, programmatic influences, experiential influences, race- and gender-related reasons, and vocational reasons. Each theme will be described with examples from the data.

Research Question 1

What do ACSM Participants Cite as Initial Reasons to Teach?

Looking across participants' application materials (resumes and Statements of Purpose), first questionnaire, first interview, and ACSM faculty members' program interview notes, I identified several different categories for participants' initial reasons to teach. Some of the categories relate to and reinforce others. For example, many of the participants expressed that experiences with youth, either in a tutoring context or in an informal education setting prompted them to think about the possibility of teaching. And,

some participants express that informal teaching experiences provided them with a sense of purpose they did not experience in their previous profession.

From the 30 initial codes categories were developed; the categories were synthesized into comprehensive themes that describe ACSM participants' initial reasons to teach. These themes represent links and relationships from the initial codes and categories identified in the data. The final themes for the first research question are:

1. Model influences
2. Programmatic influences
3. Experiential influences
4. Race- and gender-related reasons
5. Vocational Reasons

Related to the study's theoretical framework, each of these themes could be considered a personal context for individual participants because of the personal meaning they hold for each participant.

Table 3. *Summary of Themes and Participants*

Model Influences			
Former Teacher		*Parent*	*Other*
Hope　　Lena Randolph　Steve Jane		Blake Grace Lena	Heidi Chanel
Programmatic Influences			
Length of Program	*Mentoring Support*	*Tuition Support*	*Middle School Math & Science*
Lena　　Jane Steve　Heidi Michelle　Hope	Lena　　Steve Blake Chanel	Lena　　Heidi Jane Hope	Lena Janice Randolph
Colton County Public Schools	*Job Placement*	*Credits Towards Master's Degree*	*At-risk Students*
Lena Michelle Blake	Lena	Hope Randolph	Grace
Experiential Influences			
Experiences with Youth	*Informal Teaching Experiences*	*Positive/Negative Experiences as a Student*	*Other*
Steve　　Lena Grace　Heidi Blake　Jane Randolph　Janice	Chanel　　Lena Michelle Randolph Jane	Jane　　Blake Michelle　Janice Heidi　Steve Grace	Michelle
Race/Gender Reasons			
Michelle　　Blake Randolph　Janice			
Vocational Reasons			
Lack of Fulfillment/Searching for More Purpose	*Always Wanted to Teach/Passion/Calling*	*Content-driven*	*Power of Education*
Hope Michelle Blake	Heidi　　Steve Hope Chanel	Janice Randolph Grace	Blake　　Hope Michelle　Jane Lena

These themes are not uniform in influence for participants. The number of participants who mentioned each theme is considered a proxy for its relative strength. Model influences, programmatic influences, experiential influences, and vocational reasons to teach are relatively stronger for participants than race- and gender-related reasons because of the number of participants who referenced the reasons. In addition, within each theme, there are categories that are relatively stronger than others. For

example, within the model influences theme, the influence of a former teacher is slightly stronger than the influence of a parent or other role models because more participants mentioned it.

Programmatic reasons to teach relate more specifically to why participants chose ACSM as a pathway into teaching rather than why participants chose to teach in general. This theme is included here because of its frequent references in participants' data as everyone talked about their attraction to the ACSM model for teacher preparation. Participants chose to teach at this point in time because they perceived ACSM as compelling enough to change careers.

As previously stated, data sources for the first phase of this study include program interview notes, application materials, an open-ended questionnaire, and an individual interview I conducted with each consenting participant. Each interview with a study participant began with a brief conversation with the participant about the purpose of my study, which was to explore the reasons to teach for career-changers working in the STEM fields and business professions. What's more, I explained to participants that this study sought to explore why a group of prospective teachers in an early-entry alternative teacher preparation program would choose this particular path into the profession, including any perceived convenience of the program or monetary support from ACSM. In discussing the purpose of my study, I discussed my own path into teaching, how my experiences with English language learning students in my own classroom showed me the range of students' educational experiences, and how I came to appreciate the differences that my own students exhibited every day. Through a discussion of my personal experiences as a teacher, I invited participants to share the experiences that led

them to pursue teaching. The themes I developed from participants' stories in addition to application folder materials, the first questionnaire, and program interview notes are synthesized below.

Model influences. Lortie's (1975) apprenticeship of observation explains, at least in part, a theme found in extant literature on reasons to teach – idealized images of teachers. Lortie's apprenticeship of observation suggests that a person's prolonged exposure to the work of teachers from the perspective of a student factors into a person's decision to choose teaching. More specifically, I argue that during the time a student "apprentices" with teachers in schools, the student actually develops an idealized notion of teachers' work and teachers' roles in children's lives which leads to an idealized image of teachers in general. As in the literature (Eliassen, 1932; Fielstra, 1955; Mori, 1966; Olsen, 2008; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Roberson et al., 1983; Young, 1995), this was most evident when participants discussed one or two teachers that stood out in their memories when they reflect on their experiences as students.

Consistent with the literature reviewed for this study, one of the dominant codes for participants' initial reasons to enter the ACSM program was idealized images of teachers. Moreover, in addition to their idealized images of teachers, many participants described how the positive affirmation from others about their teaching abilities acted as an influence on their decision to teach. Specifically, participants cited (1) role models – former teachers and parents – and (2) affirmation from others about their abilities to teach as reasons to teach. The influence of role models and parents, along with idealized images of teachers and Lortie's (1975) apprenticeship of observation, were synthesized into the theme of model influences.

For example, in her program interview, Hope talked about her fifth grade math teacher and said she always wanted to teach, but was deterred by her mother for financial reasons. After working for 10 years in an unfulfilling corporate career, Hope revisited the idea of teaching, hence her application to the ACSM program. Overall, for Hope the decision to teach was a result of an idealized image of her fifth grade math teacher and the search for a more meaningful line of work. In her search for more meaningful work, Hope recalled her fifth grade math teacher, and her desire as a child to become a teacher like him. Hope remembers that the first time she thought about teaching was in fifth grade. Hope recalled, "I would say my fifth grade math teacher was the first time I said 'hey, it would be cool to be [Mr. Lyons]. Then, when my parents and aunts and uncles asked what I wanted to do when I grew up, I always said teacher."

According to her Statement of Purpose, first interview, and program interview notes, Hope never pursued teaching before this time in her life because of financial deterrents and the message that her mother – an immigrant from Ethiopia who herself struggled financially – sent to Hope that teaching would create a life of financial hardship. For Hope, the expectations to become financially secure drove her to a corporate business career, even though she had a desire to pursue teaching. After a decade of dissatisfaction with her work, Hope recalled her fifth grade math teacher and decided to pursue teaching, despite the financial deterrents about which her mother had warned her.

Although Hope did not immigrate to the United States, as did Jane and Chanel, she is first generation Ethiopian from a large family. Hope did not describe *why* she has an enduring fondness for her former math teacher to the same extent that Randolph and

Jane do, which is described later, but the mention of this math teacher when asked about her K – 12 schooling experiences suggests that Hope, too, was influenced to choose teaching because of model influences. In the end, model influences overpowered the financial deterrents and cultural expectations that originally drove Hope away from teaching.

Alternately, some participants expressed that other people, specifically their parents, affirmatively influenced their decision to teach. For example, Blake's mother went through an alternative teacher preparation program when Blake himself was in middle school. So when I asked Blake about his decision to teach, he said his mother had a lot to do with it. Like Blake, Grace said her mom was influential on her decision to teach. Grace's mother, unlike Blake's, never actually taught. Rather, Grace claimed her mother always wanted to be a teacher, but Grace's grandparents, who lived in the Philippines, would not allow it. Similarly, Lena's father was never a teacher. But Lena said her father, a physician, always taught people things informally and seeing that influenced Lena's decision to pursue teaching. These data suggest a parent's profession, as well as a parent's expressed wish to become a teacher, has influenced some participants in this study to pursue teaching as a career.

In addition to the influence of parents and former teachers, other critical figures in participants' lives influenced their decision to teach. For example, when I asked Heidi about her decision to teach, she said her high school band director had an influence. When I asked Heidi *how* her high school band director influenced her decision to teach, Heidi responded that she "just loved her job…and she truly cared. Seeing that was the biggest thing. I want to be a teacher, I want to be like that and have that sort of rapport

with my students." Heidi's band director had an influence on her, and Heidi was in part influenced to choose teaching as a career because of her own aspirations to have rapport with young people in the same way that her band director did. In this way, model influences – parents, former teachers, and a band director – were part of some participants' reasons to teach.

In fact, when I asked participants about their K – 12 schooling experiences, four out of 11 participants interviewed in this study discussed a favorite teacher who played a role in their experiences in schools, and one participant mentioned all his teachers in general. One of those participants was Randolph. Randolph claimed that at his private school, he didn't think his White teachers believed that he had academic potential because he was an African American student. Randolph recalled,

> I could handle the academic side. What I also remember, typically as an
> African American student, though, is that [teachers] probably weren't
> expecting that. Where I went to school was very White from Kindergarten
> through fifth grade. And I don't think they were concerned with helping
> me.

Eventually, Randolph's parents pulled him out of private school and placed him in public school, in hopes of having a more positive school experience.

Things changed for Randolph when he was in tenth grade. During that year, Randolph recalled his math teacher "took me and several others in the math class under his wing. And my life took off at that point. No one ever pushed me to do it before I got to this one teacher. So that tenth grade experience was the trigger for me." This tenth grade math teacher left a lasting impression on Randolph, and when he was asked about

his schooling experiences, this teacher was one of the first memories that Randolph discussed. Randolph would graduate high school to go on to a prestigious Ivy League university and eventually earn a master's degree in business administration from one of the most elite business schools in the world. Later in his life, Randolph would apply to ACSM in hopes of becoming a math teacher himself. Could it be a coincidence that this influential tenth grade teacher was also a math teacher? Perhaps, but Randolph's fondness for this teacher suggests that, at the very least, model influences prompted Randolph to enter ACSM, which prepares middle school math and science teachers.

When I asked Jane to describe her own schooling experiences, Jane mentioned, like Randolph, the positive influence of her sixth grade math teacher. Jane and her family emigrated from South Korea when Jane was in third grade. Jane claimed that because of the vast amount of direct instruction she received in South Korea, she had difficulty adjusting to the idea of explaining and justifying her answers in the United States. Jane said,

> So the experience I got in Korea was different than what I got exposed to here. It was a lot more direct teaching in Korea, and it was a lot more lecturing followed by a lot of practice problems. So there was a lot drilled into me, in the context of science and math…so when I moved here it became the question of how and why, and I thought, because you do it that way. In word problems especially with the language barrier I was facing, I had difficulty.

As with Randolph, things turned around for Jane when one math teacher took it upon herself to spend extra time with Jane to help her learn and adjust to schooling in the

United States. Jane credits her success in math in middle school and high school to the extra help and assistance she received from her sixth grade math teacher. Like Hope, Jane was also deterred from becoming a teacher originally because of her parents. Jane said cultural expectations from her immigrant Korean parents compelled her to pursue work as a pharmacist. However, when Jane felt a void in the nature of her pharmaceutical work, she revisited the thought of working with youth as a teacher.

For Hope, Randolph, and Jane, a former teacher served as a model influence to choose teaching. In addition to Hope, Randolph, and Jane, Lena and Steve more casually mentioned the "great math teachers" who inspired them to work hard and to like mathematics as an academic subject of study. Still, all five participants discussed how former math teachers affected their K – 12 schooling experiences.

Part of the model influences theme is positive affirmation from other people, which planted the seed in some participants' minds to pursue teaching. Chanel, a first generation Nigerian woman, previously worked in the customer service field at a bank. At her previous job, Chanel became friendly with one of her customers, a retired teacher. As Chanel and the retired teacher got to know each other better, the retired teacher told Chanel that she would be good at teaching and asked Chanel if she ever considered switching careers. Chanel, who described herself as a "lazy student" in her program interview, began to think about teaching as a career after this woman put the idea in her head. The retired teacher told Chanel that because of her patience in dealing with customers, she would be a good teacher. So, when I asked Chanel about the factors that influenced her decision to teach, she talked about the retired teacher who first prompted her to consider teaching as profession. Chanel did not discuss whether this positive

affirmation from a retired teacher planted the seed or reinforced what Chanel was already thinking, but these data do suggest that model influences in the decision to teach should include the positive affirmation that participants received from others about their perceived ability to teach successfully.

In total, nine participants reference model influences in different forms. For some participants, model influences took the form of former math teachers. Such enduring fondness for math teachers suggests model influences are a significant reason to teach for some ACSM candidates. For other participants, model influences appeared as parents, band directors, or even former customers. The theme model influences is one of the most comprehensive of the themes identified as a reasons to teach for ACSM participants.

Programmatic influences. In addition to model influences, participants spoke about elements of ACSM that attracted them to this particular design for alternative teacher preparation. It should be noted that while this study explored initial reasons to teach, the frequency with which participants cited an attraction to ACSM program design warrants its inclusion in this portion of the study's findings. All 11 participants spoke and wrote about programmatic influences as a reason to teach. I should first contextualize this question by reiterating the structure of the ACSM program. ACSM is a 13-month early-entry alternative teacher preparation program that focuses on preparing middle school math and science teachers to work exclusively in Colton County Public Schools. While in the program, participants teach a halftime course load, make a halftime teacher's salary, take classes in the evenings, and receive intensive mentoring from both a school-based master teacher and a program mentor from the university. Tuition is almost fully subsidized by Colton County Public Schools and the ACSM grant. Program participants

are eligible for ACSM if they pass a series of three Praxis exams, meet the credit requirement in mathematics and/or science, and pass an intensive three-part interview that includes a writing prompt, questions about their teaching beliefs, and a content-specific set of interview questions. ACSM accepts less than half of those interviewed.

The structure of the program – reduced teaching load, almost fully funded, mentoring – is attractive to participants, as every participant but one said they chose ACSM because they were attracted to certain elements of this alternative teacher preparation model. For instance, participants cited the ability of the program to get them into classrooms quickly. Heidi said she "wanted to teach and didn't want to wait to get into the classroom." Steve's response was similar: "It's…a fast-track to getting into the classroom while providing sufficient support along the way."

The support that participants discussed related to ACSM is the mentoring and the financial support they receive for their first year of teaching. For example, Blake wrote, "I wanted to become a teacher. Without the relevant undergrad coursework, I realized I'd have to pursue an alternate certification program. [ACSM] provides the best amount of training and support I could find." Jane's statement echoes Blake's point about support: "Quick way to get yourself into the field without costing a lot of money." Hope's response corroborates Blake's statement: "I wanted to change professions from business to education and [ACSM] was the most logical program for me to facilitate the transition. It is the best program because it is an accelerated program geared toward career changers like myself."

Lena actually listed the reasons she entered ACSM: "1) wanted certification program that would not take several years 2) mentoring/support 3) cost 4) wanted to be in

middle school 5) guaranteed employment during and after program." Lena's response offers a summary of the programmatic features of ACSM that the other participants referenced in their responses to the main reasons they entered ACSM. Grace said she chose ACSM because she thought the program would allow her to work with at-risk youth, which is what Grace was doing professionally before she decided to teach. In sum, several participants cite the support they anticipated receiving during their first year of teaching as why they chose to enter teaching via ACSM.

I asked participants specifically if the program's middle school focus, the partnership with Colton County Public Schools, or the focus on low-performing, high-needs classrooms was a part of their decision to enter ACSM. Generally, participants claimed that all three elements of ACSM factored into their decision to enter the program, but participants' responses were more mixed, both affirmative and negative, when asked specifically if the program's partnership with Colton County influenced their decision to enter ACSM. According to their responses to these questions, participants were more attracted to the mentoring, reduced teaching load, funding structure, middle-school focus, and focus on high-needs low-performing classrooms than they were by Colton County Public Schools specifically. However, Michelle mentioned in her Statement of Purpose that she was a graduate of Colton County Public Schools and that she shares "a similar background to those that will be in the classroom." Michelle wrote,

> I knew that teaching in a classroom setting would be part of my career
> path because I felt that it was my civic duty to go back to my community
> to teach what I have learned. I grew up in the area, graduated from [a
> Colton County Public School], and was raised by a young single mother. I

was presented with challenges such as lack of income, lack of support in

the home, and sometimes a lack of confidence. I overcame these

challenges by focusing on my education, obtaining scholarships to attend

college, and having a successful career. I want to share my knowledge and

experience to help improve the lives of school children.

ACSM was particularly attractive to Michelle because it would allow her to teach

students with whom she identifies in the community where she grew up.

In an effort to explore programmatic influences more deeply, I asked participants

to tell me about how they came to the decision to enroll in ACSM after they were

admitted. In response to this, most participants said they decided to enter the program

because of elements of the model: middle-school focus, math/science focus, and

subsidized tuition. Lena and Michelle added that their decision was not entirely their

own, rather it was a "family decision" for Lena, and a decision made by "deliberation,

prayer, and conversation with friends" for Michelle. Unlike these responses was Heidi's

candid response to this question: "I needed something to do." Perhaps out of her available

options, ACSM was the best choice. Overall, all 11 consenting participants mentioned

that the features of the program influenced their decision to choose ACSM specifically as

a pathway into teaching.

Experiential influences. In addition to model influences and programmatic

influences, some participants cited experiential influences on their decision to teach.

Categories such as experiences with youth, informal teaching experiences, and

negative/positive experiences as a student, were synthesized into the theme of

experiential influences. Similar to the findings from another study (Tamir, 2008), the

majority of participants cited various experiences, such as formal or informal teaching, as a factor that caused them to consider teaching as a career. For career changers, this seems intuitive to some degree because teaching was not necessarily something they always felt called to do, but rather was a decision that might have developed over time after engaging in informal teaching experiences inside or outside of their career.

Specifically, in at least one of the data sources, nine out of the 11 study participants cited informal or prior teaching experiences as one of the reasons they wanted to teach. For example, Chanel talked about how she first considered switching careers into teaching because of her informal experiences with teaching other people in her business career, specifically through her experiences with training colleagues in her previous profession as a customer service representative at a bank. For Michelle, the birth of her son – a personal life change[7] – had something to do with her wanting to teach, but so did the fact that her former automotive engineering firm was bought and she received a lucrative incentive to leave. In her interview, Michelle said she enjoyed her experiences informally teaching a money management class at church and liked tutoring children in math but wanted more structure and more consistency in employment.

The sort of experiences participants described were teaching a money management class through her church for Michelle, teaching Sunday school for Randolph, teaching vacation Bible school for Jane, and training new employees at a previous job for Chanel. In addition to these experiences, Michelle said that the positive affirmation she received from others during her teaching of the money management class really planted the seed that teaching could be a viable career consideration for her in the

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[7] The birth of a child, or a personal life change, has been found in other studies (Crow, Levin, & Nager, 1990; Freidus, 1989) to influence career changers to choose teaching.

future. Convergence of the themes exists because often participants spoke about one theme in relation to another. For example, participants mentioned model influences *in relation to* programmatic and experiential influences.

Like Michelle, Randolph, Jane, and Chanel, several other participants wrote about their own experiences with youth as a reason why they wanted to enter teaching. For example, Steve, Grace, Blake, Lena, and Heidi all spoke about how their previous experiences working with youth prompted them to think about teaching as a career. In her Statement of Purpose, Lena wrote,

> I have worked as a substitute teacher in [Poppy] County Public Schools
>
> for the last two years. Earlier in my career, I taught students ranging in age
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> from 3-30. Yet, among all my teaching experiences, I found that I
>
> connected best with the adolescents I met in middle schools. I enjoy being
>
> a part of their struggle to find their way from childhood to young
>
> adulthood, and I relish those moments when their newfound (and
>
> sometimes wavering) maturing shines through and I see a glimpse of the
>
> people they have the potential to become.

So Lena wrote about her experiences with youth, and specifically with adolescents, as the reasons she wants to be a middle school teacher in Colton County Public Schools.

Lena claimed she always wanted to teach. However, Lena claimed she already saw herself as a teacher because of her previous professional experiences as a teaching assistant while a graduate student, as a substitute experience while raising her children, and even while teaching her younger brothers to read when she was a child. According to Lena, these experiences made her feel like a teacher even before she decided to pursue

her teaching credentials through ACSM. Further, it is these very experiences that Lena cited when she made the claim that she "was always good at teaching." With that, a sense of success in informal teaching experiences and in working with others can either plant the seed or reinforce to someone that teaching is a viable career path for them.

Like Lena, Jane wrote about her own experiences with youth as a reason why she wants to be a teacher. Jane wrote,

There were two situations which confirmed my decision to teach: being a teacher's assistant and being a main teacher at a summer camp. These experiences were unforgettable and opened my eyes to a new profession and a new passion. At the summer camp, I encountered students from low-income families and from broken and abused homes. When I was teaching them, I realized that with a little bit of attention, they were capable of developing their abilities…after observing all of this, I knew that the field of study I needed to be in was Education, a place where I can influence students' lives on a daily basis.

For Jane, working with youth in an informal setting made her want to teach. Further, Jane said in her first interview that she was most influenced to teach by her own difficult experiences in school resulting from a language barrier after she emigrated from South Korea in third grade. Her own schooling experiences and the positive impact of a former teacher played a role in Jane's decision to teach.

More specifically, throughout the program interviews several participants discussed the ways in which their experiences working with youth affected their decision to enter teaching. In her program interview, for example, Grace discussed her work with

young people in various capacities, claiming her experiences with youth shaped her reasons to teach. Similarly, for Randolph, learning had "always been fun". Randolph wanted to be a teacher so that he could give back. After a long career as a financial advisor, Randolph said he wanted to teach because he enjoyed working with young people, especially his two young daughters.

Interestingly, Blake said he never intended on becoming a teacher. As previously discussed, Blake's decision to teach resulted from the influence of his mother – who is a teacher – and of his own experiences mentoring youth during his college years. Blake majored in economics at a prestigious Ivy League university in New England. Starting his sophomore year in college, Blake took a part-time job at a local mentoring program. Upon graduation when it was time for Blake to make a career decision, Blake said he could not imagine working in economics and, through his mentoring experiences, he became interested in working with the youth population. Grace, Janice, and Blake described the ways in which their prior experiences working with youth in various capacities prompted them to consider entering teaching.

Michelle drew on her remembrances as a math student when she discussed her reasons to teach. When asked about the influences on her decision to teach, Michelle responded,

Sometimes the frustration of me being in the classroom and asking teachers, 'well how can I apply this to the real world?' and they couldn't come up with an answer. And so I was looking for ways to apply the knowledge they were teaching, and I got really, really frustrated, and I

believe that drove me to get a master's degree and another, just to continue

my learning. That frustration…how can I make this real?

Michelle wanted to teach students mathematics in a way that she wishes she had

been taught – with an emphasis on the real-world application of mathematical skills and

reasoning. Teaching will allow Michelle to show students how they can *use* math in their

day-to-day lives. So for Michelle, the experience of being a frustrated student influenced

her to teach.

In addition to informal teaching experiences and experiences with youth, some

participants discussed their positive experiences as students as a reason to teach. Four of

the 11 study participants – Heidi, Blake, Janice, and Steve – recalled their K -12

schooling experiences with a relative fondness and claimed that their K – 12 school years

were easy, and that they were "good" students, in the traditional sense that they were

supported through testing and received advanced placements in courses and academic

tracks. Having an easy time with school and being a "good" student could suggest that for

Heidi, Blake, Janice, and Steve, school was a place where they were accepted and felt

they belonged.

Counter-evidence to the idea of wanting to teach, in part, because of positive

experiences as students does exist in the data for this study. Interestingly, not all ACSM

participants described a sense of success and relative belonging in schools. For example,

Grace, who self-identifies as Filipina, talked about negative experiences in K – 12

classrooms when she was a student. Grace said that in Kindergarten through sixth grade,

she was one of only two students of color in her class. "I grew up in a predominantly

White community," Grace recalled. Later on, Grace told me, "In third grade, they thought

I was mute and I guess…I don't know why I was so quiet in class, I would just do my work and make all A's. So they thought I was mute when I was in third grade, and that was just weird, having people tell me I was mute." Grace did not discuss any teachers that she remembered from school, nor did Grace discuss a particular fondness for schooling in general the way that some other participants did.

Arguably, this does not mean that Grace does not actually have a fondness for certain teachers, or for school in general, but when prompted to describe her own schooling experiences, Grace did not talk about any teachers in particular, which suggests that idealized images of teachers are not a reason for all participants in this study to choose teaching as a career through ACSM. As mentioned earlier, Grace did speak about her mother as a model influence on her own decision to teach. However, Grace did describe the experiential influences that prompted her to decide to teach. Grace worked with young people in various capacities. For example, Grace worked as a garden manager for youth who were part of the juvenile justice system. Grace also worked with young girls and taught a cooking class that incorporated math and science concepts. These experiences shaped Grace's reasons to teach.

Like Grace, Janice and Blake cited the influence of experiences with youth on their decisions to teach. Janice worked as a substitute teacher and has previous experience teaching science education courses at the college level as well as teaching environmental science seminars to school aged children grades K – 12. Janice drew on these experiences to explain why she wanted to pursue teaching. Unlike Janice, Blake never intended on working in the education field. Upon graduation from college and his apprenhension about a career in economics, Blake recalled his work at a local mentoring program and

how it sparked his interest in working with the young people. So when it came time for him to make a career decision, Blake decided to continue to work with youth.

Participants cite experiential influences, either with youth, with education, or both, as critical influences on the decision to enter teaching. The themes of model influences, programmatic influences, and experiential influences comprehensively describe participants' expressed reasons to teach. Data from the first phase of collection were also synthesized into to additional themes: race- and gender-related reasons and vocational reasons.

Race- and gender-related reasons. In addition to model influences, experiential influences, and programmatic influences, some participants cite race- and gender-related reasons to teach, particularly through ACSM. I paired race and gender together in this theme because participants spoke of these reasons to teach in tandem. Interestingly, African-American participants expressed race-related reasons for teaching while White participants did not; White participants expressed vocational reasons for teaching to a greater extent. Moreover, even though race- and gender-related reasons could be nested under model influences or even vocational reasons, I made race- and gender-related reasons its own theme given the fact that initially only African-American participants expressed race- and gender-related reasons to teach and I wanted to explore the impact of race and gender on reasons to teach over time.

Race played a role for some participants in program selection based on the type of students and the type of schools the program serves. For example, Michelle and Randolph, both African Americans, wrote about race- and gender-related reasons for why

they wanted to be a middle school teacher in Colton County Public Schools specifically. In the opening paragraph of Randolph's Statement of Purpose, he wrote,

> First, in general, there is a shortage of role models and leadership in African American communities. In particular, there is a shortage of African American men serving in these roles. I believe this is reflected in the school systems as well. Based on my experiences, the entire community would benefit from African American men taking more active, constructive positions in the community. Success in school is linked to issues 'bigger' than the school system. Having navigated through many of life's challenges and having achieved a measure of personal, academic, and professional success at this stage of my life, I can offer insight, guidance and leadership beyond the classroom.

Randolph's Statement of Purpose reflects race-related and gender-related reasons for wanting to be a teacher in Colton County middle schools.

When prompted to describe his own schooling experiences, Randolph cited his racialized experiences in schools as a factor in his decision to teach. Randolph discussed his experiences as an African American student and feeling as though his White teachers did not see his academic potential behind his darker skin. Randolph drew upon those memories to describe how one of the factors behind his decision to teach was his desire to improve the educational experiences of other African American students. In his first interview, Randolph said, "As an African American in the United States, I realize there's still going to be some issues in how African Americans go through the school experience. I can assist some folks in middle school so that they have a shot at a career…the racial issues." Race could have been an unspoken motivating factor in other participants'

reasons to teach, but Randolph explicitly described his race-related reasons for choosing teaching and for choosing ACSM in particular.

Similarly, Michelle talked about how being an African American female is part of why she wanted to teach in Colton County Public Schools. In her Statement of Purpose, Michelle wrote,

> I knew that teaching in a classroom setting would be part of my career path because I felt that it was my civic duty to go back to my community to teach what I have learned. I also felt that it was important for me as an African-American woman engineer to be visible to other young African-American females, to show them that they could pursue careers in engineering and science. During my corporate career, I recruited other engineers on HBCU campuses, participated in local school programs, and presented at conferences on careers in engineering. I can expose students to science and math careers and show them that people who look like them are making important contributions to society.

So for Michelle, the decision to pursue teaching in Colton County was in part due to her race and her gender and her desire to help African American students and females in particular think about careers in the STEM fields like the career she previously had in engineering. Michelle's statements also reflect the influence of her previous experiences with youth. Taken together, Michelle's statements suggest that several factors converge in participants' reasons to teach.

Blake, too, described race-related reasons for entering ACSM. In his Statement of Purpose, Blake wrote about his experiences mentoring African American young males

during his time as an undergraduate at a prestigious university in New England. Blake wrote,

> [The mentoring program] operates at a [nearby] middle school, and I would go there 3 times/week and some weekends to work with boys in grades 6 – 8. Like schools in [Colton County], most of the students are of African-American descent. As a Black man, I found myself constantly challenging their conceptions of Blacks and intellectualism as well as those of masculinity as it relates to education. It saddened me that it was an issue for them, but I realized it's not enough to be sad, it's important to be an example. Then, when I think of statistics like 'only 10% of students in the top 146 colleges come from the bottom half of the income distribution' and 'FARM eligible students on average are 2 years behind ineligible peers' an anger rises. It is not okay for America to consistently fail in educating select groups such as those of lower socioeconomic status and (pertinent to [Colton County]) African Americans who 'by fourth grade are on average three years behind their white peers.' What the [ACSM] program would allow me to do is to give back to the school system that produced me and still fight those odds.

In addition to Randolph, Michelle, and Blake, all of whom are African American, Janice, who is White, also expressed racialized reasons for choosing ACSM. Janice claimed that she wants to become a teacher, in part, because she "cares about the minority population." Janice described her desire to work with "the African American or the underserved population…because their numbers are lower in science and I want to

get in there and see what's going on and see if I can make a difference." Even though

Janice is a White woman, she too, like Randolph, Michelle, and Blake, was in part

prompted to teach for race-related and gender-related reasons.

Vocational reasons. Some participants want to teach because they are searching

for more meaningful and fulfilling work; and, they think teaching will provide the sense

of purpose they perceive as lacking in their other professions. Vocational reasons to teach

is a comprehensive theme, and all participants initially cited one or more of the categories

that comprise this theme. Categories such as the lack of fulfillment in another profession,

the search for a greater sense of purpose in a career, content-driven reasons, and a belief

in the power of education were synthesized in this study as vocational reasons to teach.

The literature review for this study revealed that other researchers also found that

participants cite vocational reasons to teach (Eick, 2002; Eliassen, 1932; Fielstra, 1955;

Haubrich, 1960; Hood, 1965; Mori, 1966; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Tamir, 2008;

Young, 1995). For career-changers in particular, vocational reasons to teach frequently

appear in the form of a lack of fulfillment with a previously chosen profession and the

quest for more personally meaningful work.

For example, in her Statement of Purpose, Hope described her lack of fulfillment

as a financial analyst. For her, the decision to teach did not happen over night. Hope

wrote,

> It took me some time to decide to choose teaching as a career. I was
>
> hesitant to pursue teaching because of the limited monetary compensation
>
> potential. My mother suggested that choosing teaching would lead to a life
>
> of financial struggle. So I used my natural quantitative ability to pursue a

business career in accounting and finance. While I have excelled in that

profession for the past ten years, I have found it to be severely unfulfilling.

Hope wrote she had previously thought about teaching, but decided otherwise in

pursuit of greater financial gain.[8] Hope went on to write, "After achieving the career

goals I thought were important to me, I was left wanting more. At that point, I reflected

back on my childhood and decided to revisit the possibility of becoming a teacher." For

Hope, the search for a more personally fulfilling career became more important than

material rewards, which reflects the theme of vocational reasons to teach.

In addition to Hope, two more participants wrote about vocational reasons for

choosing to teach in their Statements of Purpose. Heidi, for instance, wrote, "teaching has

always been a passion of mine." And, Chanel wrote, "I know this career has been

destined for me; it is what will fulfill my heart's desire." In the literature review that

foregrounded this study, reasons to teach such as feeling a calling to teach, feeling

destined to teach, always wanting to teach, and more are classified as vocational reasons

to teach. Hope, Heidi, and Chanel are the only participants who wrote about vocational

reasons to teach in their Statements of Purpose.

Like the search for fulfillment and a greater sense of purpose, an affinity for

subject matter content is categorized as a vocational reason to teach. Some participants

initially expressed content-driven reasons for teaching, and for particularly choosing

ACSM. This could suggest that in their previously chosen STEM profession, participants

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[8] Other researchers (Crow, Levin, & Nager, 1990; Freidus, 1989; Gordon, 2000; Shaw, 1996) found that financial reasons deter some individuals from teaching, which Hope's Statement of Purpose illuminates as well.

might not have been engaging with their content in ways they found personally meaningful.

Janice and Randolph provide the most evidence for the affinity for content. Janice, for example, wrote in her Statement of Purpose that her decision to teach was content-driven and in part, influenced by the fact that she could work with adolescents. Janice wrote, "middle school students are just beginning to form their identities, making it a critical time period in which to influence their aspirations". Randolph and Janice, provide responses that relate more to their content – math and science respectively – than the other participants, which falls under the vocation theme of choosing to teach based on the literature review for this study. When asked why teaching is important, both Randolph's and Janice's responses included references to math and science respectively. Janice told me, "I want to facilitate helping people understand science better." Janice, who holds a Ph.D. in science education, told me,

> I didn't intend to become a teacher, but as I evolved through my
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> coursework (as a science education doctoral student) and experiences in
>
> the program, I'd been teaching teachers as a GA and professor, and I need
>
> to be teaching science. That's what it boils down to. Cause teaching
>
> teachers is not teaching science, and I really missed my content area.

A longing to return to working more closely with science content is one of the reasons Janice cited for teaching.

Like Janice, Randolph told me that his decision to teach "is so math based for me. It's important because as far as I'm concerned, most people who are having challenges or who don't think they can do [math], really can do it. I understand it, so other people can

understand it, too." So for Randolph and Janice, a reason to teach is not only to engage in a personally meaningful line of work, but also so they can help others engage with the content they so love. Participants in other studies have also cited subject matter content as a reason to pursue teaching (Eick, 2002; Mori, 1966).

In their first interview for this study, four candidates talked in different ways about the power of education as a reason they wanted to teach and become a part of the enterprise of education. Michelle talked about President Obama's speech in which he described teaching as a civic duty. Michelle claims, "education shapes who we are." Blake echoed this sentiment when he said, "Education is the great equalizer." Likewise, Lena told me, "I believe firmly that education makes a difference in the opportunities people have." Also, Lena claimed that from her own family's history, she sees education as what gave her family members the opportunities to carve out better lives for themselves. This sounds very similar to Hope's statement that "education can take you places."

One participant, Jane, said teaching is important because by being a teacher, she can show students "there's so many more things they can do…especially going into that county, they're coming from broken homes and I think that someone mentioned that they don't have a dad…there's more than to go out to the street and live their life that way." Arguably this statement if fraught with assumptions about the lives of students in Colton County Public Schools. Still, Jane expressed the belief that teaching is important because education can provide students with opportunities for a better way of life. For these participants, teaching is important because education has the power to help one move beyond one's own circumstances and improve one's quality of life.

As discussed earlier, both Hope and Jane were deterred from becoming teachers originally because of their parents. In her program interview and her statement of purpose, Jane cited that cultural expectations from her immigrant Korean parents compelled her to pursue work as a pharmacist. However, when Jane felt a void in the nature of her work, she revisited the thought of working with youth and becoming a teacher. Taken together, the data sources used to explore participants' reasons to teach reveal how various experiences co-mingle or converge in an individual's decision to enter teaching.

For several participants in this study, the search for a greater sense of purpose compelled them to consider teaching. Five participants described how, after several years of working in another profession, they craved a greater sense of purpose in their professional work. For example, Blake, who has a degree in economics, dreaded the sort of work that he thought a career in economics would entail. In his interview, Blake said, "I still like economics, but I don't think I could do that every day. Every single day is really boring. So that's what kind of got me to think about a different career path." So for Blake, the decision to teach came when he was faced with having to choose a career path that would engage him and give him a sense of purpose and excitement.

Like Blake, four other candidates described the sense of purpose that factored into their reasons to teach. Michelle, with two master's degrees and an impressive professional resume as a mechanical engineer in the automotive industry, decided to start a family with her husband; she wanted a career that would give her a greater sense of purpose but that would also provide her with a work schedule more commensurate with family life. This reason to teach is described in the literature as personal life change

(Crow, Levin, & Nager, 1990; Freidus, 1989; Wood, 1978). In her interview, Michelle said, "Once I left the automotive market in my career and I was looking for more meaning in a career…I was looking for a career that was not as demanding, that was more flexible, that still incorporated some aspect of teaching, and I heard about the ACSM program." Michelle explicitly stated that she wanted more meaning in a career, although the case can certainly be made that her contributions to the automotive industry as a mechanical engineer were likely very meaningful. Based on her statements, it appears that Michelle did not see her own work as an engineer as purposeful in the same way that she thought teaching would be.

Perhaps Hope expressed the most powerful example of looking for a greater sense of purpose in a career in her interview. Hope's previous professional experience is as a financial consultant in both the public and private sectors. Hope describes her experience in deciding to teach with rich detail in both her Statement of Purpose – discussed earlier – and again in her first interview. In that first interview, Hope said,

> I went through a period when I reached all the goals I had set, and I had
>
> set my goals to be based on my possessions, the amount of money I made,
>
> my title, the amount of respect I got from others. I identified myself
>
> through my job. And it got to the point in 2005-6 where I was miserable.
>
> And I didn't know what was going on and I hit sort of a quarter life crisis.
>
> I was like, I don't have a family, and I did all this so I could have a family,
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> not for money. And I didn't have a family. And I just stopped caring. And
>
> my contract ended and I have a time where I wasn't working but I was
>
> okay financially. And I didn't even want to get up in the morning. And my

mom reminded me I wanted to be a teacher. And I was scared about

making the transition. But I learned that I would rather be broke and happy

and living with my mom instead of being miserable and living downtown.

I had to go through that process in order to come to that conclusion.

For Hope, the search for more purpose in a career was a result of reaching all of

her professional goals and realizing that she was still not fulfilled in the way she thought

she should be once she had accomplished what she had set out to do. Underscoring the

vocational theme, and particularly the category of "looking for more purpose in a career"

is the assumption that teaching is fulfilling work. So, why do some participants in this

study think that work in finance or in engineering or in a pharmacy is not fulfilling but

teaching is? What makes some participants think that in fact the nature of the work of

teachers will provide them with a greater sense of purpose than their previous

professions? I think the case could be made that an idealized image of teachers and an

idealized notion of the nature of teachers' work is at play.

The participants in this study seem to perceive the work of teachers in a more

purposeful and idealized sense than they did their previous professions. Why is this so? Is

it simply because of Lortie's (1975) apprenticeship of observation and the familiarity

with teaching? Or, is it that these participants think they will have a greater sense of

autonomy and hence professional freedom as a teacher compared to their previous work

roles? Perhaps some of these participants think they would be more fulfilled and find

greater purpose in teaching because they have had informal experiences in the role of

teacher. The fact that this study followed participants over the course of their entire first

year in the classroom allowed me to study how participants' thoughts about teaching and their reasons to teach, or to leave teaching, change over time.

Research Question 2

In the midst of their experiences, what do ACSM participants cite as reasons to teach? How do participants express that personal, program, economic, and teaching contexts affected those reasons?

While the first research question explored the reasons to teach that ACSM participants cite in various data sources, the second research question was designed to explore how ACSM participants describe their reasons to teach in the midst of their first year in the classroom. I take into consideration how certain contexts, particularly personal, program, economic, and teaching contexts might have affected ACSM participants' stated reasons to teach; this research question is driven largely by the theoretical framework for this study. Interview protocols two and three (see Appendices F and G) gathered data on participants' stated reasons to teach. Interview two was conducted midway through participants' first year in the classroom. In addition to the interview protocol, participants filled out another questionnaire (see Appendix C) that coincided with their second interview.

Since the second interview protocol was designed to explore participants' reasons to teach in the midst of their experiences, I asked participants about any changes in personal, program, economic, and/or teaching contexts to assess what might contribute to any changes in participants' reasons to teach. The responses to the individual interviews suggest ACSM participants have developed a more informed sense of the nature of their work as CCPS middle school teachers since the first interview before they were working in schools. Interesting, while participants did not cite teaching contexts in the second

questionnaire as a reason why they had considered withdrawing from ACSM, data from the second interview suggest that participants' reasons to teach were influenced by teaching contexts more than any other context explored in this study.

In the midst of their experiences, participants generally described satisfaction with teaching and were happy they made the decision to teach. For some participants, their experiences with teaching matched their expectations, but for other participants, teaching was not what they anticipated. For example, Janice, Hope, Michelle, Blake, and Jane claimed that teaching was what they expected it to be. While Blake noted that teaching was what he anticipated in terms of being in the classroom, neither he nor Grace anticipated all the administrative work and organization with which they had to contend.

As the school year progressed, participants continued to describe vocational reasons to teach. In fact, all 11 participants referenced vocational reasons to teach, which were consistent with participants' initial reasons to teach. The persistence of participants' vocational reasons to teach suggests that vocational reasons to teach outweigh the difficulties of the profession related to administrative work and feelings of being overwhelmed during their first year in the classroom. Interestingly, some participants claimed that while they still wanted to teach, they questioned their career trajectory, particularly in terms of whether or not they wanted to continue teaching in middle school and whether or not they wanted to continue teaching in Colton County. This change in participants' reasons to teach in Colton County could be attributed to experiences in their teaching context. For example, Lena mentioned that she would welcome a job in neighboring Poppy County, where she has worked as a substitute, because of the lack of resources she thought were available to her in Colton County.

Overall, the data suggest that once participants made the initial decision to teach, and particularly to teach through ACSM, personal, program, and economic contexts have little impact on their reasons to teach, but that teaching contexts do. For example, ACSM as a program differed in some ways from participants' expectations, and there were unanticipated changes; aspects of both were perceived positively and negatively by participants, but seemed to have little impact on their reasons to teach. Indeed, what seemed to have more of an impact on participants' reasons to teach were their teaching contexts. Because teaching contexts affected participants' reasons to teach in the midst of their experiences, these will be examined in depth in the following section.

Teaching contexts and reasons to teach. Overall, participants expressed that teaching contexts were the most influential context on their reasons to teach during their first year in high-needs classrooms. For the purposes of this study, I broadly define teaching context as anything within the school environment that affected the participant's context for teaching. For example, teaching context includes the classroom environment, the collegial environment of the school, student behavior, school district policy, and school demographics. In order to appreciate the teaching contexts in which ACSM participants taught for their first year, each participants' teaching context will be described here. Below is a summary of participants' ACSM and classroom partners.

Table 4. *Summary of ACSM and Classroom Partners and Demographic School Data*[9]

Michelle & Blake	• 95% of students received Title I services • 69% of students received FARMS • 95% of students were African American • Less than 5% of students classified as having LEP
Heidi & Jane	• Less than 5% of students received Title I services • 61% of students received FARMS • 65% of students were African American • 22% of students were Latino • Less than 5% of students were classified as having LEP
Grace & Hope	• Less than 5% of students received Title I services • 60% of students received FARMS • 85% of students were African American • 10% of students were Latino • Less than 5% of students were classified as having LEP
Chanel & Lena	• Less than 5% of students received Title I services • 54% of students received FARMS • 92% of students were African American • Less than 5% of students were classified as having LEP
Randolph (did not have a classroom partner)	• 95% of students received Title I services • 83% of students received FARMS • 30% of students were African American • 66% of students were Latino • 34% of students were classified as having LEP
Janice (classroom partner withdrew from ACSM)	• Less than 5% of students received Title I services • 60% of students received FARMS • 26% of students were African American • 52% of students were Latino • Less than 5% of students were classified as having LEP
Steve & Lex*	• Less than 5% of students received Title I services • 49% of students received FARMS • 83% of students were African American • 11% of students were Latino • 7% of students were classified as having LEP

*Indicates the ACSM participant did not consent to participate in this study.

Michelle, a graduate of Colton County Public Schools, taught 7th grade math and science to the same group of students in both classes. As previously stated, Michelle

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[9] Data on this table were retrieved from the 2012 Maryland State Report Card prepared by the Maryland State Department of Education found at msp.msde.state.md.us/Demographics

taught in the same school where she completed her internship, which was in 8th grade. Michelle's school is a Kindergarten through 8th grade school, and she lived in the same neighborhood as this school in Colton County. As a result, she sometimes saw her students in her neighborhood. Michelle was married with a young son, and Michelle's ACSM partner was Blake.

Blake, also a graduate of Colton County Public Schools, recently graduated from college and was the youngest ACSM program participant. Blake lived with his family in Colton County. Blake shared a classroom with Michelle and also taught 7th grade, but Blake taught math and social studies to the same group of students. Blake and Michelle's school was not a turn-around school.

In the same week that we conducted the mid-year interview, Heidi and Jane were assigned to teach a special pull-out class in math for students who tested basic or barely proficient on the state mandated tests during the previous year. Heidi taught the 8th grade students and Jane taught the 7th grade students. On the day of this mid-year interview, Jane had just started in this new position. The purpose of Jane's and Heidi's new positions was to improve the state-mandated test scores of the students in their classes. Unlike anyone else in ACSM, both Jane and Heidi had their own separate classrooms, which they did not share with any other teachers due to low occupancy rates at the school where they taught. Grace and Hope were the only participants to teach at one of the six turn-around middle schools in Colton County, where they taught 8th grade math.

Similarly, Chanel and Lena were the only participants to teach at a public charter school, where they taught 7th grade math. Chanel and Lena mentioned having tremendous difficulties locating resources including students' textbooks, teachers' editions of

textbooks, and manipulatives. The site of this charter school was a church, and Chanel and Lena taught in one of the portable trailers in the back of the churchyard.

At the time of the mid-year interview, Randolph was still in a cooperative teaching situation in the school where he completed his internship. In February, Heidi withdrew from ACSM, and Randolph took Heidi's place teaching the pull out preparation course for mathematics to 8th grade students.

Janice, like Randolph, continued to work with a cooperating teacher at the school where she completed her internship because of a lack of vacant positions in the school district. Janice was the only ACSM participant who sought middle school science certification while all other participants sought middle school math certification. In October, Janice, was placed in a vacant position at a Kindergarten through 8th grade school teaching science to 8th graders. Janice's original ACSM partner, who did not consent to participate in this study, withdrew from the program and from Colton County Public Schools in November. As a result, Janice did not have a ACSM partner past the fall.

Steve's ACSM partner also did not consent to participate in this study. Steve remained teaching at his internship school site until mid-October. At that time, Steve and his ACSM partner were placed in a vacant math fluency teaching position in another school. After working in that position for two months, Steve and his ACSM partner were placed in an 8th grade math position at that same school.

In the midst of their experiences, each participant continued to express vocational reasons to teach more than any other theme from participants' initial reasons to teach. As participants moved through the school year, data suggest that participants' reasons to

teach were less influenced by personal, economic, and program contexts than by teaching context, particularly in terms of student behavior. Data suggest that ACSM participants attended to aspects of their teaching contexts that resonated the most with them, such as student behavior, which suggests that teaching contexts might impact participants' reasons to teach.

Student behavior negatively impacts reasons to teach*.* Hope spoke primarily about student behavior at the mid-year point. Hope said, "I spend a lot of time on discipline, calling home, emailing, writing documentation. I mean it takes hours, so as a result, that's why I'm not having the time to do a lot of my homework." Hope went on to say,

> My second mod is very difficult because the students who are known for
>
> behavior problems are all in the same class, not the special ed. class. They
>
> all are in one class, which makes it extremely difficult. They feed off each
>
> other. So there's really no way to control them unless I separate them, but
>
> there's no way to separate them. They need individual help and attention.

So for Hope, student behavior was the aspect of her teaching context that impacted her reasons to teach because the stress that students' behavior created for Hope caused her to "want to shut down completely at times." In the midst of her experience, Hope said that her goal was simply to finish the school year.

Heidi, like Hope, spoke about student behavior when she described her experiences in the classroom. Heidi said,

> [The students] are super talkative and one class was a little bit better
>
> behaved because their math teacher walked them down to the classroom

so they didn't get lost along the way. They were more willing to listen and stay on task. But still they had a little bit of the attitude of 'why am I here? I don't want to be here.'

In addition to Hope and Heidi, Randolph spoke about student behavior when asked to describe his teaching experiences and why, if at all, he wanted to continue to teach. Randolph said,

> The first thing that really sticks out is I have to spend more time or more time than I originally thought on behavior management and classroom management. There are generally a number of students whose behavior has to be managed; and typically there's one or two who will disrupt the rest of the class, who if you don't get them in control there's going to be no learning going on.

Randolph went on to say, "Teaching the math part of it has not been a challenge. It's the behavior management and the culture." Lena, too, spoke about her students' misbehavior. Lena said,

> A very high number of kids when you call the parents, that say, 'oh well you know he was diagnosed ADHD but here's why he's not on medication.' My students are overwhelmingly boys, cause the girls are in algebra. So that class is more diverse than my class. I have the 8th graders who have IEP's and ADHD, especially my class that we have after lunch. Some kids just don't sit down, but they're paying attention. There are a lot of kids with various issues at home. So the counselors are saying things are bad at home.

There's one counselor for the whole school. I don't have anyone

who really loves math or thinks they're good at it. If they were

good at it, they'd be in algebra. Some of the parents want their kids

in algebra. Some behaviors keep kids out of the advanced class. To

a great extent, they're immature one way or another.

For Heidi, Randolph, and Lena, students' misbehavior has impacted their reasons to teach

in terms of their career trajectory. Heidi and Randolph questioned whether or not they

wanted to stay teaching in middle school, and Lena questioned whether she wanted to

teach in Colton County. Hope's goal was simply to finish the school year. She was not

thinking beyond that.

Student behavior reinforces reasons to teach. Not all participants' reasons to

teach were negatively impacted by students' behavior. For Janice and Steve, even though

other aspects of their respective teaching contexts were different, they both thought

students in their classes were well behaved. In this way, well behaved students reaffirmed

Janice's and Steve's reasons to teach. Janice said,

Most all of them are compliant. And most of them are responsive to

suggestion and to the need to do work. They definitely come in with

different levels of interest in school probably. So again that's that

differentiation that I'm kind of interested in in working with as I get to

know them. I think they're great, I really do.

Steve's description of his first year teaching experiences also indicated a focus on student

behavior as part of his overall teaching context. When asked about his teaching context,

Steve said, "I mean for the most part they're all good kids. I have some like really nice

classes." In this way, Steve positively perceived his students' behavior, and as a result, student behavior as an element of teaching context in general did not cause Janice or Steve to reconsider their decision to teach.

Blake also spoke about student behavior, but unlike the other participants who spoke about student behavior when asked about their teaching experiences, Blake talked about student behavior in relation to school structure. Specifically, Blake attributed his students' compliance to the fact that they attended a K – 8 school that in some ways, preserved students' elementary school behaviors and hindered the development of so-called typical middle school behaviors. Blake said,

> Well my school is a K through 8 school so there are a lot of young kids in
> the building. And I think these students, having been in the school longer,
> they don't act like traditional middle schoolers. They're more child-like,
> which is good. I mean a little bad but it's good mostly for us.

Overall, student behavior was a popular category that participants discussed when asked to describe their teaching experiences. For some participants, reasons to teach were reinforced or affirmed by their students' positive behavior in the classroom. Other participants continued to express their desire to teach, but that their reasons to teach in middle school and/or in Colton County had changed due to experiences in their teaching context.

Overall, participants' questionnaire and interview data reveal each participant continued to express vocational reasons to teach in the midst of their experiences, despite the negative impact that students' misbehavior might have on their reasons. Moreover, students' misbehavior impacts participants career trajectories inasmuch as some

participants express they still want to teach but do not see themselves either in middle schools or in Colton County Public Schools altogether.

Teaching as a career. The data from this study indicate that immediate teaching context affected stated reasons to teach in terms of participants' envisioned career trajectory. In the midst of their experiences, participants' reasons to teach *in certain contexts* were impacted by their immediate school environment and their experiences in those environments. For example, some particiapnts expressed a desire to continue to teach, but in a different context, while some participants expressed they wished to remain in the field of education, but not necessarily in the classroom.

Wants to teach, but in a different teaching context. Specifically, some participants indicated that while they still wanted to teach mainly because of vocational reasons, they were uncertain that they wanted to continue their teaching career in their particular teaching context – high-needs, low-performing. Moreover, some participants indicated they still thought positively about teaching as a career, but they did not want their teaching career to continue in the middle school grades. For example, Grace, Lena, and Steve maintained vocational reasons to teach, but expressed they wanted to teach in a different context. Grace, said

> Well I guess like being in a turn-around school it's like- I think there's only
> like six of them in the county. But I think…I mean I feel it's made…I don't
> know, I just feel like it's a lot harder then being at like a non-turnaround
> school. So I mean there have been days where I'm like I don't want to do
> this anymore. Just because coming here everyday is just very hard. And it's
> not necessarily that I don't feel like I'm being supported within the school

because like just the understanding that the administrators have a lot of

stuff going on so I've turned to other teachers because there's a lot of first

and second year teachers here.

Grace indicated she still had vocational reasons to teach, but she had considered teaching

in a context that is not a turn-around school.

Like Grace, Lena maintained vocational reasons to teach, but in the midst of her

experiences, she thought about teaching in a different teaching context. As mentioned

previously, Lena taught at a public charter with what she claimed were limited resources.

Lena said,

I just don't want to teach at a small charter school. I want to have

colleagues that I can talk to about math. Even if there weren't a lot of other

math teachers but I had colleagues that I could talk to about student

behavior.

For Lena and Grace, the teaching context did not impact their vocational reasons to teach

in general, but it did impact where they saw themselves teaching after their first year.

Like Lena and Grace, Steve also indicated he wanted to continue to teach in a

different context, but for Steve, the context in which he would have liked to continue to

teach related to the nature of his position. At this mid-year point in time, Steve was

teaching a math fluency course to classes of students that he saw once every three days.

Steve said, "In this specific context I know that I would never want this type of position."

Steve's teaching context impacted his thinking about teaching as a career; but, for Steve,

the context he would like to change is the nature of his position, not his actual school site,

which is what Lena and Grace indicated.

Similar to wanting to teach in a different school site is the fact that some ACSM participants indicated they wanted to continue to teach but would like to teach a different grade level than middle school. Specifically, three participants indicated they wanted to teach high school students rather than middle school students. Michelle, for example, questioned whether she wanted to continue teaching in middle school:

> I question the grade level. Is middle school where I want to be? It's so challenging. We started off in the internship in 8th grade. And for our placement we're in 7th grade, and we didn't expect it to be so different. It's just a year, but it's a huge difference. What we could do in the 8th grade class, we couldn't do in the 7th grade class. It would just get out of control. So I question the grade. I would look at going higher.

Like Michelle, Heidi questioned whether she wanted to continue teaching in middle school. Heidi said, "I know that I still want to teach but I'm starting to second guess if I want to teach middle school." Randolph, like Michelle and Heidi, also indicated he questioned if he wanted to continue to teach in the middle school context. Randolph said, "My personal preference is still to…at least have some time with the more advanced students and deal with those who are more college bound and deal with the mathematical issues of academics." Randolph's response was consistent with his other content-driven reasons for teaching. Randolph would like to have worked more with his content, and he thought teaching either more advanced or older students would have enabled him to do so.

Wants to stay in education, but in a different capacity. In addition to questioning the grade level, Michelle also questioned whether she wanted to stay in the classroom

setting at all. Specifically, Michelle indicated she wanted to remain in the field of education, but was uncertain of teaching as a career. Michelle said,

> I don't know how long I'll be teaching in the classroom setting. I would look at going higher. Just to see the difference. Possibly administration but my heart is back to the tutoring that I used to do. I could see myself back in that realm with the one-on-one.

Her enjoyment of tutoring young learners was one of the experiences Michelle initially cited for teaching in her first interview and questionnaire. Her response at this mid-year point indicated that Michelle missed the one-on-one experiences she had with students in the tutoring context as she continued to teach in the classroom.

Despite that some ACSM participants indicated they would rather teach in a different teaching context, all ACSM participants reported they were happy with their decision to change careers and teach. All 11 participants interviewed at this mid-year point in time indicated they were generally happy with their decision to teach and career choice, despite challenges in their teaching contexts. However, while all participants expressed they were generally pleased with teaching, not all participants saw themselves remaining in middle schools or in Colton County Public Schools.

Generative insights. Participants initially expressed model influences, experiential influences, programmatic influences, race- and gender-related reasons, and vocational reasons to teach. During their first year teaching, participants continued to express vocational reasons and programmatic reasons to teach more than anything else. On their second questionnaire, every participant cited vocational reasons for wanting to continue to teach. For example, Hope wrote, "I feel good about my purpose." And, Janice

wrote, "I am still very interested in working with children as they develop their understandings of science." Similarly, Lena wrote, "I still want to teach because I care about giving kids the skills to succeed so they can believe in themselves." These data show how participants continued to express vocational reasons to teach during their first year in the classroom.

In the midst of their experiences, however, participants expressed these reasons to a much lesser extent than they did before they taught, as immediate teaching context seemed to have had the most impact on their reasons to teach. As discussed, participants referenced their supportive or unsupportive school environment and student behavior. Despite the challenges faced in their teaching contexts, participants continued to express vocational reasons to teach in the midst of their experiences, although *where* and *what* they wanted to teach were impacted by their teaching contexts. As a result, vocational reasons to teach seemed to endure for participants in their midst of their experiences as first year teachers in high-needs schools.

Some participants expressed they were uncertain about teaching in the midst of their experiences. Participants' responses to the second questionnaire indicated that in fact six out of 12 consenting participants had considered withdrawing from ACSM at some point in time between the beginning of the school year and the middle of the school year. Michelle and Blake, for example, wrote that they had considered withdrawing when Colton County Public Schools did not place them in a vacant teaching position following the successful completion of their internship. Jane wrote that a lack of support from Colton County Public Schools was the reason she had considered withdrawing from

ACSM and leaving teaching altogether. These data suggest that teaching contexts, as defined for the purposes of this study, have impacted participants' reasons to teach.

Like teaching contexts, personal contexts also impacted some participants at this mid-year point. Chanel cited that overwhelming coursework, along with a stressful personal financial situation, prompted her to consider withdrawing from ACSM and leaving teaching. Similarly, Grace and Heidi indicated they had considered withdrawing from ACSM. This could be due to personal contexts as both participants wrote on their questionnaires that they were experiencing high levels of stress, which made them question their commitment to teaching in general and to ACSM specifically. These data suggest that personal contexts impact reasons to teach for some participants. In fact, one month after the second phase of data collection, Heidi did withdraw from ACSM. Consistent with her second questionnaire, Heidi cited that high levels of personal stress were the reason she withdrew from ACSM.

Initially, participants expressed a strong attraction to the program features of ACSM. Programmatic reasons endured as a theme for participants to continue to teach in the midst of their experiences, although the relative strength of this theme decreased from what participants initially expressed. This could be due to the fact that once participants began to teach, they focused on their teaching context, which seemed unrelated to their initial attraction to features of ACSM. Once they became ACSM participants, features of the program might have become normalized to participants as they moved through their first year in the classrooom.

An implication of enduring programmatic reasons is that ACPs should be designed to entice (through such measures as tuition support, job placement, mentoring,

and more) people that are considering teaching. Further, programs ought to continue to offer intensive support to participants beyond the recruitment and selection phases and well into participants' first year in the classoom so as to continually affirm a new teacher's reasons to choose the profession.

Above all else, in the midst of participants' experiences, teaching contexts have more of an impact on stated reasons to teach while personal, economic, and programmatic contexts seem to have a lesser impact on reasons to teach. In line with the first two research questions, the third and final research question for this study examined how participants describe their reasons to teach at the end of their experiences as first year teachers.

Research Question 3

At the end of their experiences, how do ACSM participants describe their reasons to teach? How do participants express that personal, program, economic, and teaching contexts affected their reasons to teach?

Data was gathered on 11 participants for this portion of the study; data sources used to answer this question were the third questionnaire, the third interview, program interview notes, and participants' Statements of Purpose. At the final point of data collection, which took place at the end of participants' first year teaching, Heidi had left Colton County Public Schools and ACSM citing high levels of stress and personal unhappiness. In her exit survey for ACSM, Heidi wrote,

> I am choosing to withdraw from the [ACSM] program. This was a very
> hard decision for me to make, but I feel it is the best thing for me. I had
> been feeling a lot of stress and nothing I tried let me get it to a manageable

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level. I think for me right now, this is not the program for me and not the

job for me, which is why I am choosing to withdraw.

Moreover, in her second interview conducted at the middle of her first year teaching,

Heidi did admit that teaching is not what she thought it would be because the population

of students in her classroom differed from the affluent students with whom all her

previous experiences had been. During that second interview, when asked how teaching

compared to what she thought it would be, Heidi said,

It's harder and it's more stressful. I knew it would be stressful, but it's

more. And I think a lot of it is…I don't mean to sound stereotypical, but

working with these type of students. All my experience before has been

working with the upper class affluent school districts where it's automatic

what happens. So it's harder to figure out activities and things. They just

kind of never go the way they're planned. They should but they don't.

Heidi's withdrawal from ACSM can, in part, be traced to the ways in which her

expectations for teaching did not align with her experiences as a first year teacher in a

high-needs middle school. Heidi also described the personal stress she felt being in the

ACSM program and teaching in Colton County Public Schools, which also contributed to

her desire to withdraw from the program. In sum, Heidi's experience suggests that

personal context impacts reasons to teach inasmuch as participants are able to manage the

stresses of teaching. Similarly, teaching context impacts reasons to teach in terms of the

ways in which participants' expectations for teaching align or misalign with their actual

teaching experiences.

With Heidi's self-imposed dismissal from ACSM, interview and questionnaire data were collected on 11 consenting participants, 10 of whom consented to be interviewed. As previously stated, Lex did not consent to be interviewed for this study; however, he did consent to answer a series of questionnaires as part of the larger IRB – approved ACSM evaluation system. Since, the interviews went much more in depth than the questionnaires, it turns out that there is little data on Lex's reasons to teach beyond what he wrote in the first open-ended questionnaire. As a result, it was difficult to assess any potential *changes* in Lex's reasons to teach, and therefore I made the decision not to include his data beyond the first research question.

Table 5. *Changes in Stated Reasons to Teach*

Participant	Reasons to Teach *before* First Year	Reasons to Teach *at the end of* First Year
Michelle	instructional role with students; vocational reasons; race- and gender-related reasons; experiential influences; programmatic influences	instructional role with students; **teaching is more than instruction**; vocational reasons; race- and gender-related reasons; experiential influences; **supportive teaching context; desire for full teacher certification**
Heidi	relational role with students; model influences; experiential influences; vocational reasons; programmatic reasons	*Withdrew from ACSM program in February 2012; personal unhappiness and high levels of stress were directly stated as her reason for withdrawal*
Randolph	instructional role with students; **model influences**; **experiential influences; programmatic influences;** vocational reasons; race-related reasons	**relational role with students**; vocational reasons to teach; race-related reasons
Grace	relational role with students; **model influences; experiential influences**; vocational reasons; programmatic influences	relational role with students; vocational reasons; **race did play a role in experiences**; programmatic influences
Chanel	relational role with students; programmatic influences; **experiential influences; race-related reasons;** vocational reasons	relational role with students; **personal life changes**; programmatic influences; vocational reasons
Jane	instructional role with students; programmatic influences; model influences; experiential influences; vocational reasons	**relational role with students**; vocational reasons; **race did play a role in experiences**; programmatic influences
Blake	instructional role with students; **model influences**; **experiential influences;** programmatic influences; vocational reasons; race-related reasons	**relational role with students**; programmatic reasons; vocational reasons; race-related reasons
Lena	relational role with students; model influences; experiential influences; programmatic influences; vocational reasons	**instructional role; then, again, a relational role with students**[10]; race did not play a role in her teaching experiences; **desire for full teacher certification**
Hope	instructional role with students; **model influences**; programmatic influences; vocational reasons	**relational role with students**; programmatic influences; vocational reasons
Janice	instructional role with students; **programmatic influences**; race-related reasons; vocational reasons	**instructional and relational roles with students**; race-related reasons; vocational reasons
Steve	**managerial role with students**; **model influences**; **experiential influences**; programmatic influences; vocational reasons	**relational role with students**; programmatic influences; **race-conscious (senses cultural disconnect from students);** vocational reasons

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[10] Lena is the only ACSM participant who initially thought a teacher's role with students was relational. Then in the midst of her experiences, she thought it was instructional. By the end of her first year, she indicated that, once again, she thought a teacher's most important role with students was relational.

Relationships with students and reasons to teach. When thinking about how participants might describe their reasons to teach after teaching in a high-needs middle school, one could hypothesize that first year teachers would abandon idealist notions for wanting to teach in favor of taking on a more custodial role with their students after dealing with the management issues associated with middle school classrooms. In contrast, participants in this study prioritized their relationships with students over the teaching of mathematical or scientific content to students or behavior management. Moreover, participants who initially thought that a teacher's most important role was tied to instruction in the classroom thought by the end of their first year in the classroom that a teacher's most important role was tied to his/her relationships with students. For example, in her interview at the end of the school year, Jane said,

> I originally thought [teaching] was the learning aspect and that's all that I needed to do as a teacher. That the kids need to learn from me and I just really need them to learn the math, the thinking, the reasoning. And so I thought that was it, they come to school and learn and that's their job and that's my job. And now I'm finding more and more that I have to be sensitive to what they have and what they don't have.

For Jane, after spending time with students in her classroom, she realized that her knowledge of students' lives outside of school was more important than she originally thought before she started teaching. This could be due to the fact that teaching context seems to have an impact on participants' reasons to teach, and a teacher's relationship with his/her students remains a significant aspect of a teacher's teaching context.

Randolph, who like Jane initially thought a teacher's most important role concerned instruction, echoed Jane's sentiment about the primacy of relationships with students. When asked what he thought a teacher's most important role was before teaching, Randolph replied that a teacher's most important role was to teach students mathematical content. At the end of his first year in a high-needs classroom, Randolph said,

> One of the most important roles is to be a role model and a coach. So no question, we're trying to model good behavior, good citizenship. Some might say, well you're just a teacher. But the point is, trustworthiness, loyalty, honesty, being on time, learning to be a leader. So even if you're not rich and famous, you can still role model good behavior. I think that's more important than making sure students understand the Pythagorean theorem.

In this way, both Jane and Randolph's conceptions of a teacher's roles shifted from instruction to how a teacher relates to his/her students. Like Jane and Randolph, Hope, who also originally thought a teacher's primary role was tied to instruction, at the end of her first year teaching, said, "If you do relate to the students and they relate to you, and you feel comfortable giving them guidance outside of the educational realm, you can be an older sister."

In addition to these participants, after spending a year teaching in high-needs schools, Steve thought that good teaching had more to do with a teacher's relationships with students more than it had to do with instruction in the classroom. Steve said,

Mostly I thought of it as the instruction and what kind of messages you're relaying. But I'm seeing more and more that it is very important…like if I do establish a connection, I can see that the kids work harder. I think that's actually one of the most important things, more important than I realized before.

When prompted to describe what he thought a teacher's most important roles were at the end of the year, Steve replied, "Just like a good role model and someone who can expose them to more than just what they see here. It's not just teaching your content area, it's teaching life lessons I guess." In this way, Steve's change in emphasis on behavior management, which is what Steve thought before he started teaching, to relationships with students was a result of his teaching context.

Finally, Blake's thinking about teaching also changed since the beginning of the year. Like Jane, Randolph, Hope, and Steve, Blake had initially thought a teacher's most important role was tied to instruction; after spending a year teaching in a high-needs middle school, Blake thought that the ways in which a teacher relates to students were more important than instruction. When asked what he thought a teacher's most important role was, Blake responded,

I think the biggest one is, I'd say more than content knowledge is being respectable. I don't know how to qualify that, but it's like your attitude, your demeanor, the way you come to work, if you come to work, I think they need that. And they also…the way you perceive your classroom cause it's your role as a role model. Like how much you value education, cause I think that comes across.

Blake originally thought a teacher's most important role was to serve as a purveyor of mathematical content, and, after spending a year actually teaching, Blake realized the importance of relationships with students, and that in some ways, building positive relationships with students was more important than teaching students content knowledge. Relationships with students largely define a teacher's context. Therefore, data suggest that teaching context affects reasons to teach, which could explain in part why participants shift their thinking about their role as teachers. In order to foster a productive work environment, some participants came to the realization that if they wanted to continue to teach, they needed to build positive relationships with their students.

Unlike Jane, Randolph, Hope, Steve, and Blake, Grace, Lena, and Chanel had been consistent in their thinking that a teacher's most important role had to do with relationships with students. Before she started teaching in a high-needs middle school, Grace thought that a teacher's most important role concerned relationships with students. Consistent with her original thinking and after spending a year teaching, Grace said, "It's more than just the content…you have to be really patient…you just have to be a certain way to be successful as a teacher." Lena's thinking about a teacher's most important role initially concerned relationships with students. At the middle of the school year, Lena changed her thinking and indicated the importance of teaching organizational skills to students. By the end of her first year teaching, Lena returned to her original thinking about the importance of a teacher's relationships with students. In her final interview, Lena said,

In part it's being the advocate for the students cause a lot of them don't have

other advocates. In part it's sort of guiding them and mentoring them during

the hour plus I see them every day and maybe a little bit after that.

In this way, both Grace and Lena maintained over time that a teacher's most important role transcended academic instruction and had more to do with how a teacher related to his/her students in the classroom.

Chanel, too, had been consistent in her thinking that a teacher's most important role had to do with how a teacher related to his/her students. Chanel said, "You're a positive figure in their life, so you have to be cautious of what you do and what you say cause they are watching and they see everything." By the end of the school year, Chanel still thought a teacher's most important role concerned relationships with students more than academic instruction. Similar to Grace, Lena, and Chanel, both Janice and Michelle were consistent in their thinking about a teacher's most important roles.

In contrast, however, Janice and Michelle maintained their thinking that a teacher's most important roles related to the instruction of students in their classroom. For example, after teaching for a year, Janice said, "I really do want them to learn, so I do think that it has to be an equal role with teaching and being prepared and making sure your lessons good for the students so kind of dual roles." While Janice's statement articulated an overall concern for students, Janice continued to think that a teacher's most important role in the classroom related to academics.

Like Janice, after a year of teaching, Michelle continued to think that a teacher's most important role focused on academic instruction. Michelle said, "I think the primary role is the role of communicating information and teaching, adding to what they've

learned." Hence, Janice and Michelle remained consistent in their thinking that a teacher's most important role concerned academics and the instruction of students.

This phenomenon of the changes in teachers' roles is discussed in educational research, and in particular by Valli and Buese (2007) who focused on the role that the NCLB-imposed accountability context had on teachers' roles inside and outside the classroom. The researchers identified relational tasks for teachers as "those that require teacher interaction with students, parents, and other teachers in ways that cannot be standardized but that nurture and attend to the overall well-being of students" (pp. 529-530). Valli and Buese (2007) found that teachers' roles have expanded, increased, and intensified as a result of federal, state, and local policies aimed at increasing student achievement in the current accountability context. This study confirms that finding inasmuch as ACSM participants reference their changing roles during their first year teaching in high-needs classrooms. In the same way that Valli and Buese (2007) claim that changes in teachers' roles have had unanticipated effects on teachers' relationships with students, ACSM participants who initially considered their most important role as one that primarily focuses on academics begin to change their thinking in the midst of their experiences as they realize the impact that their relationships with students has on their daily classroom life.

Race- and gender-related reasons to teach. Participants who initially expressed race-related reasons for wanting to teach in high-needs middle schools in Colton County continued to express race-related reasons for wanting to continue to teach in high-needs schools in Colton County at the end of their experiences, while gender-related reasons were not discussed by participants. Moreover, as participants continued to teach in Colton

County schools, they became more conscious of the role that race played in their teaching experiences. Janice, who is White, and Michelle, Blake, and Randolph, all of whom are African American, had all consistently expressed race-related reasons for wanting to teach in Colton County schools in particular. Alternately, Lena, Grace, and Hope consistently maintained that race did not factor into their reasons for teaching when I explicitly asked them about it. Lena, like Janice, is White, while Grace is Filipina and Hope is first generation Ethiopian.

Two participants, however, became more conscious of the role that race played in their teaching experiences as they moved through their first year of teaching. Jane and Steve, both of whom did not initially cite race-related reasons to teach, expressed that, in fact, race did play a role in their teaching experiences when prompted to discuss race. Jane is first generation Korean, and Steve is White and from Belgium. Regarding the role race played in her experiences, for example, Jane said,

> We're not here to identify each other and say, I'm this race and you're that race. But at the same time, I realize I need to be more sensitive to it cause some of the kids I have don't have the same cultural background as the majority of the students so when it comes down to word problems being worded a certain way to the majority of the culture, that minority group is not going to understand it because it doesn't fit in with their culture, it doesn't work.

In this way, Jane's experiences in her classroom with students impressed upon her the importance of acknowledging students' race and culturally relevant pedagogy. Similarly, Steve did not initially cite race-related reasons to teach, but after teaching for a

year in Colton County, he acknowledged that race, in fact, did play a role in his teaching experiences. Even without being prompted to discuss race, Steve mentioned that he expected teaching in Colton County would be harder for him than his African American ACSM cohort members. Steve said,

I kind of came in with the expectation that it was going to be much harder for me than African American teachers or some of the other teachers that connect on that cultural level. Harder with the students for them to accept me I guess. But overall it's pretty much been right on point with my expectations.

Moreover, Steve discussed the differences he perceived between his interactions with students and his ACSM partner Lex's interactions with students. To reiterate, Steve is White and from Belgium and Lex is African American and first-generation Nigerian. Steve said,

I could see myself and Lex having started out on the same level when we got into this new classroom. The kids are pushing back and testing the limits. He has a way of talking to them that I can't do. It's not like I want to try and do it. That's not who I am, but I can see that they're relating to that. Whatever he's doing is working for him. For instance, he swears occasionally in the classroom, but they find that normal, and they swear and he won't necessarily say anything about it unless it's really bad words. For me, they know that's never happening in my classroom and I won't allow myself to do that. I wasn't brought up like that. That goes back to me always wanting to set a good example, and if I'm slipping in that way, I feel like

I'm not doing my social responsibility. So it's definitely…the one class I
have is all African American and the other class is like 95% African
American with the rest Latino. So I have no white kids. It's been tough to
establish that connection. I would try to joke around with them, but even the
sense of humor is different. I can see that Lex has established more of a
connection with some of the other teachers. That was something I kind of
expected but not to the degree that it was.

In sum, four ACSM participants – Janice, Michelle, Blake, Randolph –
consistently expressed race-related reasons for teaching and for wanting to continue to
teach in Colton County public schools; three participants – Lena, Grace, Hope –
consistently expressed that race did not play a role in their reasons to teach or in their
experiences teaching in their first year in the classroom. Jane and Steve, however, who
initially did not cite race-related reasons to teach did, after teaching for a year in a high-
needs school, express that race indeed played a role in their experiences in the high-needs
classrooms of Colton County's middle schools. And finally, by the end of participants'
first year teaching, race-related reasons to teach had remained consistent for the
participants who initially expressed them.

Vocational reasons to teach. By the end of the school year, participants
expressed race-related reasons to a greater extent than they initially cited whereas
participants expressed vocational reasons to teach to a lesser extent than they initially
cited. While participants did continue to express vocational reasons to teach, the relative
strength of those reasons lessened as compared with participants' initial reasons before
they taught. A reasonable explanation for participants' relative decrease in expressing

vocational reasons to teach could be that, when faced with the realities of day to day life inside classrooms, participants develop more pragmatic and specific reasons to teach as opposed to broader vocational reasons. Also, participants could be more focused on their teaching contexts and their work environments than on their vocational reasons to teach at the end of their first year teaching.

Programmatic reasons to teach. Programmatic reasons to teach continued to appear in participants' data, but the specific programmatic reasons that participants cited changed. For example, during the middle and towards the end of the school year, some participants expressed mentoring and coursework as programmatic reasons for continuing to teach, while participants initially expressed programmatic reasons to teach such as teaching halftime and the financial support of ACSM. Over time, participants specifically cited programmatic contexts such as colleagues, supportive teaching contexts, programmatic support through courses and professors, and the desire for teacher certification to a greater extent than features of ACSM such as halftime teaching and financial support. For example, Chanel indicated that one of the most critical influences on her during her first year teaching was her program mentor. Chanel said,

> She gave me hints and feedback, and asked me what I was going to do to prepare for the upcoming school weeks. So she helped me pace myself. If she wasn't pregnant, if she wasn't a teacher, it would have been hard to listen to someone who had not been in those shoes before.

In addition, other ACSM participants continued to express programmatic reasons to teach by the end of the school year. Janice, for example, expressed on her questionnaire that one of the most critical influences on her reasons to continue teaching

at the end of the year was "all the training I've had in this program." Similarly, Jane, Blake, and Steve wrote on their questionnaires at the end of the school year that ACSM enabled them to get into the classroom quickly and obtain middle school teacher certification in the most efficient way possible. In sum, participants continued to express programmatic reasons to teach and the desire for full teacher certification after spending their first year in the classroom.

An implication for this finding relates to the importance of recruitment and selection into alternative preparation programs of participants who express reasons to teach that align with programmatic and school district goals and objectives. Further, another implication of this finding speaks to the importance of the supports that alternative teacher preparation programs ought to provide to their candidates *throughout* their entire first year teaching and not just their first few weeks in a program or the summer before their first year in the classroom as a teacher of record.

Experiential reasons to teach and model influences. Initially, almost all study participants cited experiential influences to teach such as informal teaching experiences and experiences with youth. By the end of the school year, participants continued to express experiential influences, however, the nature of the experiential influences for teaching by the end of the year were specific experiences with students in their classrooms rather than more informal teaching experiences.

Similarly, model influences remained reasons to teach for some study participants. However, by the end of the school year, model influences as a theme expanded to include parents, former teachers, and other influential adults before teaching this first year *in addition to* collegial influences such as cooperating teachers by the end

of the year, which were an aspect of the teaching context. It is important to note that by the end of the school year, teaching contexts remained the most influential context out of those explored in this study – personal, programmatic, and economic – on participants' stated reasons to teach. Indeed, participants cite specific aspects of their respective teaching contexts as defined in this study – classroom environment, collegial environment of the school, student behavior, school district policy, and school demographics – as having an influence on their reasons to continue or not want to continue to teach more so than the other contexts that were explored.

Generative insights. One of the generative insights this study offers to the literature on reasons to teach for participants in an alternative certification program is that after participants in an ACP spend time dealing with the realities of day to day life in high-needs classrooms, they realized that despite why they wanted to teach, their relationships with students became, in some ways, their primary focus as teachers while students' understandings of academic content took a more secondary role. An implication of this finding is that alternative teacher preparation programs should encourage their candidates to build positive relationships with students and should equip their candidates with strategies in doing so, as their teaching context will impact their reasons to teach and to continue to teach, while at the same time developing candidates' pedagogical skills.

In addition, programs should be built around continued support for first year teachers, as programmatic reasons to teach continued to influence participants throughout their experiences. Programs should not make modifications based solely on participants' reasons to teach, but those reasons ought to be explored and considered because of the influence they continue to have on participants.

While vocational reasons to teach decreased in relative strength, participants continued to express their vocational reasons throughout their first year teaching. Since vocational reasons to teach persist for participants, alternative teacher preparation programs should screen for potential participants who express an affinity for the desire to engage in a purposeful, albeit challenging, career in high-needs schools.

Chapter V: Discussion of Findings and Further Explorations

This study adds to the literature on this topic by moving past initial reasons to teach and examing why participants continue to teach once they are working as classroom teachers. In addition, this study examined reasons to teach for participants enrolled in an early-entry alternative preparation program focused on recruiting individuals with experience and course work in the STEM fields. Having explored those reasons throughout participants' first year in high-needs classrooms, I now look at the ways in which participants' data relates to extant literature in the field. The literature reviewed in chapter two was relevant in the contributions it made to the initial framing of this study. As I engaged with the data and developed themes, other literature emerged as relevant, which will be reviewed here in relation to the findings from this study. In this chapter, I review each theme and discuss other literature that is relevant in light of the findings reviewed in chapter four. I also discuss how future studies could continue to build the knowledge base on this topic.

While survey research has historically been the most widely utilized research method in the literature on reasons to teach, interviews served as the primary means of data for this study. Other data sources included ACSM faculty members' program interview notes, participants' application materials such as their Statement of Purpose for ACSM and their resume of prior professional experience, and a series of three open-ended questionnaires. The focus on participant interviews and open-ended questionnaires is deliberate; I wanted to include the voices of participants as much as possible in order to build theory around a group of early-entry ACP participants, not only by looking at what participants initially cite as reasons to teach, but by also looking at how those reasons

might change over time for novice teachers in arguably difficult teaching contexts. Further, the findings of this study describe participants in a certain sort of ACP – a program focused on recruited individuals with education and experiences in STEM fields to teach middle school mathematics and science in Colton County Public Schools.

In addition, data collection took place at three different points in time for two reasons. The first reason results from a pragmatic choice on my part to align my research with that of a larger study that collected data at the same points in time. The second and more compelling reason to collect data at three distinct points in time was to capture beginning teachers' voices in different phases of their experiences in the classroom. By collecting data at the beginning, middle, and toward the end of their experiences, I captured a greater range of participants' reasons to teach across a schoolyear.

In response to the first research question, what do ACSM participants cite as initial reasons to teach, I developed five themes from participants' data – model influences, programmatic influences, experiential influences, race- and gender-related reasons, and vocational reasons. In the midst of their experiences and toward the end of their first year teaching, participants' reasons to teach did not change significantly from what participants initially expressed, although over time they began to express less lofty and idealized reasons to teach in favor of citing specific reasons, such as the context for teaching. Moreover, participants' teaching context had an impact on reasons to teach in terms of what grade level participants want to teach and where participants want to teach. For some participants, the teaching context caused them to reconsider whether they wanted to continue teaching at all. This finding aligns with Ingersoll and May's (2011)

study that found the organizational conditions of a school directly relate to the rates of teacher turnover in a school.

While the data did not indicate significant changes in reasons to teach, participants, however, generally did shift their thinking from a teacher's most important role as instructional to relational. This finding can be explored in relation to extant research which suggests that teachers often move toward a more custodial view of their role with students as they experience the realities of teaching (Hoy, 1969; Hoy & Rees, 1977; Roberts & Blankenship, 1970). This idea, however, is not supported by other research (Zeichner & Grant, 1981) that found that despite experiences in the classroom, prospective teachers did not shift significantly in their views of student control. Zeichner and Grant (1981) found that the initial classroom experience, which was called student teaching in their study, had little impact on prospective teachers' views on student control. The researchers assert that many variables, such as an individual's predispositions toward teaching and an individual's prior schooling experiences, interact with the initial classroom experience and influence prospective teachers in different ways.

Similar to the Zeichner and Grant (1981) study, this study found that while many participants intially considered their primary role with students to relate to instruction, in the midst of their experiences and toward the end of their first year teaching, participants shifted their ideas and thought that their most important role dealt with student relationships. In fact, Lena was the only participant who shifted her thinking from a relational role with students intially to an instructional role mid-way through her first

year. However, by the end of the school year, Lena returned to her original thinking that a teacher's most important role concerned relationships with students.

A reasonable explanation for the difference between Lena's thinking and the other participants' thinking is that teaching context does not affect each individual in the same way. Moreover, each individual comes into teaching with differing experiences as a student, which could also impact their vision of teaching and what a classroom should look like. While other research (Hoy, 1969; Hoy & Rees, 1977; Roberts & Blankenship, 1970) shows that beginning teachers move toward more custodial views of their work with students and of classroom management, this study supports Zeichner and Grant's (1981) findings. Specifically, depending on the teaching context and personal experiences as a student, not all beginning teachers actually develop more custodial views of their students. In fact, this study found that beginning teachers actually privilege their relationships with students over instruction in the midst of their experiences and toward the end of their first year teaching. This could be partly due to the influence of ACSM and the emphasis the program places on building positive relationships with students. Also, this could also be due to the realization that, as Valli (1996) suggests, a teacher's ability to build trusting relations with students is essential for the success of the teacher. Since it could be argued that "custodial" is a type of relationship a teacher could have with a student, a follow-up study could be conducted to tease out the nuances of the teacher/student relationship.

Aside from relationships with students, there was not a significant shift in anything else participants expressed related to their reasons to teach from the beginning of their school year until the end of their school year. A seemingly obvious implication of

these findings is that a prospective teacher's reasons for entering the profession endure and generally resist change, although the importance of relationships with students as well as race become more important and noticeable to beginning teachers than they initially anticipated.

Additionally, the themes developed in this study are not uniform in strength; the number of participants who referenced categories in each theme is a proxy for the relative strength of the theme. And, this study found that vocational reasons persist and race-and gender-related reasons become increasingly salient. Moreover, the themes are interrelated; race- and gender-related reasons and model influences could be nested within vocational reasons to teach as it could be argued that both themes reinforce the participants' desire for meaningful and purposeful work. With that in mind, the themes should be thought of as spheres that overlap in some ways as opposed to distinct and disparate categories that describe the reasons to teach for ACSM particpants.

Model Influences

Out of the sample of participants in this study, five participants mentioned their own teachers as having an influence on their decision to teach. Given that this study explored reasons to teach for career changers, it is interesting that despite the time that has elapsed since their own K – 12 schooling experiences, about half of the participants still mentioned their own teachers as having an affect on their decision to teach. This finding reinforces the strength of the apprenticehship of observation (Lortie, 1975) in the development of prospective teachers.

The influence of former teachers is not a new finding germane to this study, as it has been documented by research conducted by Eliassen as far back as 1932 and is

widely recognized by Lortie's (1975) work. However, given that this sample of teachers comprises career changers whose own experiences as students are more distant than undergraduate samples of prospective teachers, the fact that former teachers remain influential suggests their enduring signficance in the decision to teach.

In addition to the influence of former teachers, the model influences theme includes parental influence. Historically, teaching was one of the few available pathways for children of immigrants to achieve middle class status. Today, that is no longer the case; however, five participants in this study are children of immigrants – Lex, Jane, Steve, Hope, and Grace. Out of these five participants, only two, Jane and Hope, mentioned being deterred from teaching by their parents who had hopes of their children achieving greater financial gain than what teaching could proffer.

While it should be noted that no other participants in this study mentioned being deterred by their parents from teaching, participants in previous studies also mentioned being deterred from teaching, but more so by what they perceived as U.S. society's pejorative views on teaching, not by their parents specifically (Crow, Levin, & Nager, 1990; Gordon, 2000; Shaw, 1996). In this study, only Jane and Hope expressed that their immigrant parents had encouraged them to pursue professions that would allow them to obtain greater financial gain. Lex, Steve, and Grace did not mention that their parents had discouraged them from pursuing teaching. In fact, Grace actually said that her own mother was discouraged by her mother's parents from pursuing teaching, which in turn, prompted Grace to want to teach. This suggests that despite the scrutiny that teaching has to bear, teaching is a relatively attractive profession to individuals making career decisions.

Experiential Influences

Grace also mentioned how her negative experiences as a student influenced her decision to teach. In addition, Michelle mentioned how her frustration as a former mathematics student and not knowing how to apply her skills to the real world prompted her to want to teach. Randolph also mentioned his negative experiences as an African American student in a predominantly White school. Several participants mentioned either positive or negative experiences in their own K – 12 schooling as part of their intial reasons to teach. An implication of this finding is that an individual's experiences as a student are hard to shake, even for those who decide to teach later in their academic careers, which speaks to the enormity of teachers' influence on the lives of young people, an individual's experiences in schools, and the thoughfulness that should go into selection and preparation of teacher candidates.

Programmatic Reasons

Initially, participants described an attraction to specific programmatic features of ACSM. For some participants, ACSM as a program, and the opportunity to pursue teacher certification at a relatively low cost, facilitated the decision to enter teaching. In the midst of their experiences and toward the end of their first year teaching, participants continued to express programmatic reasons to teach. However, the nature of the programmatic reasons changed to reflect participants' daily lives as classroom teachers. Specifically, during the school year, participants mentioned programmatic reasons such as the support of their mentors and professors as reasons to continue to teach. The programmatic reasons that participants initially cited, such as a quick way to get into the

classroom and the ability to work in middle schools, did not appear as frequently as other

programmatic features like mentoring.

The fact that a supportive context for teaching has an influence on beginning

teachers is not new; but, this study supports the idea that if teachers are placed in high-

needs, low-performing schools, mentors should be available to guide and support them in

their work. Moreover, mentors and supportive school colleagues, despite other challenges

in the teaching context, might help diminish teacher turnover, which costs U.S. schools

an estimated $7.34 billion annually (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007).

Vocational Reasons

Initially, participants cited very lofty vocational reasons to teach such as the

desire to engage in purposeful work. Vocational reasons to teach persist for particpants,

however, similar to programmatic reasons, in the midst of their experiences and at the

end of their first year teaching, participants cite less lofty vocational reasons to teach in

favor of more specific reasons to teach, such as the relationships they have developed

with their students. This idea can be found in extant literature on the disillusionment that

sets in for beginning teachers once they enter the classroom and face the realities and

challenges associated with the day to day work of running a classroom. Liston,

Whitcomb, and Borko (2006) describe the "emotional spectrum" of first year teachers'

experiences as "exhilarated and exhausted, hopeful and cynical, fulfilled and dejected"

(p. 351). In addition, the emotional spectrum of teachers and the disullsionment brought

on by the realities of life in the classroom has been documented in other research (Fuller,

1969; Johnson, 2002; Kane, 1991; Michie, 1999; Moir, 1990; Ness, 2001; Roehrig,

Pressley, & Talotta, 2002; Veenman, 1984). The findings from this study can be added to

this body of literature, which asserts the challenging, and sometimes chaotic, experiences of first year teachers and the disillusionment that sets in during the midst of their experiences.

Race- and Gender-related Reasons

I found that, initially, African American participants cited race-related reasons to teach while only one White participant expressed her race-related reasons to pursue teaching. Because of this and because I wanted to continue to explore the impact of race and gender over time, I made race- and gender-related reasons its own category. As time went on, more participants started to express the role that race played in their experiences as first year teachers. Overall, the data suggest that race-related reasons for ACSM participants are, at least initially, almost exclusively articulated by African American participants, but when teacher candidates are placed in a situation wherein they are teaching students who do not share their own ethnic identity or culture, race becomes a salient factor in the teaching context. The findings from this study support prior research that claims African American prospective teachers are more likely to mention the need for minority teachers and role models for minority students (King, 1993).

On the other hand, it should be noted that in the literature initially reviewed for this study (Gordon, 2000; Shaw 1996), researchers found that participants' race and cultural background, either African American or Asian, acted as a deterrent to choosing teaching. In the literature, there are data to support the idea that race acts as both a reason to teach and a reason not to teach. Findings from this study support the idea that race can be a reason to teach, but more studies on the relationship between an individual's race and his/her decision to teach or not could help illuminate the nuances of this relationship.

Implications for Alternative Certification Programs

Alternative certification programs now appear in 45 states and in the District of Columbia (Duncan & Ochoa, 2011). While there are variations of ACPs, the common thread is that candidates in those programs serve as the teacher of record for a classroom while participating in the teacher preparation program. ACPs are becoming a more popular pathway into the profession; this study explores the reasons to teach for individuals in such a program.

Some research exists on teacher socialization and teachers as learners that supports the notion that limited support is available to first year teachers and that beginning teachers express they often have to work out issues that arise on their own without the support of colleagues or mentors (Arends, 1983; Isaacson, 1981; Lortie, 1975). Findings from this study suggest that the support available to first year teachers, especially those working in hard-to-staff schools, is of extreme importance. This study contributes to literature on ACPs by discussing the importance of supportive teaching contexts, particularly in the form of supportive colleagues, as a way to keep teachers in difficult schools despite the many challenges they face there. Whether a teacher is placed in what they consider a supportive teaching context is not something an alternative certification program can control. In addition, many alternative programs are designed to prepare teachers for positions in hard-to-staff schools. ACPs, however, can augment support provided for teachers by offering consistent mentoring for their candidates throughout their first year in the classroom.

Mentors for ACSM were doctoral students at the university or retired teachers with extensive experience in Colton County Public Schools. The mentors brought with

them insider knowledge about the challenges first year teachers in that district might face. ACSM's mentors worked with teachers on an individual basis each week, which gave the teachers a chance to reflect on their successes and struggles in the classroom and to find news ways to engage their middle school students in the learning of math and science.

Further Explorations

This study was originally developed with Zeichner's (2005) charge for teacher educators in mind. Zeichner argued that research in teacher education should "play a greater role in illuminating how we can do a better job of preparing candidates who will choose to teach in the schools where they are most needed, will be successful once they arrive, and will stay there" (p. 747). This study, in part, answers Zeichner's charge with finding that teacher preparation programs should emphasize the importance of candidates' relationships with students and should give candidates explicit tools for fostering positive relationships with students. Further, this study finds that consistent mentoring can be a reason for some participants to stay teaching despite being placed in hard-to-staff schools. By building positive relationships with students and with the support of consistent and focused mentoring, prospective teachers are more equipped with the tools to persist in the schools where they are needed most.

While education research often dichotomizes traditionally prepared participants with alternatively prepared participants, the themes in this study indicate that, theoretically at least, the two groups might not be as different as the literature suggests. This study adds to the body of knowledge on who chooses to teach not by testing extant theories on alternatively prepared teachers, but by engaging in a yearlong study of the persistence of teachers enrolled in an early-entry alternative teacher preparation program

focused on STEM education. While the findings of this study can only describe participants in the ACSM program, other studies could compare these themes with studies conducted on participants in other ACPs.

Those teachers are situated in a context that is the intersection between a university and a nearby high-needs school district. Specifically, the context for this study is an early-entry alternative certification program focused on preparing teachers for middle school math and science classrooms. This study adds to what the educational research community knows about a population of teachers in such a program. Other studies (Feistritzer, 2008; Grossman & Loeb, 2008; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005) discuss the characteristics of individuals who choose alternative certification programs, and this study helps to continue those conversations.

For the participants in this study, reasons to teach did not change significantly over time, and vocational reasons and programmatic reasons to teach endure despite the difficulties and challenges that their high-needs, low-performing teaching contexts presented. However, participants did express the importance of a supportive teaching context and mentoring in their reasons to stay teaching. This reinforces Grossman and Loeb's (2008) contention that "a solution to the problem of teacher quality may lie in taking the best innovations of alternative routes, particularly with regard to recruitment and selection of a talented and diverse pool of candidates, and marrying that with stronger preparation and support for new teachers" (p. 3). ACSM seeks to recruit high-quality, diverse individuals to work in high-needs schools, so this study provides data on a program that strives to recruit diverse individuals to work with a commensurately diverse student population. Since I found that supportive contexts for teaching, despite

other challenges, have a significant influence on participants' reasons to continue teaching in that context, this study serves as evidence for Grossman and Loeb's (2008) argument. Moreover, since the organizational conditions of many of our nation's neediest schools result in higher rates of teacher turnover (Ingersoll & May, 2011), this study goes beyond identifying participants' initial reasons to teach and asserts the importance of sustained support for new teachers as a means of mitigating teacher attrition given the changes in teachers' roles since the enactment of *No Child Left Behind* (Valli & Buese, 2007). While simply having diverse teachers stay in the classroom for long periods of time is not the panacea for systemic problems of racism and poverty that pervade many of our nation's schools, research continues to suggest the importance of a diverse teaching force (King, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Roberts, 2010).

The field of teacher preparation continues to seek innovative ways to recruit and prepare effective teachers. Moreover, teacher preparation has been charged with finding ways to recruit more diverse individuals to match the changing student demographics in U.S. classrooms. Further explorations in this field should include studies on what we can learn from the array of pathways now offered into the profession and how to recruit effective teachers based on reasons to enter the profession.

Follow up studies that also focus on teachers' voices through interviews and/or open-ended questionnaire data would continue the discourse on teacher preparation programs and those who choose them. Such studies could explore reasons to continue to teach or to leave the profession for teachers at different phases of their careers. Given that more and more teachers are certified through alternative pathways (Duncan & Ochoa, 2011; Feistritzer, 2008), further studies could also examine the reasons to continue to

teach for those teachers who are alternativley certified and remain in the classroom for several years. While there were some data in this study to support the convergence of reasons to teach for participants, other studies could explore the convergence of reasons to teach more explicitly. For example, does feeling a void in one's professional life faciliate the search for more meaningful work and evoke idealized images of teachers' work?

This study reaffirmed the importance of a supportive teaching context, particularly for recent college graduates and career changers who choose to teach through an early-entry alternative certification program; therefore I echo Grossman and Loeb's (2008) call for research that explores the various "kinds of support and experiences required to help teachers with diverse profiles succeed in their first year of teaching", which could help providers "tailor their programs to the specific needs of different pools of teachers" (p. 205). Interestingly, although participants in this study taught a reduced load, none of the participants mentioned at any point in their experiences the influence of teaching half time during their first year as opposed to full time as a reason to enter ACSM specifically or remain in the program. While this does not negate other studies that support an induction model for beginning teachers to promote teacher retention (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999; Johnson, 2007; Kelly, 2004; Odell & Ferraro, 1992), it does call into question the significance that induction has on individuals to actually *enter* the profession.

In addition, the field of teacher preparation at large could benefit greatly from longitudinal studies that track reasons to teach for teachers who remain in the field and demonstrate a record of success and impact in the classroom. Data do exist on this idea

(Eick, 2002; Ingersoll & May, 2011), but more studies are needed to get a better sense of whether an effective and long-term teacher can be predicted based on the reasons to teach initially expressed by an individual. For example, do most successful career teachers express similar reasons for choosing the profession in the first place? Our nation's schools and the children who attend them could benefit from an increase in our knowledge base on how to recruit effective teachers who stay in the schools where they are needed most, and where traditional and alternative programs alike can find these individuals. Further, it is critically important to build on extant research on those who consider teaching and ultimately choose not to pursue it (Shaw, 1996). Future studies should look at individuals who are not working in teaching to get a better sense of why some talented individuals do not consider teaching as an attractive or viable career path.

Without doubt, teachers make important contributions to society through their time spent developing the social, emotional, and intellectual worlds of children and adolescents. Evidence for the lasting impression that teachers make on their students lies in this study, through the model influences theme, and elsewhere through idealized images of teachers (Eliassen, 1932; Fielstra, 1955; Lortie, 1975; Olsen, 2008; Roberson et al., 1983; Young, 1995). It behooves educational researchers to continue to study alternative certification programs and the individuals who choose them because more and more of our nation's teachers are coming through ACPs (Duncan & Ochoa, 2011; Feistritzer, 2008). Given the moral dimensions of teachers' work with young learners and the rising demands placed on teachers, research that engages in explorations around those who prepare to teach, and what they think about their career choice after they begin to work in schools, will continue to be critical to the educational research community's

understandings of how to best prepare and support those who choose to teach through

whichever pathway they choose for certification.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Glossary of Terms

Accountability Context: The context in which teachers currently work, which includes, but is not limited to, high-stakes student assessments (Cuban, 2009), increased surveillance on teachers' work, and the changing role of teachers in classrooms since NCLB legislation (Valli & Buese, 2007), and rewards and penalties for schools based on student performance on standardized tests.

Alternative Certification Programs (ACPs): Programs that serve candidates who are the teacher of record in a classroom while participating in the teacher preparation program (Duncan & Ochoa, 2011, p. 8)

Early-entry Alternative Certification Program: A type of alternative certification program that expedites candidates' entry into classrooms and place candidates in teaching positions in a number of weeks.

Reasons to Teach: Participants' expressed or stated explanations for pursuing teacher certification.

**Open-ended Questionnaire Item 1**

What are the main reasons you entered the ACSM program? Why do you want to be a teacher?

What are the main reasons you stayed with the ACSM program? Why do you still want to be a teacher?

Have you ever considered withdrawing from the ACSM program? What were your reasons and why did you decide to stay?

What are the main reasons you completed the ACSM program? Do you still want to be a teacher? Why or why not?

(For the "leavers" ask) What are the main reasons you left the ACSM program? Did you decide you no longer wanted to be a teacher or were there other reasons? Please explain.

APPENDIX E
Interview 1 Protocol

1. How are things going?
2. How would you describe your K-12 schooling experiences?
3. I'm especially interested in reasons to choose teaching as a career through the ACSM program. Please tell me what factors have influenced your decision to become a teacher.
4. So, how did you come to the decision to teach?
5. Why is teaching important to you?
6. What was the most critical influence on your decision to teach? Please feel free to elaborate.
7. What do you think of teaching as a career?
8. Why did you choose to become a teacher through this program?
    a. Was the program's middle school focus part of your decision?
    b. Was the program's partnership with the school district part of your decision?
    c. Was the program's focus on high-needs, low-performing classrooms part of your decision?
9. Describe the teacher you want to be.
10. In your opinion, what are the most important roles a teacher has?
11. Describe the experience of first considering switching to a career in teaching? What was it like to think about changing careers and becoming a teacher?
12. Have any particular experiences caused you to consider teaching? Please describe.
13. Describe how you came upon the decision to enter ACSM.
14. What do you think teaching will be like?
15. What do you hope your students will think of you?
16. What is your image of good teaching?

1. We are coming to the middle of your first year as a resident teacher in a high-needs middle school. Tell me about your experiences in teaching so far. What has teaching been like for you?
2. Has anything in your own personal life changed since your initial decision to teach?
3. Has anything in your economic life changed since your initial decision to teach?
4. Has anything in the program changed since your initial decision to teach?
5. Has anything in the teaching context changed since your initial decision to teach?
6. How would you describe yourself as a teacher so far?
7. How does your teaching experience compare to what you thought it would be?
8. How do you feel about teaching at this mid-year point?
9. Tell me about the teaching context in which you teach.
10. How would you describe your students?
11. How would you describe your relationship with your students?
12. Has being in this context had any impact on your decision to teach? If so, please describe.
13. What are the most important roles, in your opinion, that a teacher has?
14. How do you think your students would describe you as a teacher?
15. To what extent and in what ways, if any, have your past experiences in K-12 schooling influenced you as a teacher?
16. Describe your goals as a teacher.
17. What do you think about your decision to teach?
18. With 5 months of teaching experience, what do you think of teaching as a career?
19. Has the ACSM coursework influenced your decision to teach?
20. Has teaching half time influenced your decision to teach?

APPENDIX G
Interview 3 Protocol

1. We are coming to the end of your first year as a resident teacher in a high-needs middle school. Tell me about your school year. (Probe for successes and struggles and ask participant to elaborate on those experiences)
2. Is teaching what you thought it would be?
3. What did you learn about teaching?
4. Has anything in your own personal life changed since your initial decision to teach?
5. Has anything in your economic life changed since your initial decision to teach?
6. Has anything in the program changed since your initial decision to teach?
7. Has anything in the teaching context changed since your initial decision to teach?
8. Please describe your current image of good teaching.
9. Has your image of good teaching changed since the beginning of the school year? If so, how?
10. What are the most important roles, in your opinion, that a teacher has?
11. To what extent and in what ways did your experiences as a student influence you as a teacher?
12. Tell me about your decision to teach. How do you feel about that decision now?
13. If you had to make the decision all over again, would you still choose to teach?
14. If you had to make the decision all over again, would you still choose to work in a high-needs middle school?
15. Has race – of you or your students – played a role in your teaching experiences? Please elaborate.
16. Looking back, what were the most critical influences on you as a teacher?
17. Did any experiences this past year make you reconsider your decision to teach?
18. Did any experiences in this past year *reaffirm* your decision to become a teacher?
19. Has the ACSM coursework influenced your decision to teach?
20. Has teaching half time influenced your decision to teach?
21. What is it like to become a teacher in an alternative preparation program that prepares you through experiences in a high-needs middle school?
22. Has this experience had any impact on your decision to teach? Please elaborate.

I have re-read Heidi's and Michelle's interview transcriptions, and there are some similarities in what they two participants have said. Both participants mentioned that while they wanted to stay in teaching, they both wanted to eventually teach high school. In fact, according to them, this experience has shown them that they do not want to teach middle school students.

There was also an apparent difference in the way the two participants spoke about the influence that their own K – 12 schooling experiences had on their teaching so far. For Michelle, her own experience as a middle school student has made her, in a sense, more empathetic to the students because she remembers some of the ways she behaved as a middle school student. For Heidi, however, her own experiences as a student have made her less empathetic to the students because she claims her background was more upper class and affluent, and allegedly, the students were easier. Heidi also mentioned that when she was a student, she was in the gifted and talented/IB track, and so activities went more smoothly. When Heidi plans activities for her students, she said they rarely go as planned. It sounds to me like Heidi is having a harder time relating to the students she is teaching because her background is so dissimilar to her students.

I just re-read Randolph's interview, and Randolph certainly talks a lot and in great detail about his experiences at his school. Randolph still speaks about racial issues, this time he spoke about his membership in the African American community, and as a minority, he feels he is more accepted by his minority students. Randolph described his school like home because it reminds him of where he went to school. Like Heidi and

Michelle, Randolph spoke about staying in teaching, but he did talk about teaching older children, high school, and even about teaching in college. Randolph was surprised by the fact that in his role as a teacher, he does more counseling with the middle school students and hasn't gotten to as much higher level math, which was something he mentioned he was looking forward to.

In Grace's interview, she seemed to focus more on the relational aspects of teaching than on the instructional or management aspects of teaching. Grace said she did reconsider teaching, but then she saw two students that she worked with at previous jobs, and it put everything into perspective for her. Grace also mentioned that she was trying to be more reflective in her role as a teacher, because the ACSM program professors encourage residents to become reflective practitioners. Also, Grace mentioned the influence that her own experiences as a student who did not speak English as her first language had on her in terms of word problems in particular. Grace mentioned that word problems were hard for her because she wasn't as familiar with the English language, so she implied she was empathetic to her students when she introduced word problems to them.

APPENDIX I
Summary Table of Studies Conducted on Reasons to Teach

Researcher	Participants	Analytic Approach	Findings
Eliassen (1932)	686 new teachers who graduated from Ohio State University	Open-ended Questionnaire; Typological Analysis	A like for the work of teaching (idealized images); a love for children (vocational)
Fielstra (1955)	230 teacher education students at UCLA	Closed-response surveys; descriptive statistics	To help children develop values of citizenship (vocational); influence of former teacher (idealized image)
Haubrich (1960)	194 undergraduates in the College of Education at the University of Utah	Closed-response surveys; descriptive statistics	Job security (extrinsic); to work with children (vocational)
Hood (1965)	226 sophomores at the University of Montana	Closed-response surveys; descriptive statistics	Service to society; the opportunity to work with young people (vocational); professional training to prepare for other occupations (extrinsic)
Mori (1966)	556 undergraduate teacher education students at Michigan State University	Closed-response surveys; descriptive statistics	Development of students, opportunity to pursue favorite academic subject (vocational); opportunity for expression (idealized image)
Wood (1978)	52 prospective teachers at SUNY College at Old Westbury	Open-ended surveys; Typological analysis	Personal experiences with children (life change)
Roberson, Keith, & Page (1983)	High School and Beyond (HSB) data set	Closed-response surveys; Inferential statistics	A desire to work with friendly people (idealized image)

Freidus (1989)	Two men and two women	Case study	Low salary and gender deterred from teaching (extrinsic); desire to combine home values with workplace values (life change)
Crow, Levin, & Nager (1990)	13 prospective teachers from Bank Street College	Researchers claim ethnographic study	Financial obligations, negative notions of teaching deterred from teaching (extrinsic); birth of a child (life change)
Young (1995)	272 prospective teachers from highly selective teacher education program	Open-ended and closed-response survey	Desire to work with children, service to society, desire to shape the future; desire to reform schools (vocational); Enjoyment for the nature of teaching (idealized image)
Shaw (1996)	One African American male and one African American female	Interviews; Narrative Inquiry	Deterred from teaching by pejorative views of teachers and lack of status (extrinsic)
Gordon (2000)	20 Asian Americans in California	Interviews; Typological Analysis	Deterred from teaching by low prestige, low salaries, and cultural mismatch between Confucian and American ideals of education (extrinsic)
Eick (2002)	19 science teachers	Autobiographies; Personal Life History	Shape students' lives and help students understand content (vocational)
Richardson & Watt (2005)	74 prospective teachers in graduate teacher education program in Melbourne, Australia	Mixed Methods - Typological analysis; Exploratory factor analysis	Prestige of teachers, financial reward, time for family (extrinsic)

Richardson & Watt (2006)	1,653 teacher education candidates from three universities in Australia	Closed-response surveys; Inferential statistics	Perceived teaching abilities (idealized image); value of teacher and service to society (vocational)
Olsen (2008)	Six new English teachers	Interviews; Discourse analysis	Gender (idealized image); perceived compatibility with work of teaching (idealized image)
Tamir (2008)	10 prospective teachers from an elite university	Interviews; Typological Analysis	Help children and society, making a difference for kids, past experience teaching (vocational); student loan forgiveness (extrinsic)

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