CAREER UNCERTAINTY IN PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

by

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ABSTRACT

This mixed methods study considered career uncertainty in collegiate students studying to become early childhood teachers. The sample included 58 pre-service teachers in a small, private university. All pre-service teachers had applied, been accepted to, and begun coursework in the university's College of Education early childhood education program. Nearly 68% of participants noted that they had experienced career uncertainty. They attributed their uncertainty to aspects of the career, personal ability, trouble with school, and consideration of another profession. Over 60% of the participants marked on a survey that they had overcome their uncertainty by deciding they had come too far in the program to quit. Additionally, about 80% of the participants stated on the questionnaire that they had overcome their uncertainty by talking to other individuals, including their parents, friends, peers, and practicing teachers.

Introduction

My face in my hands, I tried to cover up the tears streaming down my cheeks. I had finally hit a breaking point, and I did not know what to do. More than two years into a four-year track to becoming a teacher, I did not know if I was finally realizing that maybe I did not really want to be a teacher. I had already applied and been accepted into the College of Education. I was uncertain about my career choice. This was my experience as a junior going through the College of Education Program.

Undeniably, students who choose to major in education with the goal of becoming a teacher may experience career uncertainty. This uncertainty might lead students who major in education without being fully committed to the teaching profession to leave teaching after only a few years in the classroom. According to a U.S. Department of Education survey, 44% of the teachers that began their career in 2007 had left the field by 2011 (2015). Furthermore, 14% of teachers have been shown to leave the teaching profession after one year, and 46% leave after five years (Ingersoll, 2002). While a variety of reasons may cause these statistics, it could be that uncertainty while in college makes teacher attrition more likely. I know now that there is a definite possibility that I could become one of these statistics because of my career uncertainty as a pre-service teacher.

Although uncertain about my choice, I decided to continue in my Early Childhood Education tract. Realizing that many people graduate with particular degrees but undertake careers in different fields left me feeling more at ease with the uncertainty. I became content with being uncertain and chose to embrace it instead. Teaching has been something I have always longed to do, but now I am at peace with uncertainty in my future, whether it includes teaching or not.

Deciding to Enter the Teaching Profession

Individuals choose to become teachers for a variety of reasons; these motivations can include altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic purposes and can stem from any number of personal experiences (Richards, 1960).

Altruistic

Pre-service teachers often find altruistic reasons the most motivating for becoming a teacher (Dünbar, 2014). Altruistic reasons for choosing the teaching profession stem from a feeling of purpose and duty toward bettering society. Some researchers have concluded that the most common motivating factors for pre-service teachers were to make a social contribution and influence children. Both of these reasons are classified as altruistic reasons (Dündar, 2014; Reif & Warring, 2002; Stuyven, Jacobs, & Docky, 2013). In one study conducted by researchers Reif and Warring, 339 pre-service university students completed a survey about their interest in the teaching career. The results revealed that 75% of the undergraduates listed "love kids" as one of their top three answers. The answer "making a difference" came soon after with 46% of the participants noting this choice as one of their top three reasons for entering the profession (2002). While the previously stated reasons might be the most common motivators for individuals to choose the teaching profession, there are a variety of others including enhancing social equality and making a difference in the world (Dündar, 2014; Reif & Warring, 2002; Stuyven et al., 2013).

International research supports the notion that altruistic reasons for becoming a teacher are prevalent around the globe. Dündar (2014) surveyed 176 freshman pre-service teachers at two universities in Turkey. The results showed that there are a variety of reasons why pre-service teachers chose the teaching career, but the most influential factors were social utility values. Specifically, pre-service teachers have a desire to enhance social equity, to shape the future of children, and to make a social contribution. In another international study, researchers surveyed 1,805 pre-service primary teachers and found that two of the most prevalent reasons why

participants entered the profession were to help children and make a difference in the world (Stuyven et al., 2013).

Extrinsic

The teaching profession also offers many extrinsic motivations. Extrinsic motivations "are related to job characteristics not inherent to the job itself, such as long holidays, salary, status and working conditions" (Stuyven et al., 2013, p. 1009). Incentives such as others' praise and money are classified as extrinsic motivation. Researchers have noted that an educator's schedule, which allows for additional time for family, is a noteworthy reason to become a teacher (Dündar, 2014; Reif & Warring, 2002). Traditionally, an educator's schedule goes from Monday to Friday, from about 7am-4pm. Additionally, teachers usually have a winter vacation, spring break, summer vacation, and a variety of other holidays. Such a schedule tends to align nicely when considering a family because children will have a similar school schedule, and thus a parent could spend breaks and holidays with his or her family instead of worrying about organizing time off of work. Job security, knowing that there will always be a need for teachers, along with job transferability, knowing that there are schools and teachers needed everywhere, are also reasons individuals chose to become teachers (Dündar, 2014).

Intrinsic

Intrinsic motivations play a role in many people's decision to pursue teaching (Stern, 1958, p. 76). Intrinsic motivation originates from one's own self; when someone is interested or has a passion for an activity, they are intrinsically motived to do the activity (Stuyven et al., 2013). One example of an intrinsic motivator is that the teaching profession warrants an opportunity to develop as an individual and continue learning due to the challenges of the profession (Reif & Warring, 2002; Stuyven et al., 2013).

The opportunity to work with children is another noteworthy intrinsic motivation for becoming a teacher (Bloomfield, 2010; Dundar, 2014; Fokkens-Bruinsma, & Canrinus, 2014; Reif & Warring, 2002). Fokkens-Buinsma and Canrinus conclude in their study that teachers motivated to teach due to a desire to work with children and adolescents positively affects how engaged in the profession the individual will be in the future (2014).

Career Uncertainty

University students have been known to show career uncertainty throughout their college experience (Orndorff & Herr, 1996). Additionally, data on university websites (e.g., Pennsylvania State University, Princeton, LaVerne) show that it is common for university students to change majors between the freshman and senior years. While career uncertainty can stem from general anxiety and indecisiveness, it can also be a result of a variety of other factors. Often, career uncertainty is linked to an individual's lack of accurate information and career readiness (Trevor-Roberts, 2006). University students tend to only entertain a handful of career options, which could result in an uneducated decision to pursue a career path towards which they are not fully passionate (Orndorff & Herr, 1996).

While career uncertainty affects students who have not declared a major, some researchers study career uncertainty among students who have declared their majors. Orndorff and Herr (1996) conducted a study at Pennsylvania State University where a mix of 96 declared and 93 undeclared students were asked to rank their career uncertainty; the results expectantly showed that undeclared students had a higher rate of career uncertainty. However, both declared and undeclared students had a limited view of the working world, which could have contributed to career uncertainty. Students with declared majors expressed more interest by using a greater depth of exploration in their career path than students who were undeclared. Not only do students with undeclared majors experience career uncertainty, but students who have declared their majors also

show signs of uncertainty (Orndorff & Herr, 1996).

Students who have undeclared majors may receive career development assistance, whereas students who have declared majors receive much less (Orndorff & Herr, 1996.) If students choose to pursue a career from only a few options and receive little critical examination, they enter into a career that they do not feel passionately about. Thus, Orndorff and Herr's study concluded that declared students need occupational exploration as much as undeclared students (1996).

Recently, career counselors working with people at all life stages that struggle with career uncertainty have shifted their counseling approach to assist their clients to be more career conscious. Being career conscious includes one making sense of current and future life roles, settings, and events that one might experience. Once assessed, individuals reflect upon their visions and create purposeful action plans to attain their goals (Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnston, 2014, p. 11). Career consciousness proactively considers counterfactual thoughts (what could have been) and distinct callings one feels toward a particular career. Such a calculated and goal-oriented procedure is not conducted for students before choosing a major and career in college

Donald Super's Life-Career Rainbow Model of career development visually represents a variety of different life stages one might pass through (Gysbers, N., Heppner, M., & Johnston, J., 2014, p. 37). It is noted that life stages can take different amounts of time for every person. One's life path is also rather fluid among the life stages. The Rainbow Model indicates when a person reaches career maturity, meaning that the person is ready to develop his or her appropriate career (Gysbers et al., 2014, p. 27). This model describes career development as a cyclical process of development and thus something that is never complete. When used in terms of collegiate students, the model suggests that students who are uncertain with their career choice might not be developmentally prepared to move on or overcome their uncertainty until they have developed at their particular life stage.

Additionally, the Social Cognitive Theory connects three aspects of career development, which includes developing interest, the choice of educational and career options, and performance along with persistence in education and career goals (Gysbers et al., 2014, p. 37). Such a theory would suggest that a student might experience career uncertainty if any of these three aspects of career development wavered. This change in career development could be caused by a variety of experiences and environment factors. Additionally, this theory discusses the term "self-efficacy beliefs." These beliefs are defined as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance (Gysbers et al., 2014, p. 37)." Students who begin a career track and notice that they are not doing well in terms of grades or understanding might experience negative self-efficacy beliefs that affect their confidence in their own self-success.

Conclusion

Researchers have conducted studies about why individuals might be interested in the teaching profession, along with how prevalent career uncertainty is in college students. However, seemingly no research has considered career uncertainty for college students interested in the teaching profession. Such a study is immensely important to consider because career uncertainty during collegiate years could eventually contribute to career attrition.

In the present study, I explored whether or not career uncertainty exists among pre-service teachers and how, if at all, pre-service teachers overcome such uncertainty. The research questions guiding this study were: (1) In what ways, if any, do Early Childhood through grade sixth (EC-6) majors experience uncertainty after deciding to become a teacher? (2) How do they respond to the uncertainty?

Method

This study was conducted using mixed methodology, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods in an effort to answer the research questions.

Context and Sample

A small, Southern, private university's College of Education, through which this study was performed, offers a distinct Early Childhood Education program for undergraduate students who are interested in teaching early childhood aged to sixth grade students. Students apply for admission into the program near the end of their sophomore year. Once admitted, the students have two years of coursework during which they stay in a cohort and take a variety of methods courses. The students are also required to complete a series of fieldwork experiences in preparation for their future teaching careers.

Eligible participants included all juniors and seniors who had been admitted into the College of Education Early Childhood Education program. I visited all four classes of pre-service teachers in the program and explained my research. I invited all students to participate in the study.This participant pool included 101 eligible students. Of the 101 students eligible 57% (N=58) completed the survey and thus became the sample.

Data Sources

Data for this study included an online survey (N=58) and semi-structured interviews (N=2). The electronic survey I developed consisted of eleven questions that asked about possible uncertainty about becoming a teacher, when such uncertainty occurred, and how the participants overcame the uncertainty. Questions were created based on existing literature (See Appendix A). Two participants were randomly selected to take part in a single 10-15 minute semi-structured interview (See Appendix B).

Data Collection

Within a week's time period, I visited four classes containing eligible participants to invite students to participate in the study. At the end of the week, a digital link to the survey was then sent out via email using the program Qualtrics. The link was active for two weeks after the original email was sent. An additional reminder email was sent the second week the survey was open.

The last question of the survey asked if the student would be willing to participate in an interview with the researcher. If the participants qualified and were willing, they would leave their contact information. Twenty participants left their contact information noting their willingness to participate in an interview. The researcher entered the names into a randomizer website and randomly selected two names. I contacted both participants to set up appointments to pursue the interviews, and both agreed.

The interview was directed by 10 predetermined questions to learn more about the interviewees' choice in the teaching career and any uncertainty they had experienced since choosing to pursue the profession. The interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed.

Data Analysis

Survey. As shown in Appendix A, the survey included 11 questions: nine multiple choice, one open-ended, and one that invited participants to take part in a follow-up interview. Once the survey link had expired, I explored the answers received. The program, Qualtrics, organized multiple choice responses in readable formats including tables and charts with percentages of responses by question.

One question was open-ended: "What caused [your career] uncertainty?" This question was followed by a series of questions exploring the presence of uncertainty within the participants. Thirty-eight participants responded to this open-ended question. I exported the results from Qualtrics and printed the pages. I then cut out each participant's individual response as I read through all of the data so that there were 38 pieces of text to analyze. If a person reported more

than one way they overcame their uncertainty, I cut out each response separately. For example, one participant stated, "My ability to do it, scared I was going to lose interest and worries of what the job entails." This response was split into three portions including, "My ability to do it," "scared I was going to lose interest," and "worries of what the job entails." Eventually, the first and second portion were sorted into the "personal ability" category; the third was sorted into "aspects of the career" category.

After cutting and splitting responses, I compiled 57 individual answers. Data analysis included rereading the data and physically grouping the slips of paper containing similar ideas. I continued to compare and contrast the forming groups creating four main over-arching groups or themes: aspects of the career, personal ability, trouble with school, and other professions.

Interviews. After transcribing the recorded interviews, I read through each interview text separately while making notes in the margins, such as observing when participant B explained twice that she was "scared." I associated her concern with the category of "personal ability" that had formed from the interview open-question responses. Similarly, participant A noted that "[I] was leaning towards going into the medical field." I connected this comment to the survey result category "other profession." I looked for patterns in the codes and drew conclusions across the transcripts (Galvan, 2013).

Limitations

While this study's results provided valuable insight about career uncertainty in pre-service teachers, there were some limitations. First, the participants contributed to this study during the fall semester of either their junior or senior year. This meant that the participants had not completed the entire Early Childhood Education program. It is possbile that uncertainty is also prevalent at the end of the program. Second, in addition to the timing of the survey, the sample size is a limitation. With a sample size of 58 participants, the pool of participants was rather small.

Additionally, all of these students were from one university. Results should be interpreted accordingly.

Results

The first research question was: *In what ways, if any, do EC-6 majors experience uncertainty after deciding to become a teacher?* Out of 58 participants, 40 declared that they had experienced career uncertainty, which means that more than 68% of the participants admitted to experiencing uncertainty of pursuing a career in teaching. There was no distinct time period when most of the participants experienced this uncertainty. Figure 1 shows that the career uncertainty is experienced at a variety of times within the education program (N=38). Interestingly, when asked if they were currently feeling uncertain about becoming a teacher, only 15 participants marked 'yes,' which means that 60% of the participants who answered this question had either never felt uncertain or somehow got over their uncertainty.

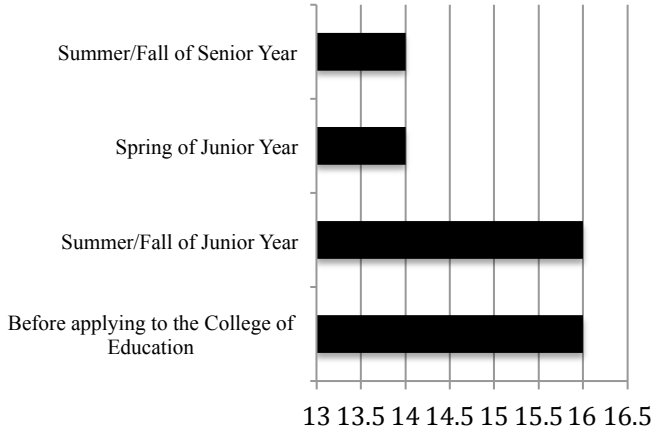

Figure 1. Number of pre-service teachers experiencing career uncertainty.

The results from the open-ended survey question, "What caused the uncertainty?" indicated that causes of the uncertainty fell into four main categories: aspects of the career, personal abilities, trouble with the College of Education's program and classes, and interest in another profession. With 20 responses, the category that included "aspects of the career" was the most prevalent. Half

of the responses in this category included concerns about the magnitude of the career's workload and responsibilities. It also included the school environment, which encompassed points about negative field experiences and facts about the teaching environment such as having to "work with teachers who do not like their job." Job security was another aspect of the career that was noted in the responses. One example response in this section stated, "Not knowing where I would get a job." The final aspect of the career discussed was financial insecurity. One participant specified, "[Teaching] would not be a financially supportive career."

In addition to "aspects of career," another category of career uncertainty formed was "one's personal ability." This category was the second most popular category and included 17 responses. Results in this category included a variety of viewpoints including apprehension about losing interest in the career, concern about not being "cut out" for the job, and even utilizing skills and techniques learned during university lectures inside their future classrooms.

The catetory "trouble with school" included 11 responses. Some examples of results included comments about undergraduate experiences such as feeling rushed into the process of choosing a major and the amount of schoolwork expected being in the classroom. Other comments included personal issues such as not taking enough time to explore other career options.

Another category of what caused participants' career uncertainty included "another profession," with six responses. Some participants added that their additional work experience opened their eyes to other opportunities. Others expressed interest in other careers because of personal skills or talents.

When asked about their experiences with career uncertainty, both interview participants reported that they had experienced such feelings. Participant A explained that her uncertainty stemmed from interest in a different profession, "I was kind of leaning towards going into the

medical field." In addition, her uncertainty stemmed from unknowns of the teaching profession, and certain aspects of the career including the challenges and "overwhelming" responsibility load.

Each of these reasons for uncertainty fit the categories that resulted from the survey. First, her interest in the medical field shows that a different profession may have been influencing her career uncertainty. Additionally, feeling uneasy because of the unknowns of a teaching career, challenges, and overwhelming work load can all be categorized into the classification of feeling uncertain due to the aspects of the job.

Participant B also expressed reasons of uncertainty that could be classified into the four categories of uncertainty that emerged from the surveys. *Aspects of the career* was her most common stated reason for uncertainty, as she discussed the challenges of the profession, "kids [who] are very intimidating," no variation in career, specialization of inclusion class versus a self-contained class, and logistics of the career. She also stated, "I don't think [I'll] ever fully be prepared." Finally, she discussed feelings of being scared, which were both in reference to her personal ability. First, she mentioned feeling scared "being 18 years old and making that decision [to become a teacher]." She also mentioned that becoming a teacher "was just kind of scary."

Nearly 40% of participants admited that they still are feeling uncertain with a career in teaching at this point it time. When asked to rank their feelings of uncertainty. As shown in Figure 2, most participants, 53%, admitted that on a scale from 1-7, they are about a 3, which means that they are not extremely uncertain at this time. Three participants note their uncertainty ranking at a level two, and only one participant notes they are experiencing uncertainty at a level four and another at a level five. While there were no participants who declared their uncertainty at a level seven, they feel the most uncertain they possibly good, two participants selected level six, only one away from maximum uncertainty.

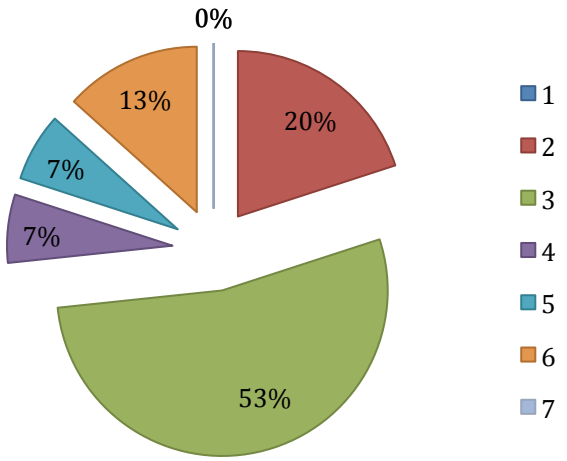

Figure 2. Amount of uncertainty in participants.

The second research question this study addressed was: *How do pre-service teachers respond to career uncertainty?* As seen in Table 1, participants overcame their uncertainty through a variety of techniques. The most common reason, chosen by 60% of the participants, was that "I figured I had come this far and should continue." Content from interview Participant B supported this claim by stating, "I kind of was just like, 'I'm going to stick this out' but I need to be wary." The second most common response on the survey was that the participants talked to family to settle their uncertainty, with 47% of participants' selection. Both interview participants talked, in depth, about this response. When asked if there was a specific event or person who helped them work through a time of uncertainty, Participant A stated, "Definitely my mom." Participant B also discussed talking with her mom about her uncertainty. With 40% of responses, the third highest response included talking to a peer to overcome career uncertainty. Talking to a practicing teacher received 20% of responses. Participant B stated that she talked to a "mentor teacher at her school

that [she had] always communicated with." The selection, 'I did not know what else to do' received responses from 20% of the participants during the survey.

Table 1

How Pre-Service Teachers Overcame Their Career Uncertainty

#	Answer	%	Count
1	I figure I have come this far and should continue.	60.00%	9
2	I don't know what else I would do.	20.00%	3
3	I talked to may parents/family about my uncertainty and they influenced my decision to stay in this career path.	46.67%	7
4	I talked to a practicing teacher about my uncertainty and he/she influenced my decision to stay in this career path.	20.00%	3
5	I talked to my friends about my uncertainty and he/she influenced my decision to stay in this career path.	26.67%	4
6	I talked to my peers/classmates about my uncertainty and he/she influenced my decision to stay in this career path.	40.00%	6
7	I talked to my advisor/faculty about my uncertainty and he/she influenced my decision to stay in this career path.	0.00%	0
9	Other (please explain)	26.67%	4
	Total	100%	15

No pre-service teachers noted that talking to an advisor or faculty member helped them get over their career uncertainty on the survey. Interestingly, this way of coping with uncertainty was heavily emphasized in Participant B's interview. She first discussed the reaffirmation she felt once taking two education courses by two separate teachers. She explained that these professors spoke about teaching like, "'This is how it is' … and they both had experience as teachers, so hearing their experiences was cool too." She quickly named another professor and stated, "They were definitely the main reasons I want to be a teacher, just from how they teach and what they teach too." By the end of the interview, Participant B had mentioned three additional staff members who had influenced her to remain in a career path in education. While not as in depth, Participant A

also expressed the influence of the faculty and staff within the College of Education. After being asked about a particularly influential faculty or staff member, she mentioned, "not any [professors] in particular. I mean, they've all been excellent…They all have equally."

Although not reported on the surveys, both interview participants talked about overcoming their career uncertainty by being reminded that they love working with kids. Participant A said that "I have always felt comfortable dealing with and interacting with that [young] age group" in addition to "I always knew I wanted to work with kids." Similarly, Participant B stated that "I love working with kids." Motivations for entering the teaching career, especially loving to work with children, seemed to play a role in the interview participants' ability to overcome their career uncertainty.

Discussion

The results of this study showed evidence of career uncertainty among pre-service teachers. While reasons for the uncertainty varied, understanding the ways the participants showed they overcame their uncertainty could be of assistance for faculty and staff of educator preparation programs.

Results from this study revealed four main causes of uncertainty. Data showed that "aspects of the career" was the most common cause of career uncertainty, with 20 responses. In short, participants believed that the teaching profession can be overwhelming and require a lot of work. To assist with this cause of uncertainty, teacher education programs should include field experiences so that preservice teachers can observe the challenges and notice a variety of experienced professionals dealing with the magnitude of the career. Connecting pre-service teachers to mentor teachers and first-year teachers while in the field could also assist in pre-service teachers better understanding "aspects of the career." Exposure to multiple professionals could help pre-service teachers visualize themselves in a similar position a few years later and

overcoming the challenges of the work. Additionally, pre-service teachers may be able to take note of any tips or suggestions relayed to them from practicing teachers. Such field experience exposure could help decrease pre-service teachers' career uncertainty. As referred to previously, the amount of career uncertainty experienced by pre-service teachers decreases after the first semester within the program. Because the program in this study does include a variety of consistent field experience, this could be the reason career uncertainty decreases after only one semester in the program.

Connecting pre-service teachers with recent program graduates could also help ease that uncertainty as more dialogue and experiences are exchanged. For example, panels of beginning teachers could visit with pre-service teachers to discuss what they have dealt with and how they have overcome challenges of the teaching profession. While uncertainty might spike at the beginning of the program, such panels could be beneficial throughout the program to address uncertainties at different times and any questions that might arise as students proceed through the coursework.

The results of this study also revealed that most students who experience career uncertainty experience the uncertainty either before applying to the College of Education or the semester after they begin courses within the College of Education. Data collected indicated that 32 participants had experienced career uncertainty before applying or during the first semester of the program. This number dropped to 28 participants who experienced career uncertainty in the following two semesters. According to this sample, uncertainty appears to peak early in the pre-service program.

Because career uncertainty is most prevalent at the forefront of the program, support soon after admission might prove to be beneficial to students as they begin the program. The data show that uncertainty tends to level off after the first semester, which means that support earlier on in the program would be more beneficial than later. Faculty and staff assisting with the admissions

process into the College of Education also might consider how critical this time is to many of the applicants. Such knowledge may be beneficial as they discuss and talk with the applicants. These results could also be useful to academic advisors and program faculty as they interact with students who are about to and just beginning the program. Program faculty and staff should be prepared to have ongoing conversations about "aspects of the career" especially before and shorly after pre-service teachers enter into the program.

Researchers have explored why teachers chose to enter into the teaching profession--these reasons include altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivations. Altruistic motivations, specifically contributing to society and influencing children, proved to be the most common motivator for entering the teaching career (Dündar, 2014; Reif & Warring, 2002; Stuyven, Jacobs, et al., 2013). Interview Participant A stated that "[she] always knew [that she] wanted to work with kids." While altruistic motivators seem to be huge draws for individuals to enter the profession, when asked how pre-service teachers overcame their uncertainty to stay in the profession, altruistic reasons were not noted.

According to the data 60% of participants simply thought that they had come far enough that they should just continue with this path, whereas 46% of participants recognized that talking through their uncertainty with family helped overcome their uncertainty. Deciding to continue in the program hinges on talking to others (family, friends, peers, etc.). Interestingly, although 0% of participants declared on the survey that they talked to faculty or staff to overcome their uncertainty. both interviews revealed that talking to professors was a way to work through career uncertainty. Interview Participant B specifically mentioned the important role that multiple mentor teachers played in her decision to stay in the teaching profession. She said the mentor teachers "were definitely the main reasons I want to be a teacher…" She also disucussed when talking about two of her professors that "they both had experience as teachers so hearing their experiences

was cool too." Further research might delve into what is said during such imperative discussions. It would be interesting to note if revisiting why the individual entered into the profession was part of the conversation.

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Appendix A

Survey

1. Do you plan on being a classroom teacher?
    a. Yes
    b. No (If no, you may exit the survey)
2. What is your current standing?
    a. EC-6 Junior block
    b. EC-6 Senior block
3. When did you decide to major in Early Childhood Education?
    a. Before I entered College
    b. Freshman year of college
    c. Sophomore year of college
    d. Junior year of college
    e. Other
4. How many times did you change your major before becoming an Early Childhood Education major?
    a. 0
    b. 1
    c. 2
    d. 3+
5. Have you ever experienced uncertainty about becoming a teacher?
    a. Yes
    b. No (If no, you may exit the survey)

6. If so, when did you experience uncertainty? (CHECK AS MANY AS APPLY)
    a. Before applying to the College of Education
    b. Summer/Fall of junior year of college
    c. Spring of junior year of college
    d. Summer/Fall of senior year of college
7. What caused the uncertainty? Please describe.
8. Are you currently feeling uncertain about choosing to become a teacher?
    a. Yes
    b. No
9. If so, how would you rank your uncertainty of being a teacher today? (HIGHLY UNCERTAIN = 7) Please select a number 1-7, 1 being very little uncertainty (being very certain) and 7 being very uncertain.
10. If you ever experienced uncertainty about becoming a teacher, but you decided to remain an Early Childhood Education major, which of the following apply to you? (Check as many responses as are relevant):
    a. I figured I had come this far and should continue.
    b. I didn't know what else I would do.
    c. I talked to my parents/family about my uncertainty and they influenced my decision to stay in this career path.
    d. I talked to a practicing teacher about my uncertainty and he/she influenced my decision to stay in this career path.
    e. I talked to my friends about my uncertainty and they influenced my decision to stay in this career path.
    f. I talked to my peers/classmates about my uncertainty and they influenced my

decision to stay in this career path.

g. I talked to my advisor/faculty member about my uncertainty and he/she influenced my decision to stay in this career path.

h. N/A

i. Other (please explain)_____

11. If you have experienced uncertainty about becoming a teacher and are willing to participate in an interview in October or November, please type your first and last name and your email address in the space below. Your name will not be used in any reports of the study.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. Tell me where you are in the Early Childhood Education program and how things are going right now.
2. How long have you wanted to be a teacher?
3. Did you ever question your decision to become a teacher?
4. Can you tell me about the first time you questioned becoming a teacher and what was going on in your life at the time?
5. On a scale 1-7 (7 being very uncertain), rank your uncertainty of becoming a teacher at that time.
6. What caused this uncertainty, and about how long did the uncertainty last?
7. How did you deal with the uncertainty?
8. Did you ever experience a different time of uncertainty? Please explain. How did you deal with the uncertainty?
9. Was there a specific event or person who helped you work through the period of uncertainty? If so, please tell me about that.
10. You expressed feelings of uncertainty in your career choice, yet you're still in the Early Childhood Education program. Can you tell me why?