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Exploring the Nature of Teacher Professionalism in an Era of High-Stakes Accountability

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

by

Leigh McNeill De La Victoria

December 2014

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. John Wills, Chairperson
Dr. Judith Sandholtz
Dr. Margaret Nash

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The Dissertation of Leigh McNeill De La Victoria is approved:

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University of California, Riverside

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Exploring the Nature of Teacher Professionalism in an Era of High-Stakes Accountability

by

Leigh McNeill De La Victoria

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate School of Education
University of California, Riverside, December 2014
Dr. John Wills, Chairperson

According to existing research, teacher professionalism has been severely compromised during this most recent era of high stakes accountability in education. Studies have shown a significant lack of teacher autonomy regarding curricular and instructional decision-making, leading researchers and those in education to question the current status and nature of teacher professionalism. To investigate the current state of teacher professionalism in elementary education I conducted a qualitative case study in two elementary schools with vastly different achievement levels and varying degrees of teacher experience. Data included observations of teaching in classrooms, observations of staff meetings and grade level meetings, interviews with teachers, interviews with administrators and collection of documents, such as curriculum and assessment data. Findings indicate that micro-level contextual factors such as physical and cultural environments, student achievement levels, role of administration, and teacher experience, to be central in determining the nature of professionalism at each school. Additionally, conceptualizations of professionalism did not always dictate nor even translate into

teacher practice at each site. While findings from previous studies suggest that teacher professionalism and practice are strongly influenced by macro-level educational decision-making, this research demonstrates the importance of attending to site level factors in shaping conceptualizations of professionalism and teachers' professional practice.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Those who can, do; those who can’t, teach,” is an adage I have never quite understood. How can something be taught without an adequate knowledge base behind it, and without the freedom to choose how best to teach it? In my experience, in life and in education, I have found that being able to teach a concept usually indicates an adequate level of mastery of said concept; however, as sociocultural theory posits, perception is everything. Thoughts regarding the practice of teaching are conflicting and controversial. Thoughts regarding teaching as a profession are even more contentious as teacher practice has been severely altered, and arguably further constrained by strongly upheld educational policy. While few would argue that teacher practice informs public perception, others believe that public perception informs teacher practice. Much of the research on teaching conducted during the era of No Child Left Behind would confirm the latter (Ballet, Kelchtermans, and Loughran, 2006; Barrett, 2009; Brint and Teele, 2008; Dorgan, 2004; Lee, 2004; Nichols and Berliner, 2005; Pedulla, Abrams, Madaus, Russell, Ramos, Miao, 2003; Smith and Kovacs, 2011; Stillman, 2011; Valli and Buese, 2007; Valli, Croninger, Chambliss, Graeber, and Buese, 2008; Wills, 2007; Wills and Sandholtz, 2009). As these authors argue, the larger than life macro-level decision-making that has occurred throughout the last two decades has significantly changed the nature of teacher practice, and therefore the increasingly compromised status of teacher professionalism. This issue, however, is not as black and white as it initially appears. As this study illustrates, both political *and* social contexts determine how teacher professionalism is perceived and enacted. Within these contexts, there are vast

complexities complicating existing theories regarding teacher professionalism during the NCLB era of high-stakes accountability.

Drawing on six months of fieldwork and conducted interviews, I examine the nature of teacher professionalism and how teachers conceptualize beliefs about teaching and their practice. This study looks at how factors, such as school achievement and level of teacher experience, influence the ways in which teachers see themselves as professionals and enact professionalism.

Statement of the Problem

Throughout the last two centuries, the meaning and practice of teaching has been in a constant state of redefinition. Educators, and those outside of education, continue to conceptualize teaching quite differently and subjectively. From these conceptualizations come continuous attempts at educational reform in our country. One such recent reform, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, was exceedingly successful in establishing a climate of high-stakes accountability. Programs and mandates accompanying this reform fundamentally altered the way that teachers think about themselves as professionals and their practice. Several studies (Wills & Sandholtz, 2009; Dorgan, 2004; Valli & Buese, 2007; Valli, Croninger, Chambliss, Graeber, and Buese, 2008; Stillman, 2011; Valli and Chambliss, 2007; Pedulla, Abrams, Madaus, Russell, Ramos, and Miao, 2003; Wills, 2007) demonstrate how NCLB strongly influenced teacher practice and restricted the ability of teachers to make instructional and curricular decisions. These practical constraints caused many to question the meaning of teacher professionalism in this most recent era of accountability. These constraints included narrowing the scope of the

curriculum taught in classrooms, the implementation of rigid instructional time periods (in the form of pacing guides), and a heavy emphasis on test preparation. These issues underscore the importance of studying the nature of teacher professionalism in this era because, as many researchers argue (Darling-Hammond, 1985, Hemric, Eury, & Shellman, 2010; Fresko, Kfir, & Nasser, 1997), when teachers have the freedom and autonomy as professionals to make instructional and curricular decisions, they are able to provide more meaningful and relevant learning experiences for their students.

Many researchers, such as McNeil (2000), Wills & Sandholtz (2009), and Valli & Buese (2007), illustrate how teachers are able to provide engaging and interactive lessons when not constrained by the demands of high-stakes accountability. Teachers in these studies, as well as others (Dorgan, 2004; Pedulla, et. al, 2003; Stillman, 2010), have expressed that they do not have enough time to teach the tested subjects (math and language arts) in depth, let alone other subjects, such as social studies or science. In her research, Darling-Hammond (1985) draws on the work of several scholars (Doyle, 1978; Dunkin & Biddle, 1974; McDonald & Elias, 1976; Cronbach & Snow, 1977; Gage, 1978; Brophy & Evertson, 1976) to support the idea that students learn via a multitude of learning styles. She argues that teachers must use effective strategies for teaching “students of different characteristics and at different stages in their development, for different subject areas, and for different learning goals” (p. 211). Understanding the idea of students as diverse learners is inherent to the teaching and learning processes; students learn differently and at different times. Therefore, teachers often need to differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of their students (Tomlinson, 1999). Given the

stringent requirements and ambitious goals outlined by NCLB, many teachers do not have the time or opportunity to teach using differentiated instruction, even though they recognize its value in meeting students' varying needs (Valli & Buese, 2007; Stillman, 2011).

Restricting teachers' ability to make curricular and instructional decisions, that is, their professionalism affects how they view themselves and their practice, and this in turn significantly shapes the learning that takes place in their classrooms. Given this context challenging teachers as professionals, it is important to look at the state of teacher professionalism and how it is enacted and conceptualized in different school contexts, and within the larger context of statewide and federal level accountability. Because the stakes of accountability might be different for schools based on their levels of achievement (Stillman, 2010; Valli, et. al, 2008; Diamond & Spillane, 2004), this study focuses on how professionalism was manifested in one high-performing school and one low-performing school, as measured by student achievement on the California Standards Test. This study also focuses on level of teacher experience, as research has suggested that experience is a factor when analyzing how teachers practice and conceptualize themselves as professionals in the era of NCLB (Barrett, 2009).

Since the passage of NCLB (2001), there have been many studies conducted looking at this legislation's effects on teachers and teaching. These effects and how they are perceived and enacted speak directly to the concept of professionalism. One issue already mentioned is the lack of teacher autonomy in instructional and curricular decision-making. Additional studies discussed in the literature review describe other

defining aspects of professionalism, such as teacher knowledge, collegial evaluation and collaboration, and altruistic notions of what it means to be a teacher. Together, these issues are found at the core of professionalism and its meaning. Using professionalism as a conceptual framework, I conducted an in-depth case study of teachers and how they enacted and conceptualized their practice in two elementary schools during this most recent era of high stakes accountability. Using the literature on professionalism as a conceptual lens, the following research questions were used to guide my study:

1. What is the status of teachers as professionals and teaching as a profession in an era of high stakes accountability?
2. Does the status of teachers as professionals vary according to level of school achievement and/or level of teacher experience?
3. How does the context of accountability shape professional work and professional identities of teachers?
4. How is teacher professionalism expressed in practice (utilization of expertise, curriculum development, instructional decisions, collaboration with colleagues, etc.)?

Overview of Conceptual Framework

The meaning of professionalism has undergone several transformations in the last two centuries. It also carries with it other connotations that have been socially constructed and deemed acceptable. For example, if someone is acting or dressing “professionally,” simply refers to being in accordance with the expectations of their occupation. This can range from working as a defense attorney to a store cashier. When

speaking of teacher professionalism, I am referring to the definition of professionalism on which scholars agree; that which denotes a level of public respect and trust that is not easily attainable among occupations writ large. Looking at the literature on professionalism, there is much discussion, and at times disagreement regarding its meaning; however, the framework I provide here is a synthesis of aggregated tenets of professionalism that are most agreed upon, especially in regards to teaching specifically (Brint, 1994; Dinham and Stritter, 1986; Klegon, 1978; Elbaz, 1981; Shulman, 1986, 1998; Boreham, 1983; Darling-Hammond, 1985; Friedson, 1973; Kerchner & Mitchell, 1988; Rury & Pratte, 1991; Ballet, Kelchtermans, & Loughran, 2006; Dufour, 2005; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; McClure, 1998; Wilensky, 1964).

All professions require the attainment of higher education and a vast practical skill set from which to draw upon. This knowledge that professionals acquire is fashioned into an exclusive expertise that allows them to practice autonomously. Regarding teaching, several authors argue that this knowledge base must also consist of pedagogical knowledge, which is the set of skills used to teach the subject matter (Elbaz, 1981; Shulman, 1986; Shulman, 1998). Dinham and Stritter (1986) state the importance of the “metamorphosis” that professionals undergo as they grow from novice to expert within their field. This idea underscores the process that professionals go through as they begin to use their knowledge base to garner more practical experience and eventually demonstrate the ability to make their own decisions.

Darling-Hammond (1985) explains how autonomous decision-making is the significant factor differentiating professionals from others. It serves no social purpose to

acquire and build an extensive knowledge base without the ability to use it in making choices for the betterment of a professional's clientele. As professionals begin their practice, it is natural that they will make mistakes, and Shulman (1986) argues that this experience will contribute to their growing expertise in continuing to make future decisions. Friedson (1973), as well as Kerchner and Mitchell (1988) add that professionals determine whether or not a task should be performed and then how to perform that task.

Maintaining professional standards of quality is something often questioned and doubted when it comes to occupational freedom. Herein lies the importance of collegial collaboration and evaluation in professionalism. Because only they have the credentials to be the arbiters of their own performance, professionals are consistently contributing to each other's practice as well as evaluating the performance of others. This standard setting usually takes place within their collegial associations, as well as in educational contexts, such as universities. Professionals set the guidelines for those coming into the profession, and licensing and educational institutions uphold this decided upon criteria. This tenet of professionalism becomes problematic for teachers in particular as they are organized according to what Kerchner and Mitchell (1988) describe as "Second Generation unions," which do not function like professional associations. This issue will be further elaborated upon in the following chapter.

Lastly, Brint (1994) argues that the definition of professionalism has changed according to how our society has changed. As a nation, we currently define success in terms of economic profit. This marketplace style thinking has altered what it means to be

a professional in our current context. Because of this, Brint laments that having an altruistic approach to their work is no longer requisite to being a twentieth (or twenty-first, for that matter) century professional. He states that altruism is part of the *traditional* viewpoint of professionalism, dubbing it “social trustee” professionalism, which maintains that professionals serve in the best interests of their clientele. When looking at other theorists’ and researchers’ work on professionalism, especially as it relates to teaching, I argue that altruism is still a significant part of our current professional perception. To perform the tasks associated with teaching, a level of altruism is necessary, as the public trusts teachers do what is best for their children.

These four interdependent tenets taken together make the case for professionalism. It is important to understand that this study was not performed to ascertain whether or not teachers are professionals, but rather, how their professionalism is perceived and enacted according to this framework. This study looks specifically at factors that shape this perception and enactment, and potentially impinge upon professional practice.

Main Findings

Complicated Understandings of Teacher Professionalism

Throughout this study, during my observations and interactions with my participants, an underlying question frequently appeared at the forefront of my thoughts, “Are these teachers professionals?” This is a difficult and unwieldy question, and I had to remind myself that the purpose of this study was to explore the *nature* of their professionalism and the factors that shaped that professionalism. Given that teaching is encompassed by a larger context of policy direction, state requirements, and federal

funding, it is difficult for teachers writ large to even be considered professionals at all. The structure surrounding the occupation of teaching, as well as the manner in which teachers are organized, does not allow for true professionalism as defined by the framework. With this preface understood and set aside for the moment, I argue that the practice of teaching as it occurs at the site level can be studied using a professional lens. Even with existing macro-level constraints, teachers can conceptualize and enact professionalism as they see it, and this is what I sought to analyze and understand.

Much of the literature on teacher practice argues that teacher professionalism is severely compromised by NCLB and its accompanying effects. Using large-scale research techniques, such as surveys, these studies gauge teacher perception of how this legislation affects their practice, often addressing only macro-level issues of accountability. Surveys and interview responses (conducted upon initial meeting of the teachers) only skim the surface of how NCLB affects teacher professionalism in that they do not dive deeper into *how* teachers conceptualize their practice, as well as the subsequent enactment of their practice. The significance of the data collected from this study is its focus on the micro-level context. At both Emerald Valley and Hoover Elementary, the context set the tone, both physically and metaphorically for the nature of teacher professionalism conceptualized and enacted at both schools. The remote location and relaxed atmosphere at Emerald Valley, for example, alluded to its subdued presence of authority and evident abundance of teacher autonomy. While the politically-charged milieu at the highly urbanized Hoover was indicative of the strong sense of control held

by administration and restrictive macro-level programs, such as the School Improvement Grant (SIG).

Another significant contextual factor was the level of achievement at both sites. The nature of school achievement (as defined by state test scores) contributed to several aspects of each school's culture, including the conceptualization of teacher professionalism. Overall achievement determined the level of district and administrative oversight regarding teacher work, which in turn strongly influenced how the teachers at each site conceptualized themselves as professionals. At high-achieving Emerald Valley, for example, the teachers exhibited a sense of confidence in their autonomous decision-making, mostly because they did not experience negative sanctions associated with low achievement (e. g. curricular restrictions, personnel changes, etc.) While being a contextual factor, this finding elucidates the importance of looking carefully at site achievement level (and its relationship to other factors), and exactly how it influences teacher professionalism and the enactment of professional practice. As seen in the data from Hoover Elementary, just because a school demonstrates a pattern of low achievement, and therefore experiences negative sanctions and an overwhelming pressure to increase test scores, does not mean that those teachers did not conceive of themselves as professionals. This example illustrates the importance of acknowledging the interwoven relationship between various factors shaping teacher professionalism, and how they interact with one another in a specific school context.

In much of the reviewed literature, the role of the administrator did not prove to be a significant factor when looking at the nature of teacher professionalism. Often times,

they were seen as passive go-betweens that relayed the overarching messages coming from the state and federal legislators, while doing what they were asked to hold teachers accountable (McNeil, 2000; Dorgan, 2004; Diamond and Spillane, 2004). In studies where administrators attempted to mediate or even deviate from the restrictions of high-stakes accountability, the teachers still felt pressure to do what was ultimately valued by the macro-level decision-makers (Wills and Sandholtz, 2009). In this study, the influence of the administrator, or lack thereof, set the stage for the type of professionalism enacted at these schools. This was particularly evident at Hoover where the principal was an intrinsic force to be reckoned with. Her passion and charisma fundamentally shaped how the teachers saw themselves as professionals, and what it meant to be professionals at their school.

Further complicating the context at each school was the level of teacher experience. When analyzed with other contextual factors, such as achievement level and role of the administration, the amount of experience a teacher had contributed to how they saw themselves as professionals. The veteran teachers in this study exuded a strong bond, while exhibiting a considerable level of expertise derived from their many years of experience. While the novice teachers demonstrated a lack of longstanding expertise and a willingness to embrace curricular restrictions and an overwhelming workload, as according to them, that was what professionals did. This is especially significant when factored in with an influential administration. An interesting finding worth noting here is that longstanding experience did not always equate to meaningful teaching and altruistic endeavors, while being bound and restricted did not always compromise the novice

teachers' ability to make and enact professional decisions, as much of the literature suggests.

Chapter Overview

Following this introductory chapter, the second chapter consists of a more in-depth explanation of the conceptual framework, as I drew on the work of several researchers and theorists to synthesize a more complex and widely recognized definition of professionalism. In developing this framework, I looked specifically at how Brint (1994) conceptualizes professionalism and the many changes its definition has undergone. In his work, he explains in detail the “sectors” of professionalism and how they vary according to expectation and context, and this description is important when defining professionalism as it relates to teaching. I also incorporate scholars who have analyzed others' works and have posited theories of their own regarding teacher professionalism, or the lack thereof in certain cases. The arguments made by these authors contribute to the current status of teacher professionalism and its relationship to the perception and enactment of teacher practice.

Following the conceptual framework, there is a brief discussion regarding the role of the teachers' union and how it affects the status and nature of teacher professionalism. The manner in which teachers are organized is significant, because it assumes a hierarchical structure built into the school system; thus not allowing teachers to enact or conceive of a professionalism equal to that described by Brint (1994) and others in the framework. This is an important notion to understand and further justifies the need to study teacher professionalism as it happens at the site level. This discussion suggests the

potential for future research and practical implications, which will be discussed in the final chapter.

A contextual background is necessary to provide in the second chapter as it situates the research problem. In order to understand how teachers conceptualize their practice, and how that conceptualization relates or not to professionalism, it is important to understand the macro context at the time. There was an agreed upon rationale guiding the creation of NCLB, and the underpinnings of this legislation and its facets are significant to acknowledge and comprehend. As stated previously, perception often informs practice, and how policymakers perceive teachers and teaching affects the creation and enactment of educational legislation, and ultimately shapes teacher practice and how teachers define themselves as professionals.

The third chapter reviews the existing literature base concerning teacher practice and morale during NCLB. Most of these previously conducted studies focus on teacher practice and more specifically, how teaching has been impinged upon during the era of high stakes accountability. Having focused primarily on NCLB's effects on teacher practice and their morale, several authors do not discuss, or expand upon the relationship between these issues and teacher professionalism. There is a limited amount of articles cited in the literature review that deal directly with teacher professionalism during the era of NCLB, thus the impetus for this study.

Following the literature review is the methodological rationale and description of methods used to conduct this study. Several authors discussed in the literature review used quantitative methods and found significant correlations between high stakes

accountability and negative effects on teacher practice and morale. Though the correlations suggest a connection between these issues, they do not explore the nature of them or their origination. Therefore, qualitative methods were used for this study; more specifically, I chose a case study approach using participant observation in two elementary schools. The qualitative studies discussed in the literature review revealed a common thread of negative experiences and sentiments regarding NCLB's effects on teacher practice. Each of these studies often focused on one particular site. For this study, I focused on two presupposed factors, level of school achievement and level of teacher experience, while exploring the possibility of other factors influencing teacher professionalism. This exploration consisted of in-depth participant observation at two differently achieving schools. In this chapter, I explain why and how I chose the two sites for the study, as well as describe the difficult tasks of gaining access and establishing a trustworthy rapport with the study's participants. I also depict the process used for analyzing and triangulating data from multiple sources, consisting of observations, interviews, and document collection.

Chapter four begins with a description of the Serrano Unified School District. As mentioned previously, the findings of this study demonstrate the importance of understanding both the macro and micro levels of context. The district and its situation at the time were significant to how teacher professionalism was conceptualized and enacted at both schools due to the lack of involvement from district officials. During this time, Serrano Unified experienced a shift in leadership as they were in the process of searching for a new superintendent and recalling almost all of the current school board members.

The message being communicated from the district to the administrators was one of Laissez-faire, where the schools were asked to continue using adopted materials, while also given the freedom to pick and choose from the curriculum and make site-based instructional decisions. Though school-wide standardization was not a priority for district officials at this time, the focus still remained on assessment and accountability. As the principal at Hoover described, “It’s [district oversight] pretty loose, unless you don’t get your scores.”

Following the discussion of the district and its current status, chapter four continues with an in-depth description of Emerald Valley’s context, both physical and cultural. Fully grasping the context at each school is imperative to understanding how teachers saw themselves as professionals. The environment at Emerald Valley specifically was reflective in the way that it spoke to the type of professionalism existing there. The physical serenity that surrounded the school provided the backdrop for a calm and relaxing style of teacher practice; one that was quite different in comparison to the intensity encompassing Hoover Elementary.

The findings and analysis in chapter four are formatted in a particular way. They are separated and categorized according to each tenet of professionalism: expertise, autonomy, collaboration and evaluation, and altruism. Each of these sections includes presentation of the findings as they relate to the existing literature, analysis of these findings according to the professional framework, and discussion of their significance as they relate to teacher professionalism and practice at this site.

In chapter five, the context at Hoover is described in great detail so to illustrate the high-pressure atmosphere existing at this school. Just as with Emerald Valley, grasping the context at Hoover allows for a greater understanding of the type of teacher professionalism perceived and enacted there. The findings are presented in the same manner as Emerald Valley in chapter four: presentation, analysis, and explanation of site-level significance.

Chapter six begins with a presentation of the main findings of this study and their overall significance. Following this discussion, I relate these findings to a broader span of literature focused on professionalism, teaching, and education. Most noteworthy, I use this final chapter to discuss significant implications regarding teacher practice. The reorganization of the teachers' union, as proposed by Kerchner and Mitchell (1988) is one of these implicative possibilities. The future of NCLB and the currently growing Common Core State Standards Initiative and their relationship to teacher professionalism will also be discussed. Central to the question of whether or not teachers can be considered professionals, I look at ideas from several scholars concerning ways teachers and those outside teaching can bolster teacher professionalism. I also propose the notion of teaching being viewed as something other than a profession, and how that would ultimately affect teachers and their practice. These ideas lead to more complex questions surrounding teacher professionalism, which in turn incites future research. This final chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's limitations and setbacks, which include some unavoidable issues that deserve attention and spur further research possibilities

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework and Contextual Background

Conceptual Framework – The Continuous Redefinition of Professionalism

The idea of teachers as professionals has been widely researched and further complicated due to the ever-changing definition of teaching and its practice. Many scholars have conceptualized teachers as professionals in different ways. Rury & Pratte (1991), for example, view teaching as a “craft profession” (p. 59). Through experience and “embodied knowledge,” craft-professionals are able to practice in ways that are tacit and sensible to them. According to Lortie (1969), teachers are considered “partialized professionals” in which they enact professionalism in contexts where they are afforded more autonomy. Hargreaves & Goodson (1996) maintain that teaching must be seen through its *own* conceptualization of professionalism. In their work, they discuss six types of professionalism in which teaching can be viewed: classical, flexible, practical, extended, complex, and their own conception, postmodern professionalism. These definitions of professionalism were developed specifically for the use of looking at teaching and cannot be applied and therefore compared with other professional groups. As such, these different conceptions of professionalism are limited because they are narrowed to focus solely on the occupation of teaching. In an effort to define professionalism according to how it is viewed by the general public, as well as by those in academia, a broader definition is needed that includes teaching, along with other professional occupations.

For the purpose of looking at teaching through a professional lens, I wish to put forth a framework of professionalism that is both widely-used and agreed upon by

researchers (Brint, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 1985; Starr, 1982; Wise, 2005; Klegon, 1978), as well as the general public. In his work, Brint (1994) describes how and what professionals do in order to be afforded the benefits that go along with professional status in any occupation. His definition (as corroborated by the authors cited above) differentiates between what others might think is professionalism and what is largely accepted as professionalism. As Wise (2005) articulates, “An occupation becomes a profession when organizations such as universities, states, and the public accept that system,” (p. 318). Following Brint (1994) and specifically, his view of “human service professionalism”, I emphasize four tenets of professionalism: mastery of a specialized knowledge base, freedom and autonomy, collegial evaluation and collaboration, and an altruistic approach to their work. The following framework elaborates on these tenets through further discussion of Brint’s work, while also integrating other research on professionalism and teachers as professionals.

Specialized Knowledge Base

In his work on professionalism, Brint (1994) details the historical progression that the definition of “professionalism” has undergone. He describes how it has evolved from a more traditional view (situated in a pre-capitalist economy) to a more modernized definition (situated in our current post-industrial economy). One thing, though, that has not changed in this transition is the need for professionals to have specialized knowledge. This knowledge is obtained through formal training and/or higher education in the form of advanced degrees or credentials. Brint (1994) states that professionals are the “most highly-educated of all strata” (p. 3). Their education level almost always goes beyond the

baccalaureate. Historically, this type of professional education was viewed as “gentlemanly” or liberal (classical) education; not for those becoming a trader or an artisan. This is worth noting in that professions, even in the early nineteenth century, were and still are viewed as separate from those who are considered semi-skilled laborers.

Following completion of a formal education program, the process of knowledge acquisition continues. In their practice, professionals do not believe that an individual who obtains an advanced degree, license, or credential is ready to practice from the beginning. They begin as novices and must continue to learn the practice under the tutelage of professional mentors surrounding them. Dinham & Stritter (1986) draw on Kuhn’s work (1970) in making this point, “There is a change in gestalt that marks the metamorphosis from novice to professional” (p. 953). Implicit in this notion is the idea of professional collegiality, which will be elaborated upon in what follows.

It is important to understand the rationale for this highly specialized knowledge base. Professionals need to be able to claim expertise based on their knowledge base, otherwise, *everyone* could claim to be a professional. Klegon (1978) discusses this cautious line that professionals must walk when it comes to their knowledge base. Their knowledge cannot be something easily obtained, as it must be challenging enough to warrant an authoritative respect from the general public. On the other hand, this knowledge cannot be too narrowly defined and risk serving too small a social purpose. A profession needs to be acknowledged and respected, but also purposeful. For example, medical doctors and lawyers are considered professionals in that their knowledge base is

one that is widely respected and granted authority; while they also serve a significant social purpose.

In looking at teaching as a profession, determining a specialized knowledge base is not easy. Many describe teaching as being a combination of both academic (formal) knowledge and practical experience. Some researchers conceptualize teachers as having a “practical knowledge” base in which “teachers hold, and use, their knowledge in distinctive ways, and that this holding and using of knowledge marks it as ‘practical knowledge’ (beyond the fact that much of what the teacher knows originates in practice)” (Elbaz, 1981, p. 47). Expanding further on this idea of a practical knowledge base, Shulman (1986) describes teachers as having pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). As he explains, PCK, which is often tacit to strong teachers, includes “the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations – in a word, the ways of representing and formulating the subject that makes it comprehensible for others” (p. 9). In his later work, Shulman (1998) discusses this tension between theory and practice. He recognizes the importance of both academic knowledge and experience, while also noting how many professionals are quick to dismiss their rooted theoretical training in favor of actual real life experience. Shulman even hypothesizes that “It may well be that academic knowledge is essential only as an *entitlement* to practice and is not functionally necessary for practice” (p. 517). Regardless of its value in a practical sense, Shulman, like Brint, agrees that academic training is essential in classifying an occupation as a profession.

Freedom and Autonomy

The acquisition of highly specialized or expert knowledge is central to being a professional; however, professionals are also expected to make decisions using that knowledge. Professionals will not always find themselves in predictable situations and therefore must be trusted to make autonomous decisions whenever necessary. Boreham (1983) discusses how it is the *indetermination* of how expert knowledge should be used that makes professionalism what it is. In professional occupations, there are not always rules and prescriptions to follow for every practical situation. As Shulman (1998) argues, in most professions, what is learned in the academy does not translate easily to practice; however, with the freedom to make decisions, a professional can use theory to support what they practice, as well as use practice to supplement or supplant theory. A professional recognizes limitations in the application of theory and can choose to practice based on what they have learned through experience instead. According to Shulman, “Professionals incorporate the consequences of those actions into their own growing knowledge base, which ultimately includes unique combinations of theoretical and moral principles, practical maxims, and a growing collection of narratives of experience,” (p. 519).

Regarding occupational freedom, Darling-Hammond (1985) emphasizes, “that is the most powerful basis for professions’ arguments that they must have autonomy from administrative control in determining occupational tasks and functions” (p. 212). Therefore, professions cannot be controlled by administrative or bureaucratic measures. Professional tasks are to be organized through the authority of “institutionalized

expertise,” (which they have garnered through the acquisition of specialized knowledge) rather than “rational-level administrative authority,” (Freidson, 1973). Kerchner & Mitchell (1988) argue that professionals can and should make decisions about what and how something should be done. They believe that professionals do not just know *how* to do something, but “must decide whether the task *should* be performed,” (p. 209). This notion of autonomy can be somewhat unnerving to many, in that there appears to be no system of accountability; however, this is where the remaining two tenets attempt to ensure professional trust and responsibility.

Collegial Evaluation and Collaboration

According to the literature, professionals are experts regarding knowledge and practice in their fields; therefore they are the only ones capable of regulating and enforcing the standards of quality for their given profession. With their fellow colleagues, they determine the evaluative qualities to use in judging professional performance. Darling-Hammond reiterates, “At the core of the definition of a profession is the notion that its members must define and enforce their own standards of practice” (p. 212). The argument for peer evaluation is that in order to maintain their position as “professionals,” they must ensure that the quality of their work continues to be sufficient and therefore needed by future clientele. Freidson (1973) maintains,

The strongest professions have thus far managed to preserve much of the right to be the arbiters of their own work performance, justified by the claim that they are the only ones who know enough to be able to evaluate it properly, and that they are also actively committed to ensuring that performance lives up to basic standards” (p. 33).

As Rury & Pratte (1991) and Brint (1994) point out, professionals are viewed as successful when they are able to exercise control over evaluation, as well as the standards of *entry* into that profession. Brint (1994) discusses how members of a given profession are able to influence licensing and educational institutions. The criteria that they decide upon must be reflected in these institutions (p. 24). When making these decisions, professionals come together to deliberate and work with colleagues from many different regions. Some are organized into associations, such as doctors affiliated with medical associations. These organizations provide a context for professional discussion and standard setting, as well as further bolster the prestige and power of a profession.

Teachers are organized differently from those in other professions. They are members of labor unions, not professional associations. This is an important aspect to consider because how teachers are organized contributes to their ability to self regulate. It is difficult for teachers to self regulate because of the way their union is structured. According to Kerchner & Mitchell (1988), contemporary teaching unions are likened to “Second Generation unions.” Second Generation unions are not necessarily concerned with the betterment of teacher practice, but rather “pragmatic decision-making” where issues of wage, benefits, and working conditions are the primary focus of negotiation (p. 119). The practices associated with Second Generation unionism imply that teachers are organized as laborers and are therefore evaluated as such. In this vein, teachers are not viewed as professionals, but rather laborers that require direct “inspection” (p. 207). Management sets their standards and supervises teachers accordingly. Any disloyalty to management could be deemed as insubordination and can be documented for the purpose

of later termination. The significance of this issue lies in the fact that structural conditions do not promote teachers to self regulate; however, individual teachers, as well as collaborative teams, often hold certain unofficial standards for the work they do (Ballet, Kelchtermans, & Loughran, 2006; Dufour, 2005). Much of the current literature used in schools today, such as the Professional Learning Communities or PLC model¹, centers on the importance of collegial collaboration and its relationship to increasing student achievement (Dufour & Eaker, 1998).

Altruistic Nature

Autonomous decision-making must be earned and aside from mastering their specialized knowledge base, professionals must also prove their loyalty to their clientele. McClure (1998) describes how professionals put client welfare first, before all other considerations. This idea alludes to what Brint (1994) describes as “social trustee professionalism.” Many people see professionalism in terms of its traditional definition, which include social responsibility and an altruistic notion of devoting service to society. Professionals are described as being entrusted with socially important knowledge, therefore consistently making decisions that prioritize the clients’ needs. Historically, professions were established because that particular occupation is “doing full-time the thing that needs doing” (Wilensky, 1964, in Brint, 1994, p. 32). The way in which professions originated connotes this overarching idea of public service. Brint describes

¹ The Professional Learning Communities model is designed to reform and strengthen school organizations. Following the model, schools focus on improving in the following areas: their ability to collaborate, develop and maintain a shared mission, collectively inquire, perform action orientation and experimentation, continuously improve, and analyze results so to continue the improvement process (Dufour & Eaker, 1998).

these occupations as those dealing with individuals and human services and are often federally funded or non-profit.

In his discussion of how the definition of professionalism has changed, Brint reiterates the significance of context. In traditional terms, professionalism was viewed using a social-trustee lens; however, that has since changed. Industrialization of the economy has significantly altered the way in which we view professionalism. Professionals are now heavily aligned with profit and marketplace value. “The thing that is worth doing” is deemed so because it produces a profit, or because it claims expertise over a certain knowledge/occupational base. This has affected the professionalization of teaching in that its strongest tie to professionalism essentially was its claim to teachers as social-trustees. According to Brint (1994), the professionals that continue to cling to the altruistic ideology are generally part of the professions that were developed to meet the needs of the welfare state (such as teaching, nursing, and social work) and are therefore less profitable (p. 58). Due to the current state of our marketplace economy, the tenet of altruism is no longer viewed as important in claiming professional status today; however, in teaching it appears to remain a valuable component.

This framework applies to most, if not all, occupations that are classified as professions. I wish to use this agreed-upon conception of professionalism as a conceptual framework for analyzing and understanding how teachers see themselves as teachers within the current context of high stakes accountability. My intention was not to use this conceptual framework as a means for determining whether or not teachers are professionals, but rather a comparative ideal with which to analyze teachers’ own talk

and their understandings of themselves as teachers and their everyday practice in schools and classrooms. My findings focused on teachers and the conceptualization and enactment of teaching and how that looks in comparison to what Brint (1994) and others deem as professionalism. This analysis deepens our understanding of teachers and their practice in an era of high stakes accountability, and how that in turn affects the nature of their professionalism.

There exists an underlying issue complicating the above framework that must be addressed and understood before looking at teacher practice through a professional lens. Many scholars argue that teaching cannot be considered a profession as long as the educational system continues to be structured in a hierarchical manner (Kerchner & Mitchell, 1988; Brint, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 1985; Wilensky, 1964). This notion further delves into the nature of teaching and how teachers are organized, referring once again to the above mentioned problems associated with the teachers' union. As witnessed in some studies (Wills and Sandholtz, 2009; Tschannen-Moran's (2009), as well as this one, teachers are allotted a certain level of autonomy but only insofar that it does not challenge the authoritative and managerial style of running districts and schools. This idea is reinforced and supported by the manner in which the teachers' union functions. These unions are likened to Second Generation unions, which operate under assumptions that are professionally problematic. Kerchner and Mitchell (1988) explain, "Unions become empowered to represent self-interests of their members, but are legally, functionally and psychologically distanced from responsibility for the institution of education." Teachers' unions maintain a separation between "conception and execution

of work;” thus the need for a bureaucratic educational system designed to oversee the practices of teaching and learning (p. 14). Schools are not factories; however, the union positions teachers as laborers consistently fighting for appropriate wages and working conditions. Kerchner and Mitchell argue that the nature of teacher work will not change until the nature of their organization changes. They propose moving toward a third generation of unions called “Professional Unionism,” which substantially alters the way teachers are perceived by their clientele and themselves. The ramifications of this proposal related to the findings of this study will be further discussed in the final chapter.

This study was proposed and performed with this issue of unionization and its focus on teacher labor relations in mind. Understanding the way teachers are organized and how that impinges on aspects of professionalism was a given. This further justifies my choice to explore how high stakes accountability adds to existing factors that already complicate the current nature of teacher professionalism.

Contextual Background: Understanding the Origin and Effects of NCLB

In order to comprehend how teacher practice and professionalism has been affected by NCLB, it is important to first realize its origination and the impetus for its creation. Following the contextual background is a review of the existing literature regarding NCLB’s influence on teacher practice, morale, and professionalism.

High-Stakes Accountability

McNeil (2000) describes how our system of education has undergone a shift in control, from local (community, district, and school) decision-making to macro-level (state and federal) decision-making. The passage of NCLB is an example of this shift in

control, and has significantly impacted teachers and their practice. At the local level, they have experienced the implementation of these decisions being made at the state and federal levels. The educational system in California is one such example.

Prior to NCLB, California had an accountability system already in place. In 1997, the California State Board of Education adopted language arts and math standards; and in 1998, science, social studies, and history standards were adopted for all grades Kindergarten through twelfth. Furthermore, these standards were seen as quite extensive and rigorous in relation to other states (Wixson & Dutro, 1999). In 1999, the California legislature passed the Public School Accountability Act (PSAA), which included a comprehensive testing program, as well as rewards for successful schools and punitive actions for underperforming schools (Stecher, et. al, 2008). Schools were assigned an Academic Performance Index (API) based on their test scores each year. This was a way for the state to keep track of school progress using standardized tests (administered to grades two through twelve). These scores were and continue to be published in local newspapers and made available on the Internet. The California Department of Education (CDE) would then reward and sanction schools and districts based on their scores.

Following the passage of NCLB, measures of accountability increased in California. API is kept as an additional indicator of school progress, but more importantly, schools must meet an annual federally established percentage goal for student proficiency known as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). As part of the Standardized Testing and Reporting Program or STAR, California instituted California Standardized Tests (CSTs) for math and language arts in all public elementary schools,

including a science CST in fifth grade. Accompanying these were other CSTs given for specific subjects, such as history and science in high schools, as well as the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), which students must pass in order to graduate (and must receive a higher score to obtain proficiency). At the elementary level, AYP is attained when designated subgroups reach a certain percentage of proficiency in both math and language arts. These subgroups are pre-determined categories that represent large clusters of the student population in each school, such as: English learners, low socioeconomic status, Hispanic, African-American, White, Asian, and so on). At the time of the study, schools were expected to meet established AYP proficiency percentages each year. These goals progressively increased from year to year since 2002. According to NCLB, all schools in the nation were to be at one hundred percent proficiency by 2014. When schools did not meet their annual AYP target for two consecutive years, they were labeled as Program Improvement (PI) schools. These schools had specific guidelines they must follow each year that they were in PI. If they continue in failing to meet their AYP target, the PI sanctions became more and more severe. For example, a school that was labeled PI year four or five faced complete restructuring. Year four or five requirements included replacing all or most staff (including administration), possible reopening as a charter school, and/or state takeover (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ti/nclbpireq.asp>).

The sanctions of Program Improvement were enough to motivate any school to do as much as they could to improve their students' scores on the CSTs. Because of this, there was a lot of pressure placed on many teachers and administrators to avoid these

types of punitive situations. This pressure explains why several public school districts and sites limited their teachers to only using test-aligned curricula and practices. According to the literature, the need to meet AYP goals created a rigid environment of high-stakes accountability, and this in turn greatly affected teachers, teacher practice, and student learning (Nichols & Berliner, 2005; Wills & Sandholtz, 2009; Dorgan, 2004; Valli & Buese, 2007; Valli, Croninger, Chambliss, Graeber, and Buese, 2008; Valli and Chambliss, 2007; Wills, 2007). Several authors argue that this effect was even more pronounced in schools classified as underperforming (or as some authors describe as “high stakes”) with significantly high populations of economically disadvantaged and English learning students (Pedulla, Abrams, Madaus, Russell, Ramos, and Miao, 2003; McNeil, 2000; Stillman, 2011).

Further contributing to this rigid context of high stakes accountability is the more recently established legislation, Race to the Top (RTT). In 2009, President Obama passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which fund the RTT program. Through monetary inducements, this program encourages states to adopt appropriate standards and assessments, build and use data systems to monitor student progress, ensure teacher and principal quality, and focus on turning around their lowest-achieving schools. The third component is particularly significant in regards to teachers and teaching in the context surrounding this study, because it encourages the provision of rewards and incentives to those teachers who are considered “effective” based on how well their students score on state tests. In an effort to meet RTT criteria, several school

systems in Delaware, Texas, Colorado, and Connecticut have tied student performance to teacher evaluation and compensation (United States Department of Education, 2009).

Though the literature illustrates an educational context that is rigid and constrained, in recent years, reactions to No Child Left Behind had been increasingly varied and multidimensional. Some teachers, schools, and districts posed challenges to this legislation and its sanctions. According to a press release issued by the United States Department of Education (November 2011), many states formally submitted waivers asking to be exempt from many of NCLB's requirements. According to the waiver process, these states were to continue reforming their educational system to meet the needs of their students, but no longer used standardized tests as a sole measurement of student progress. They were given the option to use multiple measures to assess student growth, as well as make decisions at a local level regarding what programs are best for their students. As 2014 steadily approached, more and more states submitted these waivers. Thus demonstrating increasing challenges to NCLB's restrictions (United States Department of Education, 2011). During this time, a new set of standards was also in the works. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative symbolizes a significant shift in the way teachers think about teaching and learning, as it gives more decision making power to the districts, and ultimately to the schools and teachers; however due to budgetary and personnel issues, many districts and schools in the thirty-seven states that have adopted Common Core have yet to fully implement the standards. California, for example, did not begin the early stages of implementation until 2013, despite the initial development of CCSS back in 2010. The rationale behind this delay lies in the fact that

most students were still being tested using the old state standards until 2013, and therefore had a significant amount of money invested in corresponding curricular and instructional programs (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/>).

Chapter Three: Literature Review and Methods

The contextual pressures described above have greatly affected how and what teachers teach in schools today. The following studies and their findings illustrate how changes associated with NCLB have impacted teachers and student learning. Significant to this research, several of these studies describe how teachers' morale and practice have been affected by high-stakes accountability, but do not look at these effects through the lens of teacher professionalism.

Common Findings Regarding the Effects of NCLB on Teacher Practice

In their study, Nichols and Berliner (2005) apply the social science principle known as Campbell's Law to look at high-stakes accountability and its effects on our national school system. When defining this theory, Nichols and Berliner state that according to Campbell (1975),

The more any quantitative social indicator [test scores, for example] is used for social decision-making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor (p. I).

In order to see how well this theory accurately applies to our current educational system, Nichols and Berliner performed an extensive search of news stories throughout America (mostly prominent publications, such as *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times*) from October 2003 to October 2004. These news stories focused mostly on teacher reactions to NCLB and standardized testing. Using database search engines, they came across three common findings regarding the effects of high-stakes testing on teachers. One finding was a *limiting of school curriculum*, where they noticed several articles concerned with teachers abandoning other subjects and activities to teach only

content that will be tested, such as math and language arts. Another common finding discovered in the news search concerned *teaching to the test*; Nichols and Berliner found many articles that described how teachers only teach in ways conducive to testing format, such as teaching students to write in-class essays using rigid writing formats and time limits. A third recurring finding noticed by the authors was a *decline in teacher morale*. Teachers spoke of dealing with so much pressure since the passage of NCLB. One teacher felt that “her career was in the hands of 12-year-old students” (p. iii). As Nichols and Berliner conclude, “When either failure or thwarted success is contingent on the value of some indicator [student test scores], we recognize that individuals will feel pressure to influence the indicator so it will prevent that failure or allow for success” (p. 165). These authors believe that testing is not leading to what NCLB proponents had originally planned which was “to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education,” but rather to a corrupt system that will attempt to show successful results, no matter the cost (<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg1.html>).

The findings described in Nichols and Berliner’s study (2005) are also found in other literature focusing on teaching in an era of high stakes accountability. An additional significant finding mentioned by Nichols and Berliner, and reported in several other studies is the issue of *time constraints*. The following literature review is organized according to these findings and is separated into two sections. The first part focuses on how these common findings (narrowing in the scope of curriculum, an increase in test preparation, and more rigid time constraints) affect teacher practice. The second section

looks more closely at how these effects have altered teacher morale and their conceptions of themselves as professionals.

Narrowing of Curriculum

School curriculum, especially at the elementary level has significantly changed since the passage of NCLB. According to several studies, curriculum has been narrowed to prioritize only the tested subjects, such as math and language arts. Subjects such as science and social studies take a backseat when it comes to curricular prioritization in schools. In their study conducted for the National Board on Educational Testing and Policy, Pedulla, Abrams, Madaus, Russell, Ramos, & Miao (2003) found that teachers in high-stakes (H/H) schools² were experiencing these effects and their negative influence on their practice (p. 114). Using data gathered via surveys (consisting of eighty response items, answered by 4,195 teachers across several states), these authors state that most teachers reported spending a decreased amount of time on non-tested areas (such as fine arts and physical education), with the largest decrease reported at the elementary and middle school levels. One third of the surveyed teachers (mostly those at high-stakes schools) also reported a significant decrease in the amount of time spent on enrichment activities, such as art and music (p. 116).

² Defined by the authors as schools that placed significant value on test scores due to the nature of the consequences they faced. These authors categorized their findings accordingly: H/H meaning high stakes for both school personnel and students; H/M meaning high stakes for school personnel, but only moderately high stakes for students; and H/L meaning high stakes for school personnel, but low stakes for students (Pedulla, Abrams, Madaus, Russell, Ramos, & Miao, 2003, p. 1).

Some studies suggest that students in lower achieving schools experience a more narrowed curriculum than those in higher achieving schools. Inspired by the data found in their four-year longitudinal study, Valli, Croninger, Chambliss, Graeber, and Buese (2008) performed a smaller case study analyzing three schools in the Stevenson district. In their work, they found that teacher practice in all three schools was highly influenced by high-stakes accountability. More specifically, they found that out of the three schools, the one that was considered most “at risk” of not meeting their AYP goal (Cherry Ridge) was also the school that had most restricted the scope of the curriculum. In the other two schools, math and language arts dominated fifty-five to sixty percent of the day’s curriculum. At Cherry Ridge Elementary, seventy-five to eighty-five percent of the school day was spent teaching math and language arts. Approximately forty-five minutes remained for another specialized teacher to teach the “specials” (physical education, music, and art). This time was also used for science, which was taught by the classroom teacher. At Cherry Ridge, the authors found that the time designated for science was often used to teach more reading skills.

Many studies have shown how limiting the curriculum not only affects the content that students are exposed to, but also the types of materials as well. Part of NCLB’s legislation requires states to adopt standards-based curricular programs. These programs are concrete manifestations of a narrower curriculum accompanied by specific instructional activities. In a more recent case study performed by Stillman (2011), she looked at three language arts teachers located in three different underperforming schools in Southern California. In each school, Stillman collected data regarding the school’s

culture, administrative style, and language arts instruction. For her participants, Stillman recruited Xitlali, an “expert” teacher, Isabel, a teacher described as having “middle-level ability,” and Jorge, a teacher considered to be “lower level” (p. 141). Stillman wanted to see how NCLB and testing impacted the language arts curriculum for low-income minority students who are considered “at risk.” Using qualitative methods, such as interviews with teachers and administrators, as well as observations, Stillman found the district-approved language arts curriculum to be a dominating force in this school. The program stressed direct instruction, which disgruntled the focal teachers, as they strongly believed in using personal student experiences to supplement the content. Xitlali, for example, referred to the *Reading California* textbook program as “ditto-driven” and “drive-by teaching” (p. 146). Adhering to the district curriculum left little room for any supplementary curricular concepts or activities. According to Stillman, the research literature suggests that accountability and literacy instruction are more significantly stressed and more rigidly enforced in schools with high EL populations due to their lower test scores. The lower they continue to perform, the more stringent accountability becomes for these schools, therefore perpetuating the use of these restrictive curricular materials.

Test Preparation

In their study, Pedulla, et. al. (2003) not only noticed the narrowed curriculum included only tested content, but also the utilization of test preparation programs and materials. These authors found that a large part of school day instruction was spent on test preparation. In high-stakes elementary schools especially, teachers reported doing

the following: engaging in test preparation activities earlier in the year; spending more class time on these activities; targeting special groups of students for intense test preparation; using materials that more closely match the testing format; and using state released test questions (p. 117). Another finding in Pedulla, et. al's study was that the impact of the state tests was more prevalent on classroom assessments at the elementary level than the high school level. A large percentage of teachers stated that their classroom tests closely matched the format of state tests. Teachers in "H/H" schools (schools where testing has high stakes for both the school and students) strongly agreed that testing had influenced their time spent on instructing basic skills to their students. This finding correlated with a larger theme in the surveys: teachers in H/H schools (high stakes for both school personnel and students) expressed a significant increase in time for test preparation. Students in H/H schools often understood the value of state tests according to the implicit and sometimes explicit messages that the schools and teachers expressed regarding the tests. At these schools, students often experienced increased anxiety, stress, and fatigue from significant amounts of test preparation (p. 14).

In many schools with minority student populations (especially those located in urban school districts), test preparation plays an even larger role. In two of the three schools studied by Valli, Croninger, Chambliss, Graeber, and Buese (2008), explicit test preparation began two months before the administration of the state tests. During these two months, instructional strategies included teachers posing lower level questions to students, using procedure-based operational strategies when teaching math (as opposed to teaching conceptual understanding), and implementing pullout programs for students

considered “at risk,” such as English language learners. The third school and the lowest achieving in the study, Cherry Ridge Elementary, used these simplified test-preparation strategies from the very beginning of the year, so for them test preparation continued throughout the entire year. Valli, et. al (2008) saw this as substituting district-approved content for test-taking curriculum, as it dominated what was being taught in these schools (p. 73-97).

These findings are similar to those found in McNeil’s study (2000) performed in two magnet high schools in Houston, Texas. McNeil looked at how the implementation of standardization and high-stakes testing affected teacher practice and student learning in schools originally created to provide “authentic” learning experiences for at-risk students (p. 9). As administration of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) was now being enforced in these two magnet schools, there was a significant shift in curricular and instructional practice. Many outside of education are under the impression that test preparation is not necessary if teachers just follow the curriculum and teach according to the standards; however, as McNeil notes in her work, the state tests assessed proficiency in a “trivialized” manner based on “fragmented course content” (p. 235). This made it quite difficult for teachers to simply rely on just teaching the content and hoping the students would know how to answer the multiple-choice style test questions. Therefore, teachers at the two magnet schools had to “juggle” course content with test preparation strategies. Juggling consisted of teaching “double-entry” lessons where teachers taught the curriculum in ways that also showed the students how it appeared on the test (p. 235). Like many other urban schools in their district, the principals at these

schools also purchased commercially created test-prep materials for their teachers to use two to three months prior to the test (p. 236).

Test preparation can also be incorporated into specially designed intervention classes that last an entire school year. As part of a six-year study focusing on changes in language arts and mathematics instruction, Valli and Chambliss (2007) conducted a small case study looking specifically at reading instruction. For this research, the authors chose to focus on one teacher, Ms. Gabriel, and how she taught a regular reading class and a reading intervention class. Because Ms. Gabriel taught these classes during different years, the authors observed a reading class at the end of the first school year and then observed the reading intervention class at the end of the following school year. To adequately compare the two, they focused on literacy features that were salient in both classes: text choice, vocabulary development, comprehension, and composition. Valli and Chambliss found that the reading class was “child-centered,” while the reading intervention class was “test-centered.” The authors defined child-centered as a classroom where the teacher establishes a culture that “requires that teachers do more than implement a scripted program” (p. 58). Student learning through engagement is most often the primary goal for teachers in child-centered classrooms. A test-centered classroom was defined by Valli and Chambliss as a culture where “students indeed read, write, speak, and listen, but all in service of preparing for the test” (p. 64). The child-centered reading class was broken up into three small groups and Ms. Gabriel chose the text that each group read in addition to differentiated goals that each group should accomplish based on their needs. In this class, she was concerned about each of the

groups' needs and comfort levels with the text they were reading. She fostered personal connections with the text that allowed engaging discussions among the students. Ms. Gabriel facilitated their progress by focusing on foundational issues, such as vocabulary development. She also chose texts according to the characteristics of each student group, so to elicit those personal connections. Contrary to the regular reading class, the test-centered intervention class was whole group instruction and the text was a story that Ms. Gabriel selected only because of its similarities (in content and format) to stories read on the state test. Her questioning and discussions in this class focused on skills that she knew would be on the test as well. In the regular reading class, Ms. Gabriel was not pressured to focus on test preparation as much as she was in the intervention class. Students in this class were considered lower performing and therefore needed more help in scoring high on the state test.

Test preparation not only consists of teaching content-based strategies, but also operational test-taking skills, such as understanding test question format and bubbling in answers. In an effort to see how schools are affected by political decisions regarding accountability, Dorgan (2004) performed a study in the Virginia educational system. She began her study following the adoption of Standards of Learning (SOLs) with the measurement of SOLs being standardized assessments. Using qualitative methods, she focused on elementary teachers and how they attempted to meet the newly implemented standards. At one Virginia elementary school, she specifically looked at how the SOLs influenced the teachers' instructional decisions. She found a significant amount of teacher instruction devoted to test preparation. The new math program, for example,

came with assessment tools and a publisher's test that was used by the principal to determine student groups for intervention programs. These assessments were written using multiple choice style questions, which led teachers to spend a lot of instructional time teaching test-taking skills, such as properly marking bubbles. These were the only tests used in measuring student mastery of the Standards of Learning (SOLs). This alignment was purposely designed in anticipation for the students to be used to this format prior to the state test.

In their study, Diamond and Spillane (2004) focus on educational [in]equity and how schools differ in response to accountability pressures placed upon them based on their current levels of achievement. This case study consisted of interviews and observations in four urban elementary schools – two high performing and two “probation” (lower performing) schools in Chicago, Illinois. Teacher interviews were conducted mostly at the second and fifth grade levels. Diamond and Spillane looked specifically at how these schools compared to one another in the way that they chose to respond to accountability mandates and guidelines. One similarity they shared was that all schools had some form of test preparation program in place. At Kelly Elementary School - where Diamond and Spillane noticed the largest focus on test preparation - the students were assessed every Thursday using bubble forms to simulate the format of the state test. The assistant principal at this school explained, “So we try to do whatever we can so that our children are accustomed to taking tests so they’re test smart kids and they’re not nervous” (p. 1155). At the other three schools, Diamond and Spillane found increased test preparation just prior to the actual administration of the test. At one

particular school, a special meeting was held with the students to explain the importance of the test, followed by each student receiving flash cards relating to basic skills they need to know for their grade level.

Time Constraints

As Wills and Sandholtz (2009) found, time constraints can greatly alter the way a teacher organizes and enacts their instruction. In their study at Dusty Valley Elementary, a Title I school located in southern California, they looked at how curriculum and instruction were impacted by testing mandates accompanying NCLB. School wide, teachers at Dusty Valley prioritized the teaching of mathematics and language arts, and taught social studies and science with the limited time remaining. The principal at Dusty Valley allowed the teachers to decide how and what to teach in social studies and science; however, these teachers found themselves dealing with severe time constraints. One example is Mrs. Knight, a fifth grade teacher who used an interactive approach called “methodical outlining” when teaching social studies. This approach permitted her students to meaningfully interact, allowing their questioning and participation to “shape the knowledge produced in the lessons,” (p. 1085). Contrary to this, when Mrs. Knight did not have much time for social studies (due to increased time spent on math and language arts), she often abandoned methodical outlining and resorted to simply conveying (usually in lecture format) the knowledge to students, not necessarily ensuring or checking for understanding.

Many school districts use pacing or curriculum guides to help standardize what and when certain standards are taught. In Dorgan’s study (2004), the pacing guide was

found to be a significant factor influencing both curriculum and instruction at the school she studied. The content to be assessed was divided up across six different grading periods. Dorgan noticed that teachers concentrated on each period individually, focusing specifically on the content for that time frame, as there would be an assessment at the end. Often, teachers did not look ahead at the future content to be taught and seemed primarily concerned with the pacing guide and where they “were” on the guide at that given time. One-third grade teacher lamented, “I felt too rushed to get everything taught in five six-weeks (periods)” (p. 1209). Dorgan also found that teachers often did not use manipulatives in mathematics, as they took too much time. Many teachers chose the method of direct instruction using only the textbook, as they felt pressured to teach the SOLs (Standards of Learning) in a certain time period. These teachers also avoided specific activities, such as projects and field trips that they normally did in the past because it would take too much time away from the curriculum that needed to be taught (according to the pacing guide) (p. 1221). Even after making changes to their instruction and classroom activities, teachers still found themselves running out of time as there was still material that had not been covered.

Due to the existence of high stakes accountability, the prioritization of tested subjects often leads to the “squeezing” out of other non-tested subjects. In his study, Wills (2007) focused on how teachers dealt with subject prioritization (due to standardized testing of math and language arts) and the resulting time constraints that teachers faced. He focused primarily on the teaching of social studies (not a tested subject) in one fourth grade class and two fifth grade classes at Dusty Valley Elementary

School. Using data from classroom observations and teacher interviews, Wills found that teachers were reluctant to teach social studies in ways that took too much time away from the tested curricula. For example, two focal teachers, Mrs. Matthews and Mrs. Thomas, expressed their desires to teach social studies using strategies that evoked “classroom thoughtfulness,” whereby students deeply analyzed and questioned the material through meaningful interaction with other students and the teacher (Newmann, 1990); however they lacked the time available to facilitate these types of activities. Mrs. Matthews, for example, began looking for more efficient ways to teach social studies: direct instruction, jigsaw activities, directing students to specific pages to “look for answers,” and at one point, using a short film instead of reading from the textbook (p. 2012). Throughout the year, Mrs. Thomas attempted to teach social studies in more interactive and engaging ways; however, she also narrowed her social studies curriculum into a more manageable amount of content. She dealt with the time constraints by sacrificing content breadth for content depth and more thoughtful engaging lessons.

As seen in Wills’ (2007) study, time constraints can greatly affect how teachers deliver instruction. Using constructs she developed in an earlier work on schooling and the control of knowledge (1986), McNeil demonstrated how teaching and learning drastically changed in the two magnet schools once teachers and administrators were aware of the importance of state assessments. Due to time constraints, McNeil (2000) found teachers practicing “defensive teaching.” Defensive teaching consisted of teachers using instructional techniques, such as, “omission, mystification, fragmentation, and defensive simplification” in order to be efficient in the amount of time they have in the

classroom (p. 12-13). McNeil describes how these teachers “simplify content, reduce the number of information sources, and severely limit student interaction” (p. 77). Though the term “defensive teaching” was created to describe teachers attempting to control the curriculum in their own classrooms fourteen years earlier (1986), McNeil argued that defensive teaching was one response to the pressures and constraints of high stakes testing in the magnet schools she studied in 2000.

The findings described above not only affect teacher practice, but also teachers’ conceptions of themselves and their position as teachers. As Nichols and Berliner (2005) found, the influences of the high stakes testing component led to a decrease in teacher morale. In the studies previously mentioned, the following issues have had a profound impact on teacher morale: pressure and frustration (in responding to and dealing with high stakes testing), struggling to do what is best to support student learning while accounting for high stakes testing, and diminishing relationships between teachers and students.

Common Findings Regarding the Effects of NCLB on Teacher Morale

Pressure and Teacher Frustration

Following the passage of NCLB, Valli and Buese (2007) noticed a marked change in teachers’ perception of themselves and their role in the classroom. Teachers felt pressure and frustration to live up to more stringent expectations. According to Valli and Buese (2007), with these new expectations came an increase in teacher tasks. In recognizing the importance of testing, teacher tasks increased significantly in efforts to improve test scores. In their study, teachers met with outside consultants in order to

better align instruction and curriculum with assessment content, and conducted morning, lunch, and after school tutoring sessions to help low-performing students. After conducting focus group and individual interviews with fourth and fifth grade teachers, Valli and Buese concluded, “The summative effect of too many policy demands coming too fast often resulted in teacher discouragement, role ambiguity, and superficial responses to administrative goals” (p. 520). Teachers felt disengaged, stressed, and an immense amount of pressure from programs and directives accompanying this new reform. They could not live up to these new role expectations being forced upon them, while also doing what they thought was best for their students.

Another source of pressure was found in survey data collected by Pedulla, et. al. (2003). In the surveys, many teachers stated that they felt administrators viewed student test scores as a measurement of teacher effectiveness. Regardless of their level of efficacy for high-stakes testing, teachers taught as though they would be judged according to how well their students performed (p. 33). As Nichols and Berliner (2005) described, as long as tests are used to monitor public education, then corruption and distortion will continue to exist. According to Pedulla, et. al., “A substantial majority of teachers at each grade level indicated that state testing programs have led them to teach in ways that contradict their ideas of sound instructional practices” (p. 3).

Because teachers feel pressure to teach narrowed content in ways that they would not normally choose, they often experience increased levels of stress and frustration. In the study performed by Valli, et. al. (2008), teachers reported feeling frustrated when their autonomy to make instructional and curricular decisions was further constrained.

One new teacher described how she perceived her years of education to be undervalued and meaningless by the time she got into the classroom. She believed that through her graduate courses, she had learned curriculum development and best practices for students, and yet could not use that knowledge when she became a teacher (p. 137).

Another teacher in Valli, et. al's study lamented "I don't like the teacher I've become," in regards to how she teaches her students the importance of the test (p. 138). The pressure that these teachers experienced led them to feel undervalued and underappreciated for their expertise.

Even when their students performed successfully on state tests, teachers still found themselves frustrated. In the year that Dorgan conducted her study (2004), test scores increased significantly. Teachers should have been happy with these results; however, according to Dorgan, these high test scores cost teachers their autonomy to make curricular and instructional decisions. Racing to keep up with the pacing guide, while adequately preparing their students for district and state tests created feelings of frustration and sacrifice among many teachers. Following the assessments, some were overheard saying things like, "I would have liked to..." or "in the past, I have..." referring to things that they would have chosen to do if not for the passage of NCLB and the subsequent pressure associated with assessments and accountability (p. 1222). As one teacher put it, "these tests have taken all the fun out of teaching" (p. 1223).

Doing What is Best for Students

As seen in Lampert's work (1985), teachers have always been faced with various types of dilemmas. These dilemmas often manifest because, typically, teachers are

primarily concerned with doing what is best for their students. As several studies have shown, and in this context specifically, teachers are struggling with their desire to do what they think is best for their students, while also meeting the expectations of NCLB. As Stillman's (2011) study showed, teachers often struggle between two choices – they want their students to engage in meaningful lessons, but also want their students to achieve on the test as they recognize how this can affect their future achievement, as well as the school's achievement. Stillman found that the latter option weighed more heavily with the teachers in her study. While student engagement in the learning process was still a priority, many teachers were pressured to raise test scores as these were a reflection of their teaching and their school. Xitlali, Isabel, and Jorge felt the need to teach language arts in ways that they would not normally choose for their EL students because they wanted these students to have mastery of the tested curriculum in order to be successful on state assessments. Their language arts program stressed direct instruction, whereas these teachers, especially Xitlali, expressed their belief in using personal experiences to build on, as well as meaningful discovery-type lessons. At Xitlali's school, an outside evaluator frequented the classrooms to ensure that teachers were adhering to the curriculum and using its components. As Xitlali and other teachers realized, a significant boost in test scores was needed for their school to avoid further scrutiny in the following years to come.

In his study, Wills (2007) witnessed his focal teachers, Mrs. Thomas and Mrs. Matthews struggling with a similar dilemma. They were forced to manage dilemmas regarding the teaching of social studies. Mrs. Matthews felt as though she was “on a

treadmill” racing to catch up to her colleague, Mrs. Knight, who was typically ahead in her coverage of the U.S. history curriculum and who she used as a gauge of whether or not she was making adequate progress in her social studies curriculum. Mrs. Matthews expressed that she would like to teach social studies more thoroughly, but could not due to the emphasis on math and language arts, which left little time for teaching social studies (p. 1998-1999). When discussing the potential state science test being implemented the following year, Mrs. Matthews worried about how that would affect social studies instruction. She realized that if science was now viewed as a high-stakes subject, like math and language arts, then social studies would be further “squeezed” from the curriculum or perhaps even abandoned. She likened the situation to a “balancing act” that ultimately led to her frustration as a teacher (p. 2041).

Many teachers in underperforming schools are under a significant amount of pressure to increase achievement as measured by state tests. Often times, teachers and administrators in these schools target specific students on which to focus instruction that will help them improve their test scores. These selected students are those who are close to meeting the proficiency requirement or passing score on the tests. Valli, et. al (2008) describes these students as “bubble” students. As Diamond and Spillane (2004) found, bubble students received a more focused instructional program than the lowest-performing students in the school. According to the authors, this program led to marginalization of the students who were low-performing and in need of intensive intervention. At Cherry Ridge Elementary in the Valli, et. al study (2008), teachers were also told to target their instruction towards “bubble” students. As Valli, et. al. describes,

this can lead to confusion and stress for teachers and students if students outside the bubble do not feel that they are receiving the help they need.

Asking how teachers feel about NCLB and its effects on teacher practice is significant in understanding how this policy affects teachers' thoughts of themselves and their status. In 2010, Guggino and Brint administered an online survey to over 740 California National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs). These authors focused their study on NBCTs because they felt that they are an accurate representation of "highly accomplished educators" (p. 1). This allowed them to collect data from teachers who they felt could speak knowledgably and sincerely about NCLB's effects on their practice. Following analysis of the survey data, Guggino and Brint found that many teachers believed NCLB contributed favorably in some aspects of teaching. This legislation helped to organize and focus on core subject matter, improved planning, and increased teacher expectations for students; however, the negative effects of NCLB appeared to outweigh these positives. According to Guggino and Brint, many NBCTs found several tasks quite difficult to perform because of NCLB: meeting the needs and interests of students; designing lessons that reflect students' linguistic and cultural diversity; relating and integrating lessons by concept or theme; and developing strategies that encourage student critical thinking. Notably, sixty-one percent of NBCTs felt that one of NCLB's weaknesses was that "it created an overly-narrow conception of the meaning of education" (p. 4). Another significant finding was that sixty percent of these teachers believed that NCLB would affect the status of the teaching profession. Moreover, eighty-six percent of the above group of teachers felt that teachers would continue focusing on test

performance regardless of the negative educational ramifications that could result. One quarter of all respondents expressed that NCLB made it difficult to teach “unmotivated” students. Despite teachers reporting positive effects that NCLB has had on specific aspects of teaching, the data showed that, overall, eighty-four percent of the NBCTs in the study viewed NCLB unfavorably (p. 1). This is due to the ways in which NCLB made it difficult for teachers to meet student needs (p. 4).

Relationships Between Teachers and Students

Feelings of frustration, pressure, and the struggle to do what is best for students have significantly affected how teachers view their teaching and student learning. Due to the pressure to move quickly through the curriculum (Dorgan, 2004) and the resulting use of undesirable teaching strategies, such as direct instruction (Stillman, 2011), teachers often do not have time to establish and maintain healthy relationships with students. In their study, Valli and Chambliss (2007) discussed how Ms. Gabriel’s relationship with her students changed in the intervention class. She did not engage with the material in the way she did with the small groups in the previous year’s reading class. She also became quickly frustrated with the intervention students when they could not answer test-like questions about the text. These authors concluded that replacing a child-centered culture (her previous class) with a test-centered culture (her intervention class) in any classroom could be detrimental to student learning. They acknowledged that many teachers, like Ms. Gabriel, felt the need to adequately prepare their students for the test; however as these authors argue, in a test-centered classroom “it is likely that academic

achievement, as well as meaningful school experiences and personal bonds among teachers and students, will diminish” (p. 73).

As Valli and Buese (2007) mention in their study, teachers often feel conflicted with the idea of teaching the curriculum in ways that do not allow them to develop relationships with their students. In their study, teachers often struggled with teaching in small groups, using instructional strategies that did not allow for time to elaborate on personal experiences and connections. Drawing on data from studies they had previously conducted, McNeil and Valenzuela (2000) come to some specific conclusions regarding effects of accountability on student-teacher relationships. These authors described the harmful effects that test preparation and drill-type practices have had on the Houston Independent School District (HISD) student population, which is comprised of “overwhelmingly poor” African American and Latino students (p. 4). Teachers felt significant pressure to raise student scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), and therefore focused much of their daily instruction on how to bubble in answers, weeding out obviously wrong answers, and becoming accustomed to multiple-choice, computer-scored formats (p. 4). Those students who did not perform successfully on the TAAS experienced even larger amounts of explicit test preparation. This resulted in a “cumulative deficit in students’ knowledge, encouraging their resistance not to education, but to schooling” (p. 11 - cited from Valenzuela, 1999). The curriculum accompanying the TAAS did not promote the use of students’ experiences, cultures, or languages, which also led to a student perception of teachers as not “caring.” When students perceive teachers as not caring, this leads to a further diminished relationship

between students and teachers. As accountability increased, students continued to lose faith in “schooling” as many were required to take lower-level courses that lacked engaging and complex activities.

Existing Literature Regarding the effects of NCLB on Teacher Professionalism

The effects of NCLB on teacher practice and morale have led some authors to delve deeper into the connection between high-stakes accountability and teacher professionalism. In their study, Yeom and Ginsburg (2007) conducted a text analysis of eighteen different reform documents from United States and the Republic of Korea. These documents consisted of commission reports, proposals, and legislation developed by governmental and non-governmental agencies. One of the documents analyzed was the No Child Left Behind Act. The authors looked at this policy, along with and in relation to the other seventeen reform documents, in order to see how teachers and professionalism are discussed in each country. They looked for language and patterns between the documents and the ways in which teaching, teacher education, and teacher social status are discussed. In their analysis, Yeom and Ginsburg found that both countries called for an increase in teacher professionalization; however, in Korea, there was a focus on teacher autonomy as a way to build teacher professionalism, whereas none of the United States’ reform documents mentioned teacher autonomy. The authors also noticed a shift in control over pre-service teacher education in each country. Both the U.S. and Korea (with the U.S. spearheading the movement) wanted to centralize control over teacher pre-service and in-service training programs, as well as accreditation programs, thereby resulting in a reduction of autonomy for both teachers and teacher

educators. Yeom and Ginsburg believed that this shift in control not only resulted in a loss of teacher autonomy, but also an increase in the “intensification of the pace of teachers’ work” (p. 304). In the case of the U.S. specifically, these authors noted how teachers felt intense pressure to prepare students for high stakes testing. Even though many of the documents appeared to call for an increase in teacher professionalism, these authors maintained that constraint of teacher autonomy and centralized control have contributed to the de-professionalization of teachers.

In his work, Barrett (2008) analyzes the effects of NCLB on teachers’ pedagogic discourse related to their professional practice and identities. He discusses how this legislation caused a significant shift in teacher practice, resulting from “changing global economic trends.” These trends led to more macro-level control over educational domains, further impinging teacher autonomy. Barrett wished to analyze the potential correlation between level of teaching experience and response in teaching practice to NCLB (as posited by Beck and Young, 2005). In their study (conducted in the United Kingdom), Beck and Young suggest that pre-service and early career teachers would be more likely to embrace the shift of control now coming from the macro-level, than their veteran counterparts. To test this theory, surveys were administered to veteran, early career, and pre-service primary and secondary teachers in Central New York State. These “Professional Practice surveys” consisted of five multiple-choice question and ten free response questions. The answers to these surveys were analyzed using a Bernsteinian (1990) framework, which looks at the relationship between macro level decisions and micro level classroom practice. The main findings of Barrett’s study were

twofold. First, all pre-service and early career teachers claimed to use practice tests and test preparation strategies (i.e. bubbling in answers, pacing, and so on) in an effort to alter how they teach to fit the New York State test; while almost all (nine of ten respondents) veteran participants stated that they changed their curriculum and created units that were linked directly to state standards. Corresponding with this initial finding, all teachers reported having “far too little time” to teach what was expected (p. 1022). Secondly, and more significant to this study is Barrett’s finding that *all* teachers, regardless of experience, demonstrated frustration and compromised altruistic ideals regarding their practice. Looking more specifically at this finding, Barrett states that there was minimal evidence supporting the idea that novice teachers “take on more instrumental assumptions” than veteran teachers, as they too expressed significant frustration and discomfort with the shift towards macro-level control (p. 1024). There exist two significant limitations to this study: the sample size was small (ten respondents), and the author was also a course instructor of the study’s participants. He attempted to account for this potential bias as one item on the survey asked teachers to state whether or not their answers were altered because of the situation (one respondent noted that this was the case for them).

In their work, Brint and Teele (2008) focus on teacher perception of NCLB and how it has affected their practice and their professionalism. They conducted a large-scale study consisting of surveys administered to 300 Southern California randomly selected teachers (from five districts varying in socioeconomic levels) and interviews with 28 of those participants. The crux of their study demonstrates that though NCLB legislators

intended for positive changes to teacher practice, the result was something quite different. When compared with studies of their kind (performed in 2005 and 2006), these authors noticed that teachers' views of NCLB had become even more negative since the last two years. Four out of every five teachers had an unfavorable perception of NCLB. More specifically, they found that this legislation led to four major changes in teacher practice: 91% reported more teaching to the test; 79% stated less creativity in the classroom; 61% mentioned more scripted learning; and 53% expressed that the core subjects (math and language arts) received significantly more time and focus than the other subjects. Most significantly, these authors discuss the conflict existing between teacher professionalism and the de-skilling of teacher practice under NCLB. They suggest that accountability has now become part of the conceptualization of professionalism; and for several teachers in my study, this proved to be the case. This eludes to the complicated definition that is teacher professionalism, as it is context specific and manifested in different ways.

Much of the literature base on teacher professionalism does not factor in the potentially significant role that an administrator can play. Principals are often mediators that either exacerbate or ameliorate macro-level contextual changes. Tschannen-Moran's (2009) quantitative study is one of few that analyzes how administration can establish and maintain a school context that cultivates teacher professionalism. Using survey data (administered to teachers in eighty middle schools), the author looked at the following dependent variables: the principal's orientation to professionalism, the faculty's trust in their principal, colleagues, and clientele (students and families). The strongest correlations were found between degree of teacher professionalism and the principal's

perception of teacher professionalism, and also the faculty's trust in one another as professional colleagues. From these findings, Tschannen-Moran maintains that the actions of an administrator contribute profoundly to the level of teacher professionalism at their school. She suggests that principals can establish a context conducive to teacher professionalism by exuding trust and communicating their own beliefs regarding teachers as professionals. This includes giving teachers the autonomy they need to establish and maintain standards of teaching and assessment for their students, and providing the necessary support, while also challenging teachers to perform more of their own self-regulatory tasks. Understanding the potential role that an administrator can play contributes further to the idea of context-specific teacher professionalism.

Conclusion

The findings in these studies illustrate how the context of accountability has challenged teacher practice and what it means to be a teacher. From the perspective of teacher professionalism, teachers are struggling with professional issues such as freedom and autonomy, a lack of understanding regarding their professional knowledge base/expertise, altruistic notions of what teaching should be, and a lack of collegial evaluation and collaboration. Though these findings speak to the issue of teacher professionalism, many authors (Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Dorgan, 2004; Valli & Chambliss, 2007; Pedulla, 2003) do not directly address this concept in their work. The research conducted by Brint and Teele (2008) provides a foundation off which to build with a more in-depth case study using a concrete professional framework. Therefore, my study utilizes professionalism as a conceptual lens for analyzing the status of teachers and

teaching in an era of high stakes accountability. Using professionalism as a conceptual framework elucidated how these teachers conceptualized their practice in light of NCLB and its effects. Exploring these issues as they are manifested in practice provided insightful and often complex answers to ongoing questions regarding teachers as professionals. The findings of this study also add to and further complicate our understanding of the effects of high stakes accountability on teachers and their practice.

Methods

Methodology

When looking at the literature analyzing the effects of high-stakes accountability on teacher practice, the findings point to issues surrounding teacher professionalism and thus warrant a need for studying this concept in our current context of high-stakes accountability. Teacher practice and teacher perception of practice are based on how they make meaning of what they do in their given context. Teachers continue to construct and reconstruct professionalism within the social systems of schools. To fully understand the workings of this phenomenon, researchers must locate themselves in the school context to look at how teachers and teaching are being constituted. To elaborate on this idea, Erickson (1986) believes that the practice of teaching “must be interpreted in the context of theoretical presuppositions about the nature of schools, teaching, children, and classroom life, and about the nature of cause in human social life in general” (p. 125). The few articles that focus specifically on the effects of NCLB on teacher professionalism (Barrett, 2008; Brint & Teele, 2008) are limited in that their findings and/or analyses are simply briefs that synthesize findings from other studies, or data

collected using surveys and isolated interviews (only interviewing the teachers once without conducting any fieldwork or participant observation to accompany that data). Therefore, teachers' conceptualizations of professionalism should be analyzed using a qualitative case-study approach, in order to see meaning making as it happens naturally and interactively in the school context. Conducting the study using this methodology allowed myself as an outsider to become an insider and see a more complicated picture of teacher professionalism than the literature postulates.

Study Design

I conducted a qualitative study looking at teachers and their practice through the conceptual lens of professionalism in two elementary schools, one defined as high achieving and the other low achieving, as measured by state test scores. As Diamond and Spillane (2004) found, school cultures can vary according to their levels of achievement; therefore performing this study in differently achieving schools illuminated several striking differences and some unexpected similarities regarding teachers and how they perceive themselves and their practice. In their study, Pedulla, et. al. (2003) discussed how schools perceived as "H/H" (test scores have high stakes for both school personnel and students) experienced more pressure and constraints than those viewed as having lower stakes attached to testing. Therefore, it was imperative to look at a high achieving school and low achieving school to understand how the professional nature of teachers, both how they viewed themselves, how they were viewed by others, and as reflected in practice, varied according to the local accountability context in which they taught. I used API and AYP data (available online at www.cde.ca.gov) in selecting the focal schools for

this study. I selected two schools in the same district, which allowed me to see how a low achieving and high achieving school responded (or not) to the same district/state policies and mandates.

Gaining Access to the Research Sites

Attempting to gain access to two schools in the same district proved to be one of the hardest and most time-consuming aspects of the research process. Using the API and AYP data from the California Department of Education website, I selected twelve low-achieving schools (under 650) and five high-achieving schools (above 800). In October 2011, I began contacting each of these schools' administrators via phone and email. I first contacted my "top" choices of schools (schools with quite disparate achievement levels, e.g. one with an API score of 602, and one with a score of 880). After a week or so with no response, I moved on to my next two choices, and the process continued in this manner. In mid-November, my principal at the time was coming to observe me in my classroom. He asked me how my research was going and I vented to him about the lack of response from any of the administrators. He asked me if I contacted the principal at Hoover yet, and I told him that that school was one of my top choices and that I emailed them about a month ago. He then explained that he was in the same Masters' program as Hoover's current principal and that he would email her. I graciously thanked him, but did not expect much to come out of it. Two days later, he told me I "was in," and to "be prepared" because Mrs. Keiser was a no-frills, no nonsense kind of administrator. He also explained her level of clout in her district. With a newfound confidence, I emailed Emerald Valley (the third choice on my list of high-achieving

schools) and phrased my email a bit differently this time. I explained that I already received access from Hoover's principal, and that I wanted to perform the other part of my study at Emerald Valley. Even now, I am not sure if it was the weight of Mrs. Keiser's name that helped, or if I happened to stumble upon a willing principal, but Mr. Dorton enthusiastically agreed.

Selection and Recruitment of Participants

After "casing the joint" at each school site, I scheduled a meeting with each administrator. These meetings were prefaces to the experiences that lay before me, as they were preliminary symbolic representations of each school's culture. At the beginning of December 2011, I met with Mr. Dorton at Emerald Valley. As I arrived, he was standing at the doorway waiting for me with a welcoming smile. We held our meeting in a conference room adjacent to his office and discussed teaching, NCLB, philosophies, experiences, and so on for almost two hours. During this meeting, he mentioned that he had been thinking about which grade level would be best to work with (as I had emailed him regarding this issue a week before our meeting). Carefully and thoughtfully, he said he would like me to work with the second grade team, as they are "a wonderful group of teachers." Following the conclusion of our meeting, he walked me out to their classrooms (it was a minimum day, so the students had already been dismissed) and because of their pod system of classrooms, he was able to introduce me to all three teachers simultaneously. They revealed to me that Mr. Dorton had already spoken with them about my study and they were excited to be a part of it. This was difficult to truly ascertain, as initially, I felt that Mr. Dorton was using authoritative

means to bestow me with some reluctant participants. This was not the case, however, as I soon realized that these teachers would not have (and could have exercised this power, if need be) agreed if they did not want to participate.

My first meeting with Mrs. Keiser was comparable to trying to hail a taxi in Times Square. Upon arrival, I was disoriented as to where everything was because of the ongoing construction at Hoover. After confirming my appointment and Mrs. Keiser's location via walkie-talkie, the secretary half-heartedly (as she was preoccupied with other tasks) walked me out to meet her. I was thankful, as I had no idea where to go because of the many hallway detours caused by construction. Mrs. Keiser was standing in the middle of the asphalt directing students like a traffic officer. As I introduced myself and explained the purpose of my study, her eyes rarely met mine, though she appeared to be listening intently. She spotted a fifth grade teacher walking by and yelled, "Mrs. Hurado, you and your team are going to be a part of her study, okay?" Mrs. Hurado looked at both of us indifferently and said, "Okay," and walked away. Mrs. Keiser proceeded to tell me a few bits of information regarding that team, and then our conversation was over, as she hurriedly walked over to a group of students while blowing her whistle. I showed up at the next staff meeting expecting to meet with the fifth grade team, and Mrs. Keiser stopped me in my tracks. She quickly explained that the fifth grade team was involved with another project that was taking up a lot of their time, so she walked me over to the third grade table, introduced me as a student researcher, and walked away. I sat there, awkwardly for at least twenty minutes. None of them said a word to me. I watched them analyzing some writing samples, and just started to ask questions here and there. This

was a reluctant selection indeed, and I was worried that this introduction would set the tone for the entire study. As I spent more time at the school though, I realized that this type of spontaneous last-minute decision-making was common at Hoover, and did not overwhelm the teachers like I originally predicted.

Because collegial collaboration is an integral component of the professionalism framework, I looked at the nature of teacher interaction and collaboration in this context of high stakes accountability. Moreover, as I originally proposed, I thankfully had the opportunity to study grade level teams with different degrees of education and experience (novices with three to six years of experience at Hoover [with the exception of the team leader, Ms. Forrester who had thirteen years], and veterans at Emerald Valley, with eighteen to twenty-four years experience). As some studies suggest (Valli, et. al., 2008; Barrett, 2008; Brint & Teele, 2008), teachers' conceptions of themselves and teaching can vary to differing degrees depending on years of experience and level of education.

The second grade team at Emerald Valley was comprised of three teachers, and the third grade team at Hoover consisted of seven teachers. As seen in several studies (Stillman, 2011; Pedulla, 2005; Wills, 2007; Wills and Sandholtz, 2009), second and third grade are among the grade levels (second through sixth) that take the state tests each year and often experience more pressure due to high stakes accountability than kindergarten and first grade levels. Teachers in second and third grade also have a separate social studies and science curriculum which (according to the state standards) they are required to teach, but often do not have the time, as seen in several studies (Wills,

2007; Wills & Sandholtz, 2009; Dorgan, 2004; Pedulla, Abrams, Madaus, Russell, Ramos, and Miao, 2003).

Data Collection

Participant observation. Talbert and McLaughlin (1994) and Darling-Hammond and Sykes (1999) suggest that researchers and educators alike should divert their attention away from broad macro-level conceptualizations of teaching to studying teaching where it happens – within the school context. In their studies, these authors found that teacher practice and professionalism is shaped by the immediate context that teachers find themselves in. Teacher professionalism is socially constructed at the site level and Sykes argues that it be studied in that locus. Therefore participant observation was essential for this study in that it illuminated the social interactions and meanings “at play” that served to construct teacher professionalism in each particular school context.

In both schools, I conducted participant-observations from the beginning of the second trimester (January) to the end of the third trimester (June). Conducting the study throughout these trimesters allowed me to observe changes that occurred to teacher practice and their conceptualization of professionalism from the middle to the end of the year. For example, as seen in the Valli, et. al. (2008) study, teachers often make changes to their practice in the months prior to the administration of the state tests. Because of this, it is possible that teacher practice is less constrained in the beginning of the year and increasingly constrained as the year progresses and state testing approaches. Performing this study throughout these two trimesters allowed for sufficient data collection, as well as contributed to my understanding of the nature of teachers’ conceptions and when, how,

and why they are influenced by micro and macro-level contextual factors. Just “being there” for five to six months allowed me to establish a rapport with each of the teams, which was incredibly beneficial to the data collection process. As time went on, many teachers offered a more insightful perspective regarding controversial issues and were willing to answer both practice and belief-related questions more candidly.

Due to the focus of this study - how teachers view and enact their practice in terms of professionalism - I participated and observed in a wide range of settings. These settings included the teachers’ lounge (which led to a lot of insightful and candid observational data at Hoover), each teacher’s classroom, staff meetings, grade level team meetings, professional development in-services, and after school events. During the period of study, there were no district-level meetings or professional developments offered. Observing in these settings aided in understanding how and where teachers’ conceptions of teaching differed and what corresponding factors contributed to these differences. I studied at both schools two to three times a week for the first four and a half months, then spent all day at each school two days a week (switching off, e. g. Monday and Tuesday at Hoover, Thursday and Friday at Emerald Valley) for the last month. Each day, I observed for two to three hours, which consisted of lunch, the last hour and a half of the school day, and an hour or so after school. This time span varied according to school, as at Hoover, their school day ended later, so I was able to spend a bit more time in the classrooms observing; while at Emerald Valley, their instructional day ended earlier and for the first few months, I collected less than an hour a day of classroom observation. Interestingly enough, at Hoover, I did not spend much time after

school with the teachers as many of them left not long after the students were dismissed (usually to go pick up young children from daycare). This was due to their school day ending at 3:30, which was quite a bit later than Emerald Valley (2:10). Therefore, I collected a lot of data after school at Emerald Valley. This consisted of a lot of *personal collaboration* (as it is deemed in chapter four) among the teachers.

To collect data on grade level teams and the nature of their collaboration, I attended as many grade level meetings as possible at both schools. At Hoover, I was able to attend six; while at Emerald Valley, I attended four meetings and several instances of team “collaboration,” which often consisted of the teachers getting together during lunch and after school. I had hoped to observe grade-level lesson planning with each team, but this did not happen often. At Hoover, their lessons were already created, and at Emerald Valley, they performed this process in the mornings before school and at home. Observing this process, or lack thereof provided me with more insight regarding how each team utilized program and/or teacher-created materials, as well as how they collaborated with one another. Further discussion regarding this issue is found in the data chapters.

Teachers often conceptualize *teaching* differently in certain settings with colleagues than they do inside the classroom. As Lortie (1975) describes, teachers are often isolated in “egg-crate” classrooms, and despite what they agreed upon in their professional meetings (or felt compelled to agree with at a district training, for example), they might do something different when they are actually with their students in the classroom. This idea invoked the need for classroom observations, therefore I observed

in each teacher's classroom at least three times. In many of these instances, I asked the teacher a day or two prior to coming. At a few times throughout the study, I showed up unexpectedly, in an effort to see if the spontaneous observation data matched the scheduled observation data.

Interviews. In order to collect more in-depth data regarding how teachers think and feel about what they are doing in their practice, I conducted interviews with all eleven teachers on both grade level teams. Initial, individual interviews were conducted at the beginning of the study to gather information about their experience, personalities, views of teachers and teaching, and their perceptions of the school and their current students. These interviews were based on question guides (located in Appendix A) informed by the tenets of professionalism as they relate to teacher practice. More specifically, I asked teachers about their pacing guides and curricular programs, and to elaborate on how they managed those, especially in relation to their current students and their various levels of achievement. I inquired about how they worked together as a team and how that affected what these teachers did in the classroom. The teachers were asked to explain how they define success for their students and themselves as teachers, as this data spoke to the nature of their altruism. Of course, these questions and others led to more in-depth discussion regarding issues that were pertinent and passionate to them as individual teachers. At the end of the third trimester, I conducted follow-up interviews with each teacher (aside from two teachers at Hoover, as they were off track during that time). These questions were more specific in nature, pertaining to changes in their practice before, during, and after the CSTs were administered.

Aside from individual teacher interviews, I also conducted focus group interviews with each team. These interviews took place at the halfway point of the study. These meetings were quite different from the individual interviews in that some teachers demonstrated more confidence in answering questions (speaking as a team), whereas others felt uncomfortable revealing their true feelings regarding a certain issue. This data contributed to the analysis of each team and the nature of their collaboration and comfort level with each other. In some instances, these interviews also gave me a sense of how these teachers felt about representing teachers writ large, and their perception regarding the macro level context and its effects on teaching.

When proposing this study, I initially questioned the need for interviewing the administrators at each site. Being that this was a study on teachers and their conceptualization of themselves as professionals, I was not sure how significant a role the administrators would play. Following my first meeting with each of them, I decided that it was imperative to this study. At both Hoover and Emerald Valley, it was evident how much their presence influenced each school's culture and ultimately teacher professionalism. I conducted one formal interview with each principal at the beginning of the study and one informal interview near the end of the study. This interview data proved to be extremely significant, as it provided insight into the behind-the-scenes action (district and state issues, decision making, and the like) at each school. Interviewing them also helped to legitimize my presence in each school, especially at Hoover where the teachers relied on guidance and acceptance from the principal. Significant in these discussions was that the administrators were able to share their

perceptions of teachers and teaching in a high stakes era of accountability, and how that affected teacher practice at their school. Principals at both schools proved to be influential factors shaping, and as was the case for one school, reinforcing teachers' conceptions of themselves as professionals.

A constructive, and rather unanticipated strategy that I utilized was jotting down notes following most of the interviews. Initially, I had planned to take notes during the interviews; however, soon realized how difficult that task would be. After a few weeks, I was able to establish a comfortable rapport with the teachers and administrators, and taking notes while in the midst of discussing teaching-related issues (sometimes sensitive in nature) just did not feel natural. For a few teachers, merely telling them I was recording our conversation changed their entire demeanor for at least the first part of the interview. So following each interview, I found a spot close by, but not easily seen, where I could jot down several notes regarding facial expressions, head nods, moments filled with passionate gestures, and other communicative nuances that were not captured by the audio recorder. This practice also helped when teachers and administrators *revealed* something (usually regarding their practice or a school-related issue) to me after I stopped recording.

Document Collection. Throughout the study, I collected several types of documents. These documents included copies of their math and language arts textbooks, pacing guides (when available), test preparation materials, teacher lesson plans, worksheets and data sheets associated with accountability (more specifically, the School Improvement Grant), and memos handed down from administration. Looking at

textbooks aided in understanding the mandated curriculum that teachers were expected to follow and allowed me to see if the teachers in my focal grade levels followed it in detail or not. Analyzing these documents also informed follow-up interview questions in that I asked why or why not teachers chose to follow the curriculum in the way that they did. Having a firm grasp of their textbook programs also allowed me to see when they used supplemental and test-preparation materials, which also informed future interview questions regarding why and how they used these materials. At both schools, the pacing guides were created by the grade level teams (or for Hoover, the previous years' teams), and looking at this provided a clearer picture regarding the synchronization (or lack thereof) of their curriculum and instruction. As discussed in chapter four, there was a lack of district level communications to each school, and this finding contributed to a richer understanding of the district's inattentive involvement with the schools. This absence of district presence was another important factor to consider when analyzing the nature of teacher professionalism in these schools.

Lastly, I collected individual and aggregated test scores for each teacher and grade level team. In the case of Hoover, the teams' scores were graphed, printed, and posted in the teachers' lounge every month, so their scores were easily accessible. This data was significant as several studies suggest that teachers at schools with lower test scores experience less professional freedom and autonomy (Pedulla, et. al., 2005; Stillman, 2011) and vice versa for teachers at higher performing schools. These scores also added to data regarding teacher confidence, which was found to be a significant factor influencing teacher perception of professionalism at both sites.

Data Analysis

During and following the study, analyzing the data was a complicated and extensive process, as the data in each of the coding categories (the four tenets of professionalism) often overlapped and sometimes appeared to contradict with each other. This required a lot of triangulation between the observational data, the formal interviews, and the informal discussions. I also relied heavily on the quick notes I jotted down following most of the interviews.

Regarding observational data, I first analyzed the field notes that I recorded about each school. It was imperative for me to understand each school's culture and get a strong "lay of the land" that I could build off of. The culture at both Emerald Valley Elementary and Hoover Elementary reflected and contributed to how the school conceptualized teachers and teaching. In both schools, the contextual factors (physical, administrative, socioeconomic, and achievement-based) strongly influenced the enactment of teacher professionalism. Achievement was part of the school culture (for one school, the culture was a direct reflection of their achievement level) and positioned the teachers in contrasting ways. Being there, absorbing as much information as possible, and participating where and when it was appropriate allowed me the opportunity to become part of each school's culture and more importantly to see how they see, especially in terms of professionalism.

When I performed fieldwork in and out of classrooms, in grade level meetings, staff meetings, and so on, I annotated my notes using coding categories that were also used in analyzing the interview data. This coding consists of the four tenets of

professionalism: acquisition and use of specialized knowledge, having freedom and autonomy to make informed decisions, engaging in collegial collaboration and evaluation in setting professional standards, and having an altruistic sense of what it means to be a teacher. For example, teachers at one site demonstrated that they valued learning new teaching strategies by attending a voluntary (non-paid) staff development session. This type of data was coded under teacher understanding of developing or increasing their expert knowledge base. Teachers at another site were required to meet as a grade level weekly, but did not engage in organic collaboration during these meetings. This provided data regarding professional collegial collaboration and how it was (or was not) actually manifested. In observing teachers make decisions (regularly or minimally) regarding curriculum and instruction provided data regarding teacher autonomy and how these decisions were (or were not) implemented in their practice.

Throughout the study, I informally analyzed the interviews as they were conducted. Doing this allowed me to create follow-up questions to ask at a later time, sometimes during another interview, and other times during a casual conversation in the teachers' lounge, for example. I analyzed the interview data using the previously defined coding categories informed by the conceptual framework of professionalism.

Throughout the interviews, there were several pieces of data coded as multiple categories. For example, being required to follow a scripted mathematics program fits with autonomy, as well as the specialized knowledge base category, because at that particular site, the administrator believed in the expertise of a purchased math program, thus influencing teachers' professional perceptions and practice.

As stated previously, I analyzed specific documents and analyzed how they affected the teachers and what they do in their practice. I looked at a lot of memos (especially at Hoover) and how they were worded to see how the authors (often the administrator and academic coaches) of those memos positioned the teachers. I also asked teachers about these to gauge their feelings and thoughts regarding certain issues. Doing this allowed me to see the perspectives of both parties and how that constructed and shaped teacher professionalism at that school. What teachers did with these documents also demonstrated the level of value they attributed to them. For example, at Emerald Valley, the teachers chose to not use much of the adopted math and language arts programs, which spoke quite significantly to the minimal value they placed on those programs.

Following the study and the transcription of all twenty-four interviews, I performed a lengthy analysis of the annotated observational data, the interview data, and certain pieces of the collected documents. For a visual representation, I printed everything out and arranged the data under headings (coding categories) labeled according to the tenets of professionalism. This helped me in understanding the minute details, as well as the big picture of teacher professionalism at each school. This process also demonstrated the complicated nuances within each professional tenet and at times, its overlapping relationship to other aspects of professionalism.

Chapter 4: Teacher Professionalism at Emerald Valley

The teachers at Emerald Valley Elementary demonstrated an autonomous, unquestioned professionalism rooted in their experience and longstanding strength as a staff. These teachers were confident veterans with extensive practical knowledge gained through many years of experience. Due to a somewhat novice administrator and an established history of high test scores, Emerald Valley teachers were able to make their own curricular and instructional decisions. The strength of their personal bond was remarkable and fostered a natural, organic type of collaboration; however, as the findings will suggest, this collaboration did not always center on lesson planning or students' needs. The serene atmosphere of Emerald Valley established an overall sense of tranquility, to the point where potential ramifications of becoming a "Program Improvement" school were only acknowledged by the principal and not the teachers. There were varying degrees of altruism at Emerald Valley, as many staff members felt tension between looking out for the autonomy and wellbeing of the group, while also doing what was best for the students.

As the existing literature prompts, understanding both the macro and micro level contexts is key to understanding how teacher professionalism is shaped and enacted. For this study specifically, the micro or site level context largely influences how teacher professionalism is enacted at each school. Therefore, this chapter begins with a brief description of the Serrano Unified School District and a more explicitly detailed portrait of Emerald Valley Elementary School and its administrator. Following these descriptions, I will focus on the types of teacher professionalism evident at Emerald Valley. Included

in this section are two types of analysis: first, I will explain how the teachers see themselves as professionals and how that relates to findings in the literature on teacher practice; second, I will examine how their definition and enactment of professionalism compare to professionalism as defined by the framework.

Expansive District, Autonomous Schools

During the 2011-2012 school year, the Serrano Unified School District experienced a lot of significant changes. At this time, there was no superintendent, and according to the staff and administration, there was a movement to recall all of the existing school board members. During this time, there was little communication between the schools and the district. Administrators at both of my study sites explained that they were being instructed to make curricular and instructional decisions according to their site's specific needs. This phenomenon could be attributed to the large, almost unwieldy size of the district, and the push coming from the school administrators to have more autonomy at the site level. Unlike other surrounding districts, there were no stringent curricular or instructional mandates being handed down at this time. Therefore, both administrators were operating under the idea that they were to do what's best for their students, regardless of any earlier attempts at district-wide standardization. When discussing this issue with the participant teachers, they reaffirmed the lack of district office presence throughout this particular school year. When asked about emails, for example, all of the teachers reported that they received very little, if any memos from the district office. The lack of staff development was also apparent, as one teacher described how she noticed a decrease in the opportunities, especially compared to years passed

when they would receive several offerings of development throughout the school year. It was as if all schools were given carte blanche to do what they felt was necessary for their school; however, the caveat still remaining was that each school's administrators and teachers would continue to be held accountable for their California Standards Test scores meeting certain proficiency standards. Serrano Unified was an illustrative example of just how complicated the macro and micro contexts of teacher professionalism can be in an era of stringent accountability.

“The Jewel of the District” (Mr. Dorton, Principal)

Situated at the base of lush foothills and nearby overgrown vacant properties was Emerald Valley Elementary School. Traveling to Emerald Valley was much like the school itself, calm, serene, and somewhat elusive. After exiting the nearest freeway, there were several side roads to take, one in particular that followed along the railroad tracks next to factories and industrial buildings. This was not your average school (especially in this well-known urban school district) adjacent to main streets or located in the middle of a community consisting of homes, apartments, liquor stores, and the like. Emerald Valley was an outlier located at the top of a dead-end road, consisting of five pod-like structures and a vast green field where students preferred to spend most of their playtime. As one teacher described, “You couldn't ask for a nicer place to work. Physically, it's a beautiful place. You stand outside and you see the mountains and smell the jasmine and all the sage... And you just stand there and go, ‘Ahhhh.’”

At twenty-two years of age, Emerald Valley Elementary was considered a “sister school” to two others in adjacent areas. The original school, Kellogg Elementary, was

built a few years before Emerald Valley. After Emerald Valley was opened, district officials appointed Kellogg's principal to oversee both schools, as the idea was to create the same educational environment at both Kellogg and Emerald Valley. Because of this, half of the staff at Kellogg was asked to move to Emerald Valley, and continue fostering the same philosophies and teaching styles at this new site. This streamlining of both schools was so successful, that a third school was built two blocks south of Emerald Valley, and this process continued there as well; hence the term, "sister schools." The manner in which these schools were established is significant to the findings of this study, because the core group of teachers and the original administrator established this particular climate in all three schools. This therefore explains why the staff at Emerald Valley was so strongly bonded to each other and to the school itself, and how that influenced their perceptions of themselves as professionals.

In the narrow parking/drop-off lot, there were a total of sixteen buses: nine for general education students and seven for students with special services. Since Emerald Valley was so far removed, it was surprising that there were over five hundred students in attendance each day. These sixteen buses traveled all over the city to bring students (over two hundred) from different locales to this school. Emerald Valley was a magnet for environmental education, and therefore any student in the city could request to attend, regardless of where they live. The school population consisted of predominantly Hispanic/Latino students (eighty percent of these students were English learners), with White students being the second largest group, and African-American students being the third largest. More than half of the students at this school were labeled Socio-

Economically Disadvantaged or SED. In addition to those subgroups (determined by the California Department of Education [CDE]), there were twenty-two more that included various ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, and types of educational plans. According to Mr. Dorton, “The beauty and challenge of our school is the diversity.” The ‘challenge’ he referred to was meeting the testing criteria set by the CDE, which required that all twenty-seven subgroups met a certain proficiency goal on the California Standards Test (CST). The teaching staff was comprised of twenty-one teachers total: eighteen White, two African-American, and one Hispanic/Latina.

Several interesting sounds could be heard while standing in front of Emerald Valley Elementary. There were birds chirping, the rustle of the breeze moving through the tall trees, and chicken clucks and bleating sheep from one of the few ranch-style homes next to the school. Located in front of the bright white buildings with dark blue trim was a sign entitled, “Home of the Falcons” filled with important upcoming dates and events. It was clear why this school was an environmental magnet; students and staff often caught sightings of raccoons, opossums, hawks, and all types of insects. One morning during recess, I walked over to a commotion of students as they watched sheep being sheared out in the yard of the neighboring ranch. Unlike many schools in this district, a typical lockdown at Emerald Valley was caused by a curious mountain lion that ventured onto campus. The office was next to the main gate (which remained locked throughout the school day). The room was dimly lit and the counter was low (about three feet high) and student-friendly. On the wall to the right was a large paper tree with each staff member’s picture on each branch. One of their slogans, “Nothing learned in this

world is ever wasted” was written above the tree. This slogan rang true as I looked around the school and got to know the staff and principal. There was value placed on learning more than what was measured by macro-level accountability, as Mr. Dorton exemplified, “We are not *just* test scores. We are *so* much more than that.” This mantra and its meaning were quite significant, especially as Emerald Valley was on the brink of becoming a Program Improvement school due to its subgroups not meeting all of the proficiency requirements for the previous 2010-2011 school year.

What made Emerald Valley such an interesting place was the relationship between its physical environment and its unique culture. Simply setting foot on the campus, you experienced this overwhelming feeling of camaraderie and friendliness that set it apart from other schools. Teachers, office staff, and custodians were quick to greet visitors, and welcome them to their school. When I attended my first staff meeting, Mr. Dorton introduced me as the teachers clapped and welcomed me with a “Hip, hip, hooray!” I was told (not asked) to sit at their large U-shaped teacher table, instead of my initial choice of seat along the periphery of the room. As one teacher described, “We just absorb whoever comes in. You can’t *not* be part of our group. We kind of have you become part of our... it’s like a blob or an amoeba. You come in.” The character of this bond was striking and influenced many things that happened at Emerald Valley Elementary.

The Boundaries of Administrative Authority at Emerald Valley

Mr. Dorton entered Emerald Valley as a novice principal, yet a well-known educator in the district. He began his career as a teacher in the Serrano Unified School

District twenty-four years ago. In 2002, he became an academic coach and helped teachers and staff at all of the Serrano schools. He formed strong collegial relationships with many teachers through his experience as a coach. A year and a half prior to the study, he began his career as an administrator and was hired as principal of Emerald Valley. Because of his experience, especially several years as a teacher, the ironclad staff at Emerald Valley welcomed him benevolently. In her interview, Mrs. Arconato specifically pointed out that she would only take direction from someone who had taught for more than just a few years, and that seemed to reflect the beliefs of other staff members at Emerald as well.

According to the participant teachers, Mr. Dorton was a supportive administrator, and “all over the campus.” He often sat in classrooms and observed lessons for a few minutes. It was a subtle way of showing the students and teachers that he was involved and interested in what they were doing. Mrs. Richards likened him to former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt as she described Mr. Dorton’s leadership style as “Walk softly, carry a big stick,” because of his calm nature, yet strong sense of personal responsibility. The “stick” Mrs. Richards referred to implied the punitive measures that were often associated with larger level accountability if a school was not performing according to the current proficiency standards. She viewed Mr. Dorton as “someone who has to answer to someone else.” She later explained that she perceived that “someone else” to be district officials who may or may not question potentially low test scores at Emerald Valley. When asked to describe his leadership style, Mr. Dorton responded with, “Humane, with a dose of accountability,” again recognizing his position as someone who

was held accountable for holding others accountable, if needed. His demeanor enforced his administrative philosophy; he was extremely calm and mild-mannered. His soft voice was laced with positivity and a tranquil style of enthusiasm. He spoke with confidence and pride as he described Emerald Valley, “It’s had a really nice stable environment and that’s indicative of the whole school... how stable it is. Teachers don’t transfer from here, they come here and they stay here and they retire from here.” It could be intimidating for a new principal to come to Emerald Valley because of its reputedly strong staff, but Mr. Dorton admired and believed in his teachers. He described his transition into the school,

So my relationship with them was I’m the new guy and I’m going to get to know you so that I can add my piece to it. And I think by honoring them we created a relationship that was honest and it was about what the kids needed. It’s not about me furthering my career. It was about for the right reasons and it goes back to the culture of the school.

The staff perceived Mr. Dorton’s philosophies in a positive manner, and expressed their respect for him; however, there was a noticeable tension between his level of authority and the staff’s strength. Because of their past experiences, the core members perceived the role of *any* administrator (not just Mr. Dorton) as fleeting and temporary. Mrs. Smythe elaborated,

We’ve had principals though that have not been on campus much, because other plans. The school still functioned because we know how it works. Even when those principals weren’t here, the school still continued on doing what it does. It’s like a machine... it’s well-oiled. People just do their job.

Some staff members, as reported by the participant teachers and supported by several observations, still chose to do what they felt was best for students in their classrooms despite recommendations or encouragements from the district and/or Mr. Dorton himself. The staff exhibited a level of respect for Mr. Dorton’s “walking softly”

(mostly because it did not impinge on what they wanted to do), but did not fear the accountability or the “big stick.” There were boundaries on Mr. Dorton’s authority at Emerald Valley, and it was clear that staff members delineated what they would and would not follow from the administration. These drawn lines in the sand were different for different teachers, specifically when looking at the participant grade level team for this study. They showed a willingness to follow many of Mr. Dorton’s guidelines; however, also demonstrated their passion for making their own decisions, which contributed to how they viewed themselves as professionals. This notion is exemplified during a discussion with Mrs. Smythe about their former principal,

We’re not the only ones here from dawn and until dark. Everybody is. And so, if we have one person who’s not, as we did... our [former] principal, that didn’t mean that everybody stopped being who they were and what they are. Just because we had someone here who was different. And that year wasn’t bad, we just didn’t always agree with everything she said. And I think we changed that principal for the better. I do, I honestly do.

Findings According to the Professionalism Framework

The teachers at Emerald Valley perceived and enacted a subtle, yet confident professionalism marked with a significant amount of site-level autonomy. Analyzing how they perceived themselves as professionals was a complex process due to the multi-faceted nature of the professionalism framework. The four tenets in the framework are subjectively manifested within each school and grade-level team, and thus have to be deconstructed and individually analyzed. The following section (separated by tenets according to the framework) describes how the second grade team co-constructed and enacted their practice as professionals, as well as analyzes how that co-construction of professionalism compares to the professional framework. Unlike the findings of Nichols

and Berliner (2005), this team did not experience pressure to influence the social indicator (student test scores) in the forms of curricular limitation, test preparation, and decline in morale. Also worth noting here, the focal team and how they made meaning of being professionals was reflective of the majority of the staff at Emerald Valley. There were a few teachers at this site though (that the focal teachers referred to periodically) that did not necessarily enact a type of professionalism similar to the focal team, as their notions of altruism were slightly more extreme than the beliefs held by the staff.

The Knowledge Base and Expertise of a Confident Staff

As described in the framework (Brint, 1994; Dinham and Stritter, 1986; Klegon, 1978; Elbaz, 1981; Shulman, 1986, 1998; Boreham, 1983; Darling-Hammond, 1985; Friedson, 1973; Kerchner & Mitchell, 1988; Rury & Pratte, 1991; Ballet, Kelchtermans, & Loughran, 2006; Dufour, 2005; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; McClure, 1998; Wilensky, 1964), professionals are defined by their extensive knowledge and expertise regarding their practice. As Klegon (1978) describes, professionals must obtain a purposeful, yet specialized knowledge base in order to garner the authority and trust of their public clientele. This usually takes the form of scholarly education at the secondary level and beyond. Mastery of this knowledge and practice entitles professionals to do what they do and have the power to make changes to the standards entailed with the profession (Brint, 1994). The teachers at Emerald Valley believed that their level of expertise and practical experience gave them the confidence to teach the way they wanted to teach. They went to school (two of the three have their master's degrees) took additional courses to become "highly qualified," underwent several trainings, and exuded a strong sense of their own

teaching abilities that they have acquired and refined throughout the years. These veteran teachers (experience ranged from fourteen to thirty-five years) were confident with their level of pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1998). They largely valued practical knowledge, and demonstrated a strong desire to do what they have known to work. With that being said, these teachers displayed a willingness to learn, but mostly from each other. Throughout the 2011-2012 school year, they showed excitement when learning about the new technology they received (Apple MacBook laptops and Smart Boards), as well as during in-house staff development meetings. For example, Mr. Dorton selected a book/program to focus on for that particular school year, “Teach Like a Champion.” Each meeting, a pair of randomly selected teachers was responsible for teaching the group about a certain strategy that they read about in an assigned chapter of Teach Like a Champion. During these meetings, the teachers were comfortable with each other (they would often shout out and laugh, etc.) and demonstrated receptiveness to trying the new strategy that was being presented to them. They asked questions about how to apply the strategy in practical classroom situations, and how they could use it in place of something they already did. They possessed an open and favorable viewpoint of the program, as Mrs. Richards reiterated, “I kind of like that Teach Like a Champion... I like that. And the Fred Jones... those types are fun to do too. You can never fill up your bag of tricks. You have to have enough to change them... kids change.”

The teachers at Emerald Valley were open and comfortable learning from each other, but did not extend this warmth when receiving training from someone outside the school. During a staff meeting later in the year, a district representative from the

Department of Equity and Achievement presented on the issue of Culturally Responsive Teaching. The teachers' behavior was quite different in this meeting as opposed to how they acted during in-house staff meetings. Several teachers acted nervously, with one otherwise boisterous teacher repeating, "Don't pull my stick," (referring to the sticks she had created with every teacher's name on it. She explained that she created these to model an equitable practice of randomly choosing students in a classroom). The lack of confidence and eerie silence among the teachers was surprising and could be attributed to the fact that an outsider from the district came to teach them about something with which they were not familiar. She discussed Response to Intervention (RTI) and experienced some friction with two teachers, as they explained that they felt it was a form of tracking, even *after* she redefined the term as a fluid differentiation of student groups. She presented for about fifteen to twenty minutes and then left. Following her presentation, Mr. Dorton reiterated the importance of the strategies she discussed, and that was the end of it. The room felt tense, and a bit unresolved, as though the teachers did not understand the purpose of the presentation and therefore would most likely not internalize or apply what was taught. Because this was something from the district, it was not perceived as significant, even with Mr. Dorton's brief blurb at the end. It was as if he was being polite and respectful to the issue that was presented, but not enough to reinforce it with any type of internal accountability. As Brint (1994) describes, professionals continue their learning, especially teachers as they are transmitters of culture and therefore need to continue adding to their existing knowledge base. To maintain their entitlement, professionals are to learn from fellow professionals, as they have that granted authority.

The teachers at Emerald Valley take this idea to another level where they only trust the authority and expertise of teachers at *their* school, or an “in-house” expertise, if you will. Brint describes a phenomenon similar to this when he discusses “educational closure,” (p. 76). This closure ensures the monopolization over their expertise, as it is not imparted to anyone who is not considered a professional. Emerald Valley looked out fervently for each other as a staff and possibly established this closure to maintain a perceived level of authority.

In the context of accountability established by No Child Left Behind, many schools placed a lot of curricular and instructional emphases on the CST and its data. In several studies, teachers heavily analyzed CST data and used it to add to their existing knowledge base regarding their students and the curriculum for the upcoming year (Valli, et. al. 2008; Valli & Buese, 2007; Diamond and Spillane, 2004). At Emerald Valley, many teachers believed that the CST was one tool (of many) to use in measuring achievement, and therefore should be treated as such. Therefore, they did not perceive the data to be worthy of deep analysis, and trusted their expertise based on what they saw in their own classrooms instead. When asked how the teachers felt about being labeled as Program Improvement, one teacher responded with, “You know, now that you mention us being in Program Improvement, I had even forgotten!” This response is quite different compared to the teachers’ perceptions in Valli, et. al.’s (2008) work, and other studies (Stillman, 2011, McNeil and Valenzuela, 2000), where teachers expressed frustration and constant pressure to increase test scores from one year to the next. The teachers at Emerald Valley looked at the CST data, but not all, especially the second grade team,

placed much value on it. Mrs. Arconato stated, “But you know (hesitating) I guess it [CST data] does let you know what you need to work on, but (says quietly) we kind of know that anyway. Should I say that...? (purses her lips as she looks at the recorder and laughs).” When asked if she and her grade level looked at the previous year’s test scores, she responded,

Uhhh... some. And of course, we look at our kids... how they’re doing in third grade. But you *know* those kids, you *know* what they’re going to do. I mean you probably don’t have to look at the data. You know... there’s a few surprises sometimes, but you know how... you can predict. Really, it’s very predictable usually. It really is. It is what it is.

In another interview she stated,

Though there are some schools in SUSD that just pound and pound and pound and their scores are going up, but they’re miserable. I’ve been with some of these women at these schools and it’s like how do you get anything done? There’s just constant, constant work, you know... you’re a data collector. I don’t know...

Because of this, most teachers at Emerald Valley did not believe in teaching to the state test, (except for one fourth grade teacher that was mentioned a few times whenever test preparation was discussed in our interviews). In her study, Dorgan (2004) found that students receiving high test scores, as the result of significant amounts of test preparation, caused teachers to feel that they had lost their trusted level of expertise to make curricular and instructional decisions. This was not the case at Emerald Valley, as these teachers did not compromise their level of decision-making due to their level of experience and knowledge, and their students still performed well on the CST. Their overall lack of focus on the CST was even more apparent during a particular staff meeting regarding CST administration. Mr. Dorton asked the staff to say what DFA (Directions for Administration) stood for, and no one answered. The DFA is the manual that teachers

were required to read off of when administering the test. Perhaps that acronym was not used much at this school, or it is just not that important to them.

One last theme relating to knowledge base and expertise at Emerald Valley is that the teachers trusted their own curricular choices, as opposed to following the adopted textbook programs for language arts and mathematics. This idea correlates with another aspect of the professionalism framework, freedom and autonomy; however, in this sense, the teachers felt that they had the expertise to confidently make curricular and instructional decisions for their students. More specifically, my participant grade-level team valued their individual and collaborative knowledge over the adopted textbook programs that they were encouraged to follow. From my experience with this participant grade level team, their knowledge base consisted of a plethora of teaching strategies, an immense amount of content (spanning several subjects: science, history, art, etc.), and their experiences from the last twelve years of working together. I saw several examples of this when visiting their classrooms. Each year, the second grade students read a story about a deaf student who learns to enjoy music by feeling the vibrations. To connect with this, the teachers liked to show the students a video of Andre Reiu, who is a famous deaf composer. Five to ten minutes into it, most students were watching, and some were really into it. One girl said she could feel the vibrations of the music in her chair as she watched. However, after about fifteen minutes, many students were talking and no longer paying attention. I looked to see if the teachers were going to stop the DVD, but they kept it playing. After twenty-five minutes or so, most students were not paying attention. The composer in the film was speaking in German and it's possible that that

was what made the students lose interest. Mrs. Smythe stood up and started to explain to the students what the composer was talking about. Then she began to fast-forward to other parts and stopped it after forty minutes total. I had heard about this video for the past few weeks, as they kept telling me how excited they were to show it to the kids. Even following the showing of the video, the teachers felt confident in their decision to do it, possibly because of it being successful in the past. After school that day, the teachers were discussing parts of the day (as they usually did) and mentioned that they enjoyed seeing those particular students who were really engaged while watching the video. Their comments illustrated that they felt it was beneficial for those students and worth showing for forty minutes. Therefore, it made sense professionally to continue playing the video based on those students who demonstrated interest.

There is an underlying commonality among these three findings surrounding professional knowledge and expertise of Emerald Valley teachers. According to Freidson (1973), “The strongest professions have thus far managed to preserve much of the right to be the arbiters of their own work performance...” (p. 33). Darling-Hammond reiterates, “At the core of the definition of a profession is the notion that its members must define and enforce their own standards of practice” (p. 212). Brint (1994) also adds, “A number of empirical indicators suggest that professionals have a distinctively high level of commitment to education” (p. 83). These teachers were confident in their *own* practical knowledge and expertise, and therefore did not value or buy into agendas of people outside the teaching profession that they did not know or trust. This notion is reflected in each of the findings. They were open to learning from each other (whom they trusted as

“in-house experts”) within their own school, but not open to the learning from the district representative at their staff meeting. These teachers did not place much value on the CST data, because they do not view legislators and those representing the larger institutional context to be experts on curriculum and instruction. Finally, making the professional decision to continue playing the video demonstrated a desire to continue doing something they have always trusted, despite its somewhat negative reception among the students. Choosing to trust those they consider experts correlates with part of the professional framework; however, as stated previously, the four tenets of professionalism are integral and work in relation to each other. Not trusting others, and therefore only trusting their own judgment can and did lead to negative and non-altruistic learning experiences for students, (e.g. the decision to continue playing the video). Here I introduce the complex task of analyzing teaching professionalism: teachers can perceive their actions as professional, but when looking at literature on professionalism, their actions actually show something quite different. This further complicates the understanding of professionalism in teaching because it suggests the possibility for teachers to enact parts of the professional framework, and not others. This idea of context-specific “quasi-professionalism” will continue to reappear throughout this analysis.

Collegial Collaboration Based on Personal Relationships

Professionals engage in collaboration with one another for the purpose of bettering their practice. According to research in the area of Professional Learning Communities (PLC), collaboration is defined as people working together effectively to achieve a common goal. The PLC literature explicitly outlines how collaboration should

look and what questions should be asked, i.e. “What do we want our students to learn? How will we know when they have learned it?” and so on (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). These questions are to guide collaborative encounters of any type between grade levels, as well as between the school staff. At Emerald Valley, collegial collaboration was strongly encouraged by administration, as well as fostered by the mere structure of the school. As Mr. Dorton described, “It’s been a very iconic kind of campus. It’s quite unique in that it has the pod system with three classrooms built around it, so there’s a lot of collegiality built into the architecture... and it’s up to the staff, of course, to take advantage of that.” As seen in Brint’s work (1994), collaboration serves another purpose in that it contributes to evaluation as colleagues work together in determining the evaluative qualities to use in judging professional performance. For the teachers at Emerald Valley, collaboration and evaluation did not go hand-in-hand, and therefore must be looked at individually before understanding the nature of their relationship.

The teachers in the second grade team engaged in a lot of collaboration; however they collaborated in a manner defined quite differently from the literature on professionalism. The nature of their collaboration was focused on personal bonds and trust, rather than ensuring that the quality of their work continued to meet a particular standard. They often met before, during, and after school to discuss personal issues, as well as to vent about school issues as well. However, I did not witness them meeting to discuss specific standards or plan/design lessons. They did talk about how lessons went after the fact. When asked about collaboration, they often referred to their strong

personal relationships, rather than how they worked on lessons, common assessments, etc.

Mrs. Richards described,

We had done it (teaching as a team) for a long time, but that's because Mrs. Smythe and I did our masters together and we loved collaborating together. If something happens, or wonderful, who do you share it with? We go to each other... so whatever it is, it's all better by the time we go home.

During another interview Mrs. Richards mentioned,

Or afterschool, we'll sit. Like yesterday, we sat and talked and complained... nothing about school (laughs). 'Oh my husband this... and this... mine did that too.' And then we were done, we went home (laughs). And sometimes, Mrs. Smythe has this one boy who is giving her such a hard time. She can't sleep sometimes, because she's so conscientious. She worries so much. Mrs. Arconato and I are more 'eh,' but her...

When they did collaborate on school issues, the focus was often on how to rotate the students for their Friday rotations that they do, and curricular pacing to make sure they were somewhat near each other when it came to reading specific stories and teaching certain lessons. Mrs. Richards illustrated this when discussing their teaching styles,

And after talking with them, you know that Mrs. Smythe will do things her way, and Mrs. Arconato does things in a different way. I do things in a different way... (they'll ask each other), 'What story are you on? Are you going to do two weeks or one week on it?' So we're kind of in the same spot. I might be ahead in math, Mrs. Smythe might be ahead in... but we try to stay pretty close, because we know we have those benchmarks coming up.

In several studies regarding the effects of pacing guides on teacher practice and collaboration, the researchers found that teachers felt bound to following them and altered their instruction based on where they were supposed to be (Wills, 2007; Wills and Sandholtz, 2009; Dorgan, 2004; McNeil, 2000). Contrary to the literature, teachers at Emerald Valley did not follow a guide so much as they stayed on course with each other. This correlates with the framework's definition of professional collaboration, as far as

making decisions based on the team working together, outside of an arbitrary one-size-fits-all type of pacing calendar.

Collaboration brings about a sense of accountability, and a way for professionals to ensure and improve the quality of their practice. For these teachers, the nature of their collaboration was different because they did not perceive a need to focus on macro-level accountability. The trust among them was already established and they each felt that they were all doing what was best for students, regardless of how the actual lesson or unit was taught. The nature of their accountability was as though they wanted to do well for each other so that the personal relationship was not compromised, rather than worrying about the professional relationship. Mrs. Richards commented, “I do not want to *not* be prepared when it’s my turn to do science. I don’t want to be unprepared when I go into Mrs. Smythe’s class or Mrs. Arconato’s class because I would be letting them down and their kids down.” This is how they viewed professional collaboration, and they definitely felt a sense of trust and accountability towards each other. Some would argue (Dufour & Eaker, 1998) that this type of collaboration would not be described as professional because these teachers did not plan actual lessons together, and therefore did not hold each other accountable for the activities occurring in their classrooms; while it could also be posited that detailed planning may not be needed if they truly trust what each other is doing in the classroom. The bond they had established motivated them to do their best in their practice, and allowed them a sense of autonomy even within their own team. As Mrs. Richard’s described,

We already know that there’s more than one right way to do something, and we respect what works for one won’t necessarily work for another. That’s what

works for her in her classroom might not work for mine. And when I go into her classroom, I have to remember that. We switch... we have to change the way we are. The kids will adapt usually. But not all teachers on our campus are willing to say 'your way works better than mine, so I'm going to try that.' Or to trust someone to teach your kids the subject as well as you can do it. It's kind of a nice thing... to have someone else do that for you. It's kind of nice actually. And the kids look forward to it.

Another way to understand how individuals define something is to examine how they do *not* define it. Regarding collaboration, this team continued to reference personal relationships, as already discussed. In a conversation about teams that were not collaborative, they referenced situations that more closely resembled the definition of collaboration as defined in the literature. For example, the question was asked, "If you were on a team that was not so collaborative, would your teaching change? How?" Mrs. Smythe answered quite passionately,

When I was working on a team that was not so collaborative, it was a lot more stressful. I did stick to a very strict schedule and I made sure that everything I was planning to do I did. So I felt much more regimented and much more rigid than I am. I did work with another team at our school. It was successful and we teamed the whole year. I did language arts and the other teacher did math. We met and we discussed our plans, and we wrote our plans basically together. We sat down and we were going to do... the teacher was very... were going to spend from this time to this time on this subject and this time much time on this subject. So when our students changed, I made sure right then that we were always where we needed to be. So it was not as comfortable... there was a lot more stress.

It is understandable as to why this was a stressful situation for Mrs. Smythe, but what is interesting about this is that she cited working together on lesson plans (and perhaps over-regimented scheduling) as *not* collaborative. Her sense of a lack of collaboration here most likely stemmed from the lack of a personal relationship with this team. A certain level of comfort was an integral part of what this team defined as collaboration, and for Mrs. Smythe, that level of comfort was just not there with the other team. Again,

this underlying idea of trust, personal not just professional, guided their thinking when it came to working with others in a professional atmosphere.

Collegial collaboration is jointly connected to evaluation, as professionals work together to agree upon and continuously redefine competency standards for that profession (Rury & Pratte, 1991; Brint, 1994). Peer evaluation of those standards is key in maintaining a certain level of consistency and proficiency of practice among one another (Freidson, 1973). Just as the teachers at Emerald Valley valued a different type of collaboration, their conceptualization of evaluation was also quite different from the professional framework. When first asked about peer evaluation, the team explained that they used to do it years ago. They went into each other's classrooms and observed certain aspects of their teaching. These aspects were focused and decided upon by the teacher being observed. When I probed and asked more detailed questions about this practice, I mentioned the word *evaluation* and was quickly corrected by one of the teachers. She stated that going into each other's classrooms was not an *evaluation* and was only used to help each other with a specific weakness. She did not understand that they were in fact evaluating each other by helping one another better their practice. At this point, it was understood that these teachers did not conceptualize the idea of *evaluation* as defined in the literature on professionalism. Their conceptualization of evaluation consisted of a principal or respected authority figure (Mrs. Arconato specifically and passionately noted that she only valued an evaluation conducted by a principal who had taught for awhile and had therefore earned her respect) observing them for a given amount of time and giving them a performance grade. Mrs. Smythe explains,

Well when it's an evaluation, I like a principal doing it. But I wouldn't go to my principal and say 'I think I have a weakness in this particular area, would you come down and observe me and tell me where I need to improve?' because he's my evaluator!

They trusted each other enough to ask for help, but not willing to reveal a 'weakness' to an administrator who is ultimately the one they want doing their evaluation. Their definition of evaluation most likely originated from the structure and language of the union-based contract. This *evaluation* connotes a formal obligatory event, rather than an ongoing process that is informal and collaborative in nature. An *evaluator* in the way that they perceived it, referred to the person who oversees a teacher's practice and recommends (or not) renewal of their contract.

In the literature regarding professionalism, there is a strong relationship between expertise and trust. Professionals are trusted by other fellow professionals (and the general public) because they have acquired the knowledge and experience they need to effectively conduct their practice. There is no need for personal relationships, as it is implied that the professional trust is there. As discussed in the previous section concerning knowledge and experience, the teachers at Emerald Valley had an issue with trusting others outside their school, and this issue of trust factors into how they see collaboration and evaluation as well. Their collaboration was organic (as the literature describes), but not focused on academics. They trusted each to do their best (without any significant planning and accountability in place), and that was all they needed to keep each other accountable.

According to the professional framework, to evaluate has a different connotation and no presence of authoritative positioning or power differences, as those who evaluate

each other are inherently equals. The teachers at Emerald Valley trusted each other to reveal weaknesses and help with any problems they were having in their practice, and this strongly correlates with the professional framework; however, they did not value that type of evaluation in the way they valued an evaluation from an administrator. As Mrs. Arconato passionately described, they also only valued said evaluation if it came from someone they respected and trusted as an expert. If an unknown or not respected district official were to come in and evaluate their teaching, I doubt they would place much value on the critique/comments that they would provide.

Freedom and Autonomy “Under the Radar”

The tenet of freedom and autonomy is an integral piece in determining the professional nature of a community. As Shulman (1998) describes, a professional should be able to make decisions based on their acquired knowledge and experience. In teaching specifically, the lack of freedom and autonomy to make instructional and curricular decisions, as seen in the literature, is often why teachers are not viewed as professionals (Yeom and Ginsburg, 2007). Contextually speaking, all public educators in the United States must follow federal and state mandates, which initially appear to remove a lot of professional freedom. However, given these constraints, teachers at the micro level, within their school sites, are able to enact (at varying levels) a certain amount of autonomy. Emerald Valley, specifically, did not have a lot of district oversight. As one teacher described, “We’re out in the sticks! And that’s fine with us! We very seldom have anyone come up here, very seldom. No one knows where we are. They say they’re

going to come and then they cancel, because it'll be raining, or foggy, and they don't want to come out here." Due to this lack of district presence, teachers at Emerald Valley felt a significant amount of freedom at the site level. Unlike the teachers in Stillman's (2011) study who were required to use the district-adopted curriculum, these teachers often pulled in their own resources when making curricular decisions. These teachers taught from programs that were not or no longer endorsed by the district. One math program in particular, ExcelMath, was so important to them that one of the teachers paid for the materials herself two years ago, despite her acknowledgment, "Like Excel... we're not supposed to be doing it, but he [Mr. Dorton] knows we do it, but we do it for homework and spend about twenty to thirty minutes on it in class." Since then, funds from the Parent Teacher Association had been used to purchase the program. The team decided that ExcelMath was an effective way of reinforcing math concepts and had support from Mr. Dorton as well. According to Mrs. Richards,

We don't have a lot of new curriculum and our principal has said to support what we have with what we can find. So we are given a lot of freedom as long as we stay within the standards. I can pretty much teach those standards however I see fit.

At several times throughout the study, the second grade teachers used resources that were art-based and not *directly* tied into the language arts and math state standards. During one observation, I noticed several second grade students finishing their Tomie dePaola "self-portraits." When asked, Mrs. Smythe explained that the teachers had read a story by Tomie dePaola and explained to the students that he is both the author and

illustrator of most of his stories. Being an artist, Mrs. Smythe then showed all of the students how to draw pictures using his style. That afternoon, they worked on their self-portraits for almost an hour. They continued the next afternoon (during my observation) for another thirty to forty minutes. As they had mentioned in other discussions, this second grade team valued teaching art and other non-tested subjects, which is why they spent a significant amount of time on this lesson. Earlier in the school year, the students read a story written by Patricia Polacco. Mrs. Arconato described how they extended that lesson,

When we do our rotations, we try and do something different. You know, to kind of get ‘em... like Patricia Polacco... we all like her a lot. So in mine (rotation), we find and color Michigan (where Polacco is from). And because there’s not a lot of dare I say *fun* anymore... you know. They got to color and do things like that.

These are just two examples of many demonstrating how these teachers made their own curricular decisions and chose to integrate them with other subjects, such as art, or creative writing.

Pedulla, et. al. (2003) and Brint and Teele (2008) found that teachers in high-stakes schools spent little, if any, time teaching subjects like fine art, music, and physical education. The teachers at Emerald Valley chose to incorporate these and other non-tested subjects as much as they could. Every Friday afternoon, the second grade teachers each taught an enrichment activity that connected to something taught earlier that week. They explained that this idea originated from their desire to incorporate fine art into the curriculum. Two years prior to the study, they decided to section off Friday afternoons for fine art, creative writing, and other activities that they “can’t do every day.”

Sometimes, they showed a movie based on a story they read. Another time, the teachers brought in an episode of “Reading Rainbow” that connected to one of the stories from the adopted curriculum. When asked if Mr. Dorton approved of these Friday enrichments, Mrs. Richards replied, “He’s okay with it... anything that’s enriching!”

Being that the school was on the brink of becoming a Program Improvement school, I asked the team how they would feel if they began to experience top-down control over the curriculum (that was usually associated with Program Improvement schools [Stillman, 2011; Pedulla, et. al., 2003]). Mrs. Smythe answered, “Well, I think we would make a good attempt... and then people would shut the door and do what works.” This honest answer relates to how the team felt regarding state-level accountability measures. As discussed previously, these teachers did not place a lot of value on the CST. For them, it was an afterthought of what they did on a daily basis. In their eyes, they had taught their students the standards, along with other subjects as well, and the CST was a cumulative “catch-all” that would show student mastery of what was tested. For these teachers, being professional entailed making curricular decisions based on what they believed to be best for students, and not driven by the CST. For them, the sanctions were not a threat overriding what they wanted to do in the classroom, unlike how teachers in other schools have felt (Pedulla, et. al., 2003; Valli, et. al., 2008; McNeil, 2000).

The teachers on the second grade team felt a sense of confidence and competence to make these curricular decisions, as well as do whatever else they felt was right for the students. Contributing to this confidence was the support they felt from both the

administrator and the surrounding community. When first meeting with Mr. Dorton, he specifically asked me to work with the second grade team because of their willingness to help out, and also their ability to collaborate and do “great things for kids.” In doing this, he revealed a trust he had for this team. Throughout the study, this deep level of trust was reaffirmed again and again. He dropped by the classroom in a non-evaluative way, but rather to visit students or say hello. He never stayed long (three to five minutes) each time and was always jovial. The students themselves were never nervous; in fact, they were used to it and looked forward to saying hello to their principal. Surprisingly, it was the teachers who seemed nervous, and revealed to me later that day that they still felt a bit self-conscious when he came in. As Mrs. Arconato put it, “We’re all rule-followers down here (in second grade), we follow the rules. And there are *others* who are not rule-followers at this school, but you’ve probably already figured that out at our meetings.” This team considered themselves “rule-followers,” even if they had demonstrated an overwhelming desire to continue doing what they thought was good for students, even if that meant subversively challenging their administrator’s wishes. They perceived themselves as following the rules because they did not openly challenge the principal’s recommendations, even if they did not agree with them. They compared themselves to other teachers at Emerald Valley that were not rule-followers because those colleagues were quite vocal when something was disagreeable to them. When asked about how Mr. Dorton handled changes that they made to their curriculum and/or pacing guide, Mrs. Smythe explained,

He understands that. He is very much supportive of what we’re doing. Mr. Dorton walks around all the time. He’s in here often, talking to my students.

He's always in and out, but he trusts us to do what we say we're going to do and he trusts that we *know* what we're going to do.

The teachers at Emerald Valley not only had the support of their administrator, but also their community. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) was very strong at Emerald Valley. When discussing curricular restrictions and other changes that could happen as a result of Program Improvement legislation, Mrs. Smythe stated, "The parents in our neighborhood would not support the state coming and in and making sweeping changes that they didn't have control over. We have a school site council that attends meetings. And if they don't like how things are going, they speak up. They're very vocal." This support further contributed to this team's confidence in making autonomous decisions.

One last unexpected finding showed that despite having a lot of freedom and autonomy (especially in comparison to Hoover Elementary), the teachers at Emerald Valley expressed that they still felt somewhat stifled by the larger educational context and the emphasis on the CST. Mrs. Richards commented that for the last ten years, she felt that the curriculum was too teacher-centered. With the writ-large emphasis on direct instruction because of the CST, she lamented, "It seems like I'm running the show and the kids are pawns." She was referring to what the ideal teacher-centered curriculum (which was largely the aim of No Child Left Behind) was supposed to look like, according to the central message conveyed by district level personnel and staff trainings. Mrs. Richards and her team expressed that they felt torn between what was expected of them (regarding a rigid and limited scope of curriculum), and what they wished to do professionally. In this vein, these teachers acted as professionals in that they made

decisions based on what they thought was best for students, and not based on district and state level curricular expectations.

Brint and Teele (2008) found that all teachers, veterans and novices expressed levels of frustration with the lack of autonomy provided to them by NCLB. They analyzed teachers' perceptions via survey and interview data. These veterans at Emerald Valley appear to be expressing similar sentiments to those in Brint and Teele's study; however, this façade underscores the importance of conducting an in-depth case study and collecting data through observation and more frequent interaction with the participants. Emerald Valley teachers stated they were operating in a restriction-filled context, and regarding the macro level, that was true; however, at this school, the level of teacher autonomy was salient and evident in their practice.

When looking at professionalism, there is some overlap between freedom and acquired expertise, especially regarding this specific team's perception of CST data. They agreed that it was important to look at, but that several people placed too much emphasis on it, especially when making curricular and instructional decisions. They felt that they should be trusted as experts, and acted that way in their practice, despite their thoughts on macro-level constraints. During one interview, Mrs. Richards stated emphatically, "They don't trust us to do our jobs! They don't even trust us to adjust our thermostats!" The 'they' that Mrs. Richards referred to was district-level personnel. It is important to note here that this team of teachers felt more accountability to each other and to Mr. Dorton (as their evaluator), rather than to district officials or anyone at the state/federal level who are often the decision makers when it comes to curriculum and textbook programs. They

felt stifled with the overall educational context of NCLB, but not at their site. The lack of this site level pressure most likely stems from Mr. Dorton's amelioration of any macro-level constraints, as well as their longstanding high achievement based on previous CST scores.

The framework on professionalism details the intertwined relationship between expertise and a professional's freedom to make decisions. Boreham (1983) explains that having expertise and the autonomy to use said expertise is not what determines professionalism, but rather it is knowing *how* to use that knowledge in making the most appropriate decisions possible. Building on this idea, Shulman (1998) maintains that professionals learn from past experiences and their ramifications, as those become part of their growing knowledge base. The teachers at Emerald Valley possessed the freedom and autonomy to make their own curricular and instructional decisions, which fits with the professional framework; however, as Boreham (1983) and Shulman (1998) specify, the perceived confidence and expertise that the teachers shared was simply not enough. The professionalism that appeared on the surface did not always translate into their practice. This is a difficult and complex notion, because they did act as professionals by using curriculum and teaching lessons that they deemed appropriate for the students. Without much professional collaboration though (and therefore a minimal amount of collegial accountability), moments in their practice became questionable. This complicates the findings in Tschannen-Moran's work (2009) in that Emerald Valley's context fostered professional autonomy, especially with the trust Mr. Dorton exuded

towards his staff; however, the nature in which these teachers made autonomous decisions was not always considered professional.

Shades of Altruism

Professionals are entrusted with a certain level of social responsibility and dedication to their practice and clientele (Brint, 1994; McClure, 1998). At Emerald Valley, there were variations regarding the nature of altruism among the teachers. The second grade teachers, as well as others at Emerald Valley, believed that they were there to do what was best for the students, regardless of any outside mandates or pressure. These teachers made instructional and curricular decisions based on what they perceived as the students' needs, and not based on what they knew would be on the CST. This is significant given the educational context at that time, because according to the research, and the findings at Hoover Elementary, many teachers felt pressure to do test preparation and teach what was specifically on the test (Valli, et. al., 2008; Dorgan, 2004; Pedulla, et. al., 2003; Valli & Chambliss, 2007). This grade level team was aware of the test's importance, but did not compromise what they wanted to do because of it. To them, being professionals meant making judgment calls regarding what was important. They enacted this by teaching lessons in other non-tested subjects, such as social studies, science, art, and creative writing. These teachers were teaching what they thought was essential for their students to learn for life, future grades, and then finally the test. Contrary to the teachers in Stillman's (2011) study, they chose *not* to do test-preparation and use resources that are test-based, even though there were other teachers at Emerald

Valley that chose to teach that way. When discussing her reasons for not doing test preparation, Mrs. Richards spoke specifically and passionately,

I want students to *love* learning. And I'm sure you're this way, I love learning about new things. Reading about different places in the world, things like that. We should be teaching them things about the world around them so they understand. We had Pearl Harbor Day in sixth grade, they didn't know why it was important. They couldn't say why. And someone said, "Was it Hawaii?" And then someone said, "Oh, did a volcano erupt?" No... and that goes back down to the knowledge and the Blooms [taxonomy] thing and they want us to do the higher-level thinking and we forget that at this age, elementary, this is where you get your base, your knowledge and comprehension... THEN you can think critically. If you're critically thinking about something that you don't know, then it sounds really dumb (laughs), you know, so we still have to... I know some schools that have cut out science and social studies completely, and forget the arts, music, fine art, dance, and all those things that enrich your school.

In her quote, Mrs. Richards expressed her belief of teaching students concepts and ideas, rather than test-taking strategies. She spoke strongly about this and felt that she and her grade level team chose to teach things that they deemed important, rather than the content and skills that were needed to succeed on the state test. They agreed that teaching this way was altruistically best for students. This notion is agreeable, especially when looking at what happens when students are only taught test-taking skills and school is no longer enriching for them (Valli & Chambliss, 2007; McNeil & Valenzuela, 2000).

When the participant teachers were asked why they specifically went into teaching, they each shared altruistic notions, such as wanting to help students and do what's best for kids. When asked about Emerald Valley's staff, Mrs. Smythe explained, "People just do their job. I think the overwhelming feel here is we love our work. We care about each other and we love these kids. And everyone puts in multiple hours. We're not the only ones here from dawn and until dark. Everybody is." However, at

Emerald Valley, there was an interesting juxtaposition of doing what was best for students, while also looking out fervently for the group (the staff). Mrs. Arconato described,

And just about everyone else has been here too, so we know each other. And there's not a lot of moving in and out and we look out for each other. And even when we had different principals, we kind of look at it as principals come, and principals go... but were the same.

These teachers demonstrated a strong loyalty to each other and there was a heavy union presence underlying that loyalty. The cohesiveness of Emerald Valley's staff was based on a foundation of loyalty. They worked together for a long time (most had been at EV for at least fourteen years), and they definitely felt a strong bond because of this. They saw administrators come and go, and the core of the staff (those that opened the school) still remained. After one of the staff meetings, the STA (Serrano Teachers Association) representative held a union meeting. This meeting was full of tension and frustration, and lasted almost an hour. The discussion was focused on salary freezes and where the district money had been going. The representative disclosed a new proposal from the district entailing an additional salary freeze which would not affect the existing budget, but would provide future restoration of recently-rescinded jobs and bring back counselors. Many teachers were enthusiastically against this freeze. One teacher yelled, "The teachers have had enough!" The representative then told the staff, "Now we have to get more choosy with our time. Elementary teachers just *do*, and we can't do that anymore." Working according to contract time has always been something that teachers debate upon, but most agree that they must work beyond their given contractual time frames to do their

job successfully. Here, he was proposing that they stop doing that, which in turn would affect their students.

Though the second grade teachers demonstrated an unwillingness to agree to the district's proposal, they did not support the idea of limiting their workday either. They did not openly share their lack of support for that idea, and because of that, there was a noticeable tension between their altruistic notions and those of the other staff members. This tension resided in the fact that these teachers were devoted to doing what they thought was best for students, while also remaining loyal to the staff. They wanted to stay true to their own altruistic beliefs, while also maintaining a strong, cohesive relationship with the rest of the teachers at Emerald Valley. As they had expressed on many occasions, they believed that the strength of the school stemmed from the strength of the staff, and they did not want to compromise that. In this sense, the second grade team demonstrated a silent autonomous altruism, where they could show a level of loyalty to the staff without compromising their own individual beliefs.

Some teachers at Emerald Valley believed that working only to contract time (despite still having more to do) would show district officials a sign of strength; a demand to be seen as professionals and valued as such. This is problematic when looking at the professional framework, because being a professional involves giving selflessly in “doing full-time the job that needs doing,” as well as prioritizing the clients’ (students’) needs (Wilensky, 1964, in Brint, 1994, p. 32). These beliefs would not be considered professional, according to the framework, as certain teachers were prioritizing their own needs over the students’.

In his work, Brint (1994) discusses the unfortunate evolution that has occurred regarding the definition of professionalism. As described in chapter two, this evolution from social trustee professionalism to market-based professionalism has influenced the way others see professionals and how professionals see themselves. Regarding ideologies specifically, he argues that professionals have a definable belief system. They are part of an interest group; which when applied to teachers can be likened to the teachers' union. He states, "The ideology of the staff tends to mirror the ideology of the association," and this herein leads to a "greater voice" for that association (p. 58); and this notion was evident at Emerald Valley. The union functions as a self-preserving interest group, and Emerald Valley teachers wanted to ensure their voices were and continued to be heard. This finding is an example of how the context of education can cause manifestations of coping and survival strategies for those who feel their professionalization is being threatened.

An Unquestioned Illusion of Professionalism

The second grade teachers at Emerald Valley enacted a complicated understanding of professionalism. Their conceptualization of themselves as professionals was formed early on, with the establishment of the sister school and the culture that was constructed there, prior to coming to Emerald Valley. This definition of professional practice was continuously reinforced, as Emerald Valley's culture stayed the same for many years despite changes in administration. Regarding knowledge base and expertise, these teachers' vast amounts of experience and education provided them the confidence to make curricular and instructional decisions that they felt were the best for their

students. Their perceived level of expertise, especially by the administrator, granted them the autonomy to make these decisions. It is evident from the way the principal spoke about this team, that he trusted them to make appropriate educational choices. Significant to this point though, is that the decisions made by this team did not necessarily align with decisions often made by teachers and administrators at other potentially program improvement schools (Valli, et. al., 2008; Pedulla, et. al., 2003; Valli & Chambliss, 2007; Wills & Sandholz, 2009; Dorgan, 2004; Wills, 2007). When speaking with Mr. Dorton, he did not appear consumed with CST data, nor NCLB compliance issues. This corresponded to the slogan written along the office's north wall – “Nothing learned in this world is every wasted.” His evident lack of concern is possibly due to him being a novice administrator of a school who had up until now demonstrated high achievement, or to his belief that learning is so much more than what is tested. Nevertheless, when these teachers did art projects and other activities not necessarily aligned with the district curriculum, they had the autonomy and belief that they were trusted to do what they thought was best for students. Though the objectives of these lessons were not assessed, nor would they probably aid in passing the CST, they were skills and activities that the second grade teachers thought were important to impart to the students and were often based on beliefs regarding stages of child development and enrichment.

At this site, the relationship between the staff members and the administration proved to be an important factor shaping how teachers viewed themselves as professionals. This relationship was not emphasized in the literature regarding NCLB's

effects on teacher practice. In several of those studies, the macro-level context (often mediated by the principal) was the primary force influencing teacher practice and professionalism (Valli, et. al., 2008; Pedulla, et. al., 2003; Valli & Chambliss, 2007; Wills & Sandholz, 2009; Dorgan, 2004; Wills, 2007). These studies also did not focus on or discuss the shared bond (or lack thereof) between staff members, and how that can affect teachers' conceptions of professionalism.

The relationship between professionalism and level of teacher experience was another significant finding at Emerald Valley. The bond and strength of Emerald Valley's staff was cemented by the approximate fifteen to twenty years these teachers spent in their practice together. This gave them the confidence and sometimes-questionable perception that they knew what was best for their students. These teachers even demonstrated an often overwhelming desire to shape how others viewed and conducted their practice, (e.g. administrators, novice teachers, unassuming researchers). Level of experience did not play a significant role in the literature looked at for this study. In the studies reviewed, there were novice and veteran teachers alike that felt an overwhelming pressure to teach according to rigid guidelines due to high-stakes accountability (Valli, et. al., 2008; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Wills & Sandholtz, 2009; Wills, 2007; Valli & Chambliss, 2007). The teachers at Emerald Valley were quite different from those described in Barrett's study (2008), in that their internal beliefs were not compromised or overridden by macro-level contextual restrictions and pressures.

The findings at Emerald Valley are significant because as a whole, they provide a complicated and somewhat illusory case of professionalism in practice. Many studies

focusing on teacher practice during the NCLB era found a direct correlation between achievement (as measured by state standardized tests) and teacher professionalism (as defined by trusted expertise, amount of freedom and autonomy, and compromised altruistic ideals). At Emerald Valley, a school classified as “high-achieving,” the teachers exhibited a strong sense of professionalism; however, upon deeper analysis of the data, this strong sense of professionalism was in fact illusory. The *ability* to make professional decisions did not always result in professional decision-making. This finding was difficult to acknowledge and fully understand initially. As a researcher, I found myself unknowingly absorbed into their self-described “amoeba-like” culture. Being that I am a teacher (at a low-performing school with several instructional and curricular restrictions, ongoing utilization of test preparation, and abysmal morale), it was so refreshing to walk into a school with such a serene environment and comfortable culture filled with autonomous teachers. They exuded such confidence and the bond they shared was truly inspiring; however, upon closer analysis using the professional framework, this remarkable perception of professionalism did not completely translate into what existing frameworks would characterize as professional practice.

These teachers demonstrated an unquestioned illusion of professionalism, thereby acting like professionals, but not always acting as professionals. Several aspects of their practice challenged the framework’s definition of professionalism: their decisions to trust only their own expertise and that of their fellow staff members, the use of their autonomy to provide not always meaningful educative experiences for their students, their lack of academic collaboration and collegial evaluation, and (at times) their

compromised altruistic approach to their work. Despite being situated in a context that fostered professionalism, Emerald Valley's teachers enacted an unquestioned professionalism that proved to be problematic when looking at the framework. As illustrated in the following chapter, this is contrary to Hoover's teachers, who attempted to enact a type of professionalism more fitting to the framework, while practicing in a professionally stifling context.

Chapter 5: The Nature of Teacher Professionalism at Hoover Elementary

At Hoover Elementary School, the teachers exhibited a bound and directed professionalism situated in a highly structured context. Their practice comprised of working diligently to accomplish the school's unwavering goal of increasing state test scores. These teachers functioned within a highly structured and pressure-filled context consisting of binding curricular and instructional restrictions. Mostly novices, the teachers at Hoover were trained in several programs and were coached regularly to meet specific expectations set by the administrator. Everything, including collegial collaboration, was structured and facilitated by the administrator and coaches to aid in the increase of student achievement (as defined by the state standardized test, the CST). These teachers recognized their overwhelming workload and considered it part of what made them professionals. To them, being professionals meant believing in the administrator's vision, and doing what it took to help students succeed on the CST (and for some, even while demonstrating a sense of reluctance). This was evident in their discussion of what they wanted for their students and also the fact that only one teacher (Mrs. Jeffries) voluntarily transferred out of Hoover at the end of the school year. When Mrs. Galarza was asked how the teachers felt regarding the pressure to increase student test scores, she expressed, "She [Mrs. Keiser] gives you a lot of materials. She gives you a lot of support, and the thing is that you as the teacher, you want your kids to do well [on the CST]. You *want* your kids to do well. You want them to feel that sense of pride and that sense of accomplishment... look at what I can do. I've tried, I've worked, I can grow!" Every aspect of their professionalism boiled down to improving student test

scores. When discussing the benefits of small class sizes, Mrs. Petrin emphatically stated, “The reduced class size... that’s the easiest, the best thing to get better test scores.” She also felt that working hard to boost student test scores was positive for students and teachers, “I think after awhile, some teachers get too comfortable, and then they need to be pushed.” For teachers like Mrs. Jeffries, the situation was not favorable, but as she described, “When I came in (teaching in the era of NCLB), it was there... so it’s just been what it’s been. I think the accountability is definitely good, I think some of what the expectations are kind of unreasonable... especially certain things... test scores.” These quotes exemplify the complexities and varying nature of professionalism at Hoover Elementary. For many teachers, their level of altruism was the driving force behind their passion and willingness to do whatever they could to help the students achieve, but this altruism withstood many challenges and led to a redefinition of what it meant to be a teacher.

As seen in chapter four, understanding the micro level context is imperative to understanding how teacher professionalism is conceptualized and enacted at that site. This chapter begins with a detailed portrait of Hoover Elementary School and its administrator. Following the descriptions are illustrations and analyses of the nature of teacher professionalism demonstrated at Hoover. Like the previous chapter, the findings and analyses are separated according to each tenet of professionalism. In each tenet section, I begin by explaining how Hoover’s teachers see themselves as professionals, and how those conceptualizations relate to the findings in the literature on teacher

practice. Following these explanations, I analyze how their conception and enactment of professionalism compared to that outlined in the professional framework.

“My mom keeps begging me to get a job at a different school” (Ms. Santos, fifth grade teacher)

Hoover Elementary was approximately twelve miles away from Emerald Valley, and yet they were worlds apart. This was reflective, both physically and symbolically, of just how large Serrano Unified was as a district. Hoover Elementary was located in a low-income urban area, surrounded by apartment complexes on three sides, and a small neighborhood on the fourth. The shopping centers located at the intersection adjacent to Hoover Elementary consisted of a bail bondsman, two liquor stores, a Laundromat, carniceria, and gas station. The street itself was riddled with potholes, with several people walking the sidewalks throughout different times of the day. Entering Hoover Elementary was not an easy feat. The school had been undergoing construction for the last two years, and the parking lot was a gravel area surrounded by high fencing. Drivers carefully entered through an extremely narrow opening provided by a rolling fence. Finding the office was almost as difficult as driving into the lot. A small sign directed visitors to a building on the very left of the parking lot. Across from the office was a small janitorial closet in which two ladies used to check in the students for free lunch. The students did not eat in the cafeteria, as it was also undergoing renovation; so they ate outside in a tarp-covered concrete area. Even at the end of my study (six months later), the cafeteria had yet to be re-opened. At the front of the school, there was one row of

eight permanent classrooms. Behind the eating area were two rows of portable classrooms (six in each row), and another portable consisting of the teachers' lounge and an adjoining resource room. Behind the last row of portables was the playground, which was a small square of asphalt set within a larger yard filled with patches of dead grass. Throughout the day, most of the students played on the asphalt, with only a few on the grass. Even those on the grass were not far from the pavement area. On the north and east sides of the school were two large apartment complexes, built right next to the fence separating them from the school. On any given day, there were neighbors leaning out of their windows facing the schoolyard. There were a total of eleven apartment complexes adjacent to the school. It felt quite cramped, as though the school had been built as an afterthought in an already established urban community.

The office atmosphere was a bit like Union Station, filled with staff members and students bustling about. Upon entering, a cacophony of ringing phones and blaring walkie-talkies overwhelmed the small building. There was not a lot of downtime for the office staff. Though quite helpful, they were constantly preoccupied with all types of issues. At this time, Hoover Elementary was one of the few year-round schools remaining in Serrano Unified. Teachers and students were on a four-track system (A-D), which could account for a lot of goings-on in the office. The student population they served consisted of approximately sixty-six percent Latino/Hispanic students, twenty-five percent African American, seven percent Caucasian, with Hawaiian, Asian, American Indian, and Filipino comprising the remaining two percent. All students were classified as Socio-Economically Disadvantaged (SED). Sixty-six percent of Hoover's

Latino/Hispanic population were also labeled as English Learners (EL), and eight percent of students were classified as Learning Disabled (LD). The transiency at Hoover was rampant. For example, one fifth grade teacher at the school had only two students that stayed from the time they began in July to the following January. All of her other students transferred in/out since then. Serrano Unified had a program called “Be Still” which ameliorated the issue of mobility (provided bussing from within and outside the district, and so on); however, due to increased budget cuts, that program no longer continued. Aside from high mobility, these students also experienced a high level of crime on and off the campus. From July 2011 to February 2012, Hoover had already experienced five lockdowns, with the most recent lockdown just two weeks prior to my first meeting. During that meeting, their school officer mentioned two murders that recently happened at other schools in the district. One lockdown occurred while I was observing in Mrs. Jeffries’ classroom in May. It was such a regular occurrence for the students that they barely flinched when they heard the lockdown announcement on the intercom. The following day’s newspaper revealed that there were in fact two shootings during that lockdown; one took place in the apartment complex that was adjacent to Hoover’s campus, and the other occurred at the Seven-Eleven convenient store located on the corner of the main intersection near the school. During lunch that day, one teacher lamented, “I’ve gotten to the point where it’s just another shooting... oh well.” While in the teachers’ lounge one day, a fourth grade teacher told a substitute teacher, “If you can work here, you can work anywhere.”

Within the office building, there were several small administrative offices for the principal, the community liaison, and all eight academic coaches. These coaches were hired with the Student Improvement Grant (SIG) money that was allocated to Hoover after subsequent years of not meeting their state proficiency goals (the SIG is provided to the lowest achieving schools in California, specifically within the bottom ten percent). Hoover Elementary was beyond Program Improvement status, as they were officially taken over by the state of California. Hoover Elementary was also helped by the Quality of Education Investment Act (QEIA), which kept class sizes reduced to twenty or less students. For the teachers in my study, the largest third grade class was seventeen students.

“The CSTs are our bread and butter” (Mrs. Keiser, Hoover Principal)

At the time of this study, the cultural context of Hoover had recently undergone a major transformation. This can be single-handedly attributed to the newly acquired administration. Mrs. Keiser was hired on as principal a year and half prior to the study. Before her arrival, the school was described by a few participant teachers as “highly dysfunctional... a huge disorganized mess... the kids were wild, just wild!” Mrs. Keiser began her transformation of Hoover using the SIG money. As a firm believer in “personnel, not programs,” Mrs. Keiser hired former teachers and literacy leaders to fill the academic coach positions (they were specific to each subject, science, social studies, reading intervention, math, technology, writing, and one that specialized in data analysis). Last year (Mrs. Keiser’s first year as Hoover’s principal), the students demonstrated a thirty-point increase on the CST (API score). In 2012, their goal was similar, only

according to Mrs. Keiser their focus was more on comprehension, rather than just oral reading fluency like the previous year. There was a lot of discussion of CSTs and CST or common assessment data on any given day at Hoover Elementary. Throughout the study at Hoover, I perceived a high level of pressure and anxiety regarding student achievement, especially their performance on the CST.

In the staff lounge (which was actually an outside portable building), there were three tables pushed together with a couple of older red and white-checkered tablecloths placed on top. Next to two vending machines on the south wall was a large shelving system with several totes organized on each shelf. In each bin were clothing items with corresponding labels - jackets, pants, shirts, sweaters, and shoes. These were all donated for the students in case they needed extra clothing. The back wall was covered with large posters filled with ideas of how to implement the writing process and strategies used to teach math facts. These posters were the products of group activities done during previous staff meetings. On the north wall of the staff lounge, there were several posted documents separated by grade level. These documents contained graphs and other testing data reports demonstrating how each grade level and each teacher's students performed on recent benchmarks.

The overall atmosphere at Hoover was intense. Teachers of all grade levels, as well as coaches, were constantly rushing around displaying faces filled with consternation as they attempted to get more and more accomplished. As a researcher at Hoover, I experienced difficulty with scheduling observations and interviews because of this constant hustle and bustle. I felt as though I was always intruding on something or

someone's precious and limited time. This notion is exemplified through my interviews (which were sometimes rushed), and during the staff meetings when there was truly never a moment to just sit and chat.

The Mission of the Administration

When Mrs. Keiser volunteered to transfer to Hoover Elementary, she was not worried, panicked, or nervous about what she would find. She was ready, prepared to make significant changes that would positively impact the school. As described by Mrs. Galarza, "There's a new sheriff in town," and this message was clearly articulated to the students, as well as the staff. She made her mark right from the beginning when she brought in Serrano police officers to walk around the school campus and observe student behavior. At that time, Mrs. Galarza stated that the students were taken aback. Up until that point, the students had been described as consistently misbehaving and highly disrespectful to *any* adult on campus. At the beginning of her tenure, Mrs. Keiser asked that all students walk with their hands behind their backs, and Mrs. Galarza overheard a student remark, "It's like jail." She quickly purchased all new playground equipment and this enticed students to play on the playground, rather than walk around out on the periphery of the campus. She installed an intercom with a loudspeaker to make daily morning announcements to improve the morale. Many of the teachers described how thankful they were for the many positive improvements Mrs. Keiser made right from the beginning. She also made an instantaneous impression on the existing Hoover staff. Coming from Davis Elementary, which was not too different from Hoover

demographically speaking, she had a lot of experience with low-achieving students from disadvantaged social backgrounds.

During the transition, Mrs. Keiser brought with her thirteen teachers from Davis, many of them fairly novice teachers having only taught less than five years (most have taught a different grade level every year). She had a plan to completely restructure Hoover's student achievement and staff morale from the ground up, and that mission was clearly articulated to the existing staff once she got there. Mrs. Keiser was very upfront with what she expected from her teachers. Since much of the older, veteran staff had recently retired (many of them were offered an enticing severance package at the end of the prior school year), there were a lot of newer, younger, and open-minded teachers ready to take on the challenge that Mrs. Keiser was setting forth. Another issue worth noting is that many of the newer teachers feared another wave of upcoming layoffs (that had been happening each year for the last three years in SUSD). When I questioned how difficult it might be for a new teacher to deal with all of the SIG expectations, a fifth year teacher asked me rhetorically, "Why would a new teacher fight?" meaning why would they risk losing their job? Within two minutes of my first meeting with Mrs. Keiser, she stated poignantly, "These teachers work the hardest than any other school." That notion was exemplified in the findings of this study.

Mrs. Keiser provided a lot of guidance to her teachers, and was often doing things to ameliorate the tension between the SIG expectations and the teachers' concerns. During several staff meetings, I watched her calm teachers and help them complete difficult SIG paperwork, documents asking for detailed "goal completions" and things

like that. Though Mrs. Keiser had a calm side, her constant on-the-go nature remained at the forefront. She was also quite protective of her staff and the nature of their workload. In fact, it was only through my principal (who happened to be a long-time friend of Mrs. Keiser) that I received clearance to perform my study at Hoover. Otherwise, she rarely allowed outsiders in, as she explained how busy these teachers were. Leading by example, she was always “on the move” and “everywhere” as one teacher described, and she expected the same from her staff. In our interview, she was quite forward (both in tone and word choice) about her expectations, “I wouldn’t ask the teachers to do anything I wouldn’t do. And I expect them to work 110 percent, like I do.”

Mrs. Keiser and her established presence at Hoover directly influenced the way Hoover’s teachers perceived themselves as professionals. These teachers were newer, had a lot at stake (with the impending issue of layoffs), and saw themselves as professionals in following Mrs. Keiser’s directives and philosophy. She groomed this staff and directly shaped how they defined themselves as professionals and what they did. Even if they considered her a mediator between them and their SIG requirements, they still looked up to her and did what they were asked because they believed that she wanted to do what was best for students, no matter what. Mrs. Keiser admitted that the school would function in a very similar way with or without the SIG, as that was her administrative style. Having worked under Mrs. Keiser at her previous school, Mrs. Galarza expressed that it was the same at that school as it was at Hoover (even though that school was not operating under the SIG), “I still have the same administrator. So, the same things that she expected over there are the same things she expects here.” Mrs.

Keiser was highly respected at Hoover, and throughout SUSD as well, as Mrs. Galarza reiterated, “And that’s why our former superintendent, when she came to our school, saw our principal would be leaving us, and that we were getting Mrs. Keiser... and she was a seasoned principal, and that’s why [she was asked to come to Hoover].” Significant to this study, Mrs. Keiser garnered the teachers’ trust, as Ms. Bahman describes, “Mrs. Keiser does provide a lot of support. She gives the impression that she’s going to do whatever is best for us. She doesn’t try to manipulate it in any way. She says this is what it is right now for everyone, so it’s going to be like this.” As Tschannen-Moran’s (2009) describes, this trust is necessary in fostering a context whereby teachers perceive themselves to be professionals. This trust is also imperative as most of the teachers at Hoover were young in their teaching career. Those who had more experience, such as Mrs. Forrester, demonstrated an unwavering loyalty to Mrs. Keiser, therefore illustrating how much the staff trusted her.

The Role of the Academic Coaches

Mrs. Keiser was described as “Everywhere... on top of everything...” and “Good at delegating.” Most of the SIG money was used toward personnel, as Mrs. Keiser believed that “people, not programs” made the difference when it came to student achievement. Therefore, she hired eight former teachers and literacy coaches to become academic coaches at Hoover. In maintaining the existing programs, stringent routines, and paperwork completion that was associated with SIG, Mrs. Keiser gave a lot of responsibility to these coaches. She also prioritized what they did with the students. For

example, two of the coaches were in charge of running programs for reading intervention.

Mrs. Keiser elaborated,

Two coaches do Read 180, System 44 all day long. They have seventy to eighty kids each a day. Everything was made around their two schedules. The whole school's schedule was made around theirs. We've seen the most growth, and they worked at other schools with me, so they knew what they were doing.

Along with scheduling prioritization, the coaches also held a quasi-authoritative position, where they were required to hold teachers accountable for achievement, but were also instructed to provide support (data analysis, modeling, and the like) when needed. This proved to be a tense and complex role for the coaches and the teachers. For teachers like Mrs. Jeffries, the coaches served a dubious purpose in that they were there to provide support, but also consistently “watching.” Because of this, the teachers viewed them as another branch of authority, and did not always feel comfortable asking for support. Mrs. Calhoun described her feelings regarding this issue of “watching” teacher practice, “I tell the teachers that if I come into the classroom and see something that I think needs to be brought to the attention of the administrator, I'll say something to the teacher. But there's also this kind of fine line when you do something and it's not appropriate to say anything, you *still* have to let the administration know. It becomes a judgment call.”

When Mrs. Keiser was asked if their quasi-authority ever presented a problem for the teachers, she responded,

No, the teachers wanted help. They had so much on their plates. SIG is a lot of work, they have a lot of mandates from the district they have to do. And first grade goes, ‘Hey, were ready to do our own (make their assessments),’ and I'm like, ‘You're on your own (waving hands outward).’ If the teachers come up and say ‘We're ready...’ but they really do like the support. They like someone going and turning in your stuff (laughs).

During the study, the teachers did not demonstrate this “We’re ready” notion that Mrs. Keiser referred to. She communicated this to me during our interview and I believe that this was a future goal that Mrs. Keiser had for her teachers, but this was not something that I saw teachers attempting to do. This could be due to the fact that they were already overwhelmed with their existing workload, and the coaches stepped in to do so much that the teachers did not demonstrate a desire to get involved with their role.

At Hoover, the perceived role of the coaches was controversial and caused dissension among the staff. The coaches saw themselves as a bridge between the teachers and the administrator, but this bridge was not always trustworthy from the teachers’ perspective. According to Mrs. Ortiz, the math coach, “We’re an important buffer for the right messages from teachers sometimes to get to the principal.” As described later in this chapter, the teachers did not express a lot of their feelings regarding the coaches. This could be due to a lack of trust towards me as an outsider or that they just did not feel comfortable discussing their perception of the coaches and their role at Hoover. This made it difficult to understand the teachers’ perceptions of the coaches, but it was evident that the coaches were highly critical of the teachers and did not necessarily view them as professionals. When asked about their thoughts of the teachers and their skills, Mrs. Ortiz explained,

In terms of instructional skills, our students really require a lot of interactive teaching techniques. The students need to be moving and talking a lot. I personally see that almost directly related to the drug culture of the neighborhood. Because so many students come in either exposed to airborne drugs all during the night or they’ve been exposed in the womb. And so, they have a much shorter attention span. They have a need to move more, and talk. And if you look at our teachers in general, they’re basically OWWs, Old White Women.

Another coach chimes in, “No, they’re not old.... Middle class.” Mrs. Ortiz continues, “Okay, middle class white women. And so many teachers expect to teach the way they were taught in Elementary School... which is, you sit down and be quiet.” This perception was confounding to me, as the teachers that I worked with were young, vibrant, and interactive with their students. From my experiences in their classrooms, I did not see this as an accurate representation of the third grade teachers at all.

As seen in chapter four, “evaluation” is intertwined with authority because of the structure of the teachers’ union, as well as the hierarchical nature of our nation’s school system. The coaches were asked to observe and evaluate the teachers on several occasions and this reaffirmed their role as authority figures at Hoover. Mrs. Rodriguez explained her perception, “I think my role as a math coach is many-faceted. One, to go in and model lessons, or to observe teachers and give them immediate feedback, or to come in and be a type of support with the teacher.” In keeping with the mission of the SIG, she felt it was important to “continually talk [to teachers] about how to become more proficient within the curriculum.” They recognize this cautious line between being support providers and evaluators, as Mrs. Calhoun described, “We have to be very careful with the language we use with the teachers, not to be evaluative. Now as their peers, they can’t grieve against us.” In using this union-style language (“grieve against us”), Mrs. Calhoun alluded to the benefits of being a quasi-authoritative coach, but yet still a certificated colleague. She continued, “But the relationship, it’s not... just like with teaching... it’s not possible to be an effective coach, if you don’t have a strong relationship of some... you know, respect on both sides. You know, it doesn’t mean you

have to be friends or buddies.” Mrs. Ortiz added, “I think once you have formulated that relationship, then you’re kind of able to, in a gentle way, of moving them along. And they do respect you and see you not necessarily as an administrator, but someone we need to listen to.” Understanding the role of the coaches as quasi-administrators, Mrs. Keiser often directed them to provide support to specific teachers, as Mrs. Ortiz explained,

Sometimes, Mrs. Keiser will come to us and say, ‘You know what, this is where I really need you to... I know you do your walk-throughs, but I need you to spend more time in these classrooms.’ And she’ll even tell us, ‘Hey, you know... [classroom behavior] management,’ and so we’ll just kind of gently get in there and do what we need to do.

This pseudo level of authority was not without its downfalls. The teachers at Hoover were not always receptive to the coaches’ feedback, as Mrs. Calhoun illustrated,

I was thrown out of a classroom one time by the teacher. She stood up and said, ‘Get out, get out!’ yelling ‘Get out!’ And I was like (nervous laughter). You know... Mrs. Ortiz and I were trained in cognitive coaching by John Dyer, or whoever, and I was practicing my cognitive coaching skills, and really just keep prodding, and [asking the teacher] ‘What do you think is happening? What do you think is happening?’ And it really hit a nerve with her. But I *had* to, because she was one of those teachers that sat all day and complained about her kids not... and (speaks more quietly) she wasn’t honest on her assessments. It was just a whole series of things.

This complex role of the coaches led to uncertainty among them and the teachers.

Because there were an authoritative extension of the administration, and heavily involved in the teachers’ day-to-day practice, they were an important part of Hoover’s context.

Their role contributed to how the teachers defined, enacted, and perceived their professionalism at this school.

Findings According to the Professionalism Framework

The teachers at Hoover conceptualized and enacted a type of professionalism that was significantly different from the teachers at Emerald Valley. They had an extensive knowledge base, but could not always exercise their own expertise. These teachers experienced a large amount of restrictions regarding curricular and instructional decision-making and taught the required programs in a manner agreeable to the administration and in accordance with the SIG. They were forced to collaborate, and like Emerald Valley, their collaboration looked quite different from that described in the framework. Even while practicing in a highly structured and rigid context brimming with accountability, the teachers at Hoover practiced altruistically; with each of them believing that they were doing what was best for their students and for the school.

Building One Form of Expertise While Restraining Another

As defined in the framework, Brint (1994) and others believe that professionals must attain a high level of specialized knowledge, as well as practical experience in their profession. This knowledge is obtained through formal training and usually higher education in the form of advanced degrees or credentials. This level of education gives professionals a sense of authority and trust among their colleagues and the public writ large. At Hoover Elementary, there was a complicated notion of expertise, as these teachers possessed a dual knowledge base: one part consisting of theory and past practice – both curricular and instructional (similar to that described in the professional framework) – and the other comprised of experiential and trained skills in using curricular programs, state-adopted standards, and CST format and data. This dual skillset

affected the teachers' enactment of their expertise, as well as how they conceptualized themselves as experts. In their classrooms, there were moments consisting of teachers using strategies that I assumed were part of their experiential repertoire (and not part of a scripted curricular program); while at most other times, they taught a lot of test-taking strategies, unabashedly mentioning things like "This will be worded the same way on the CST," and so on. Adding another layer of complexity to this tenet, these teachers' conceptualizations and enactment of their expertise were significantly influenced by context-specific factors: their levels of experience, the restrictions associated with SIG and other mechanisms of accountability, as well as the perceptions exuded by the administrator and academic coaches. They were not encouraged to embrace or utilize their incoming expertise consisting of theoretical knowledge and formal education, and therefore grounded their expertise in the knowledge they had recently acquired regarding accountability and its accompanying facets. For these teachers and their efforts to fulfill the mission established at Hoover, this would be the knowledge base most appropriate from which to pull. Because their dual knowledge base was differently valued (depending on context), and the perception of them as nonexperts by those in authoritative positions, the teachers' perception of their own expertise was complicated and at times, conflicting. During certain situations (mostly in interviews), they exuded a confident attitude regarding their expertise and their practice; however in other contexts, they were timid and doubtful of themselves as experts.

First, it is important to understand the extent of these teachers' consistently growing knowledge base. Though the Serrano Unified School District had not offered

many opportunities for staff development in the last two years, the teachers at Hoover Elementary had a significant amount of training at the site level, thus contributing to their newly acquired and utilized knowledge base. The SIG required that all teachers attend Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) and Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) trainings, instruction on data analysis and corresponding intervention programs, as well as continued staff development on the SWUN math program that they adopted the previous year. They attended several meetings regarding their Get Ahead writing program, specifically focusing on how to grade student writing using the program's created rubrics. A large portion of the SIG money was used to purchase a lot of technological devices to help increase student engagement and learning (a MOBY camera/computer/projector system, student responders, roving cart of MacBook laptops, and so on). The teachers at Hoover spent a lot of time learning how to use these new computer programs and devices. Mrs. Aaronson, the ABE (Alternative to Bilingual Education) teacher attended an additional training called "Side by Side" which taught the correlations of the English Language Development standards with the California language arts standards, as well as corresponding instructional strategies and activities. They also engaged in a Positive Behavior Support (PBS) training, which taught them activities and strategies to improve attendance, encourage respectful behavior, and facilitate a communicative relationship between school personnel and students' families. Though most of the third grade teachers had taught for five years or less, almost all of them had prior experience to teaching, being a tutor or aide of some type. Three of the

third grade teachers also possessed post-secondary certifications (e.g. GATE, reading specialist, and so on), and two held master's degrees in the areas of literacy.

Despite significant amounts of training and education, there was a common perception among Hoover's administration and coaches regarding teachers' lack of expertise, or rather, the type of expertise they deemed appropriate for Hoover. The majority of the teachers had only a few years of experience in teaching, with two of the team members concerned with being laid off (as they had received pink slips each year for the past three years). According to Mrs. Keiser, "You have to do it (the trainings) layered, and *only* if the teachers are ready." In her interactions with her teachers, Mrs. Keiser did not hesitate to layer in training or coaching, despite her comment that they need to be "ready." From my perspective, her approach was likened to "act now, ask questions later," as she encouraged the teachers to do, do, do. Many teachers at this school found themselves in situations where they needed to ask coaches, and peers especially, how to do something, or how to fill out certain paperwork required by the SIG. At staff meetings, the teachers were often saying things like, "Do you know how to...?" or "I think I did this wrong..." This was where Mrs. Keiser often stepped in to ameliorate fears and anxiety by instructing them on what to do. She also encouraged the coaches to support teachers in these moments whenever they could. The coaches embraced this role bestowed upon them, as they perceived a lot of the teachers needing help. In a group interview with the coaches, Mrs. Ortiz stated, "I don't think all of them have the skills that they need either instructionally or socially to deal with this population." They also discussed how they would give teachers constant feedback whenever they dropped by the

classroom, or modeled lessons for teachers they felt needed to see certain types of instruction. Regarding the trainings mentioned earlier, the teachers needed to make sure they attended them, and use what they learned. One of the teachers in my participant team stated, “People will come and check on you to see if you’re using it. Yah, you have to sign up at one of the trainings for that person to come in and watch you.” A few of the collaboration meetings I attended were held for the teachers to grade each other’s students’ writing pieces. On several occasions, the teachers mentioned how the rubric (created by the Get Ahead writing program) needed to be revised. When I asked them if they would have an opportunity to revise it, they felt that their input wouldn’t matter. They were correct, as Mrs. Keiser confirmed when I asked her if the teachers could make changes to the rubric, “No, because it holds them to a standard that they are not used to.” These examples illustrate how the coaches and Mrs. Keiser questioned the expertise of their teachers. To them, they were novices that needed to be molded and guided toward utilizing a certain type of knowledge base.

As mentioned previously, the teachers at Hoover were inundated with trainings and encouraged to take advantage of any and all educational opportunities, even those outside SUSD. In the middle of the school year, Ms. Forrester discussed how she had just returned from a GATE conference that was paid for with school funds. She continued, “She (Mrs. Keiser) has been promoting getting the GATE training, so I went this last time I was off track.” With all of this knowledge acquisition (and demonstrating the initiative to do more while on their break), I expected these teachers to exhibit a boldly confident attitude regarding their expertise, similar to the teachers at Emerald

Valley; however, this was not the case. How these teachers perceived their own expertise was difficult to ascertain, as much of the data was conflicting. In the interviews, these teachers were open, knowledgeable, and relatively confident when they spoke about their students, their past teaching experiences, the curricular programs they taught, and their teaching abilities; however, in other contexts they did not demonstrate the same demeanor. The established school context (as “SIG is running the show”) and the authoritative perceptions of these teachers as nonexperts affected how they demonstrated (or chose not to) their expertise and how they felt regarding themselves as experts in certain situations.

In their interviews, the third grade teachers at Hoover spoke knowledgeably and confidently about all they did for their students. Mrs. Aaronson spoke passionately about what she felt her students needed to know,

Personally, as a teacher, I know they need all this academic stuff, but so many of the kids just in general come in with such low self-esteem that they don't believe in themselves enough to trust in the fact that they know. A lot of my kids, I know they know it. But they're so doubtful of themselves that they're not willing to jump out and say 'Hey, maybe it's this... (raises hand) or maybe it's that...' I just want to give them that sense of confidence, that no, I'm not perfect, you're not perfect, you may be wrong, and that's okay. Nothing's going to happen. If you're wrong, that's just a learning opportunity, good for you, you know? But in that sense, I'd like them to know that. In the academic sense, of course I'd like them to be successful in fourth grade, so I'm trying to give them the foundation. I've taught fourth grade, so I know what's expected of them. I'm trying to get them ready, which is not easy when the kids come in already behind. At least I know comprehension is so important. Just in general, you know. And comprehension just goes across every... science, math, you know, everything. Comprehension is everything.

Ms. Forrester also spoke confidently about what she had been trying to do for her students,

I think the biggest thing I'm trying to focus on is just focusing more on learning, and getting away from things like the 'focus walls' and getting away from just what the environment looks like and focusing on student learning... the actual learning. And just do a lot of with constant checking for understanding. Just being very present... my kids don't get a lot of independent work. They do get a variety of different things that are independent, but I do so much whole class and always checking for understanding, and then I can pull small groups from there.

Ms. Bahman talked at length about the students in her class that year,

I would say though, academically, this class is a lot higher than classes I've had. I was a fourth grade teacher [last year], so not comparatively, but as far as coming in, I would say their fluency is a lot higher this year, and that might be comparatively (laughs). I have two non-readers... one though has an IEP, the other one, I'm working on it. We've SST'd [Student Study Team] him and everything. They both came in under ten words per minute and the one continues to struggle. We've been working on going from... I gave him a word list, like adding 'e' on the end to make the vowels long. We've been working on that for awhile, and every time, it's like brand new again. He's not quite there, but he's GATE (shocked expression). He's GATE, he's speech, he's RSP [Resource Specialist Program], and the other one has gone up to about thirty words per minute now. So he's making improvements. He can piece things together, so he's kind of... Other than that, I mean the class, there's a few... *I say they're high, I mean not high, but I say they're pretty good, but I'm only promoting four of them without consideration [referring to the SUSD retention system].*

Ms. Bahman knew her students well enough to provide this type of detailed information extemporaneously, and it was evident that she knew a lot of their strengths and weaknesses and how to go about handling those. In one interview with Mrs. Galarza, she became excited while discussing her students' progress,

And I can see the growth! I have one that was reading six words per minute and barely decoding [at the beginning of the year], and today I tested her and she read eighty words with only three mistakes. So I can see this huge growth with them. Does she still have a long way to go? Yes, but can I see this huge growth? Yes. It's just that targeted instruction for the whole group, to see what it is that they

need it. A lot of times, there are other issues that get in the way, but we [the team] just keep at it, keep at it, keep at it... and they feel good.

The excerpts above are just a few examples illustrating the confidence with which these teachers spoke when conversing with me during the interviews. This bold display of knowledge was not as apparent in other contexts, such as staff and reflection meetings (in which the administrator, coaches, or all were present). During one staff meeting, Mrs. Montgomery sighed, “I don’t know my trends,” referring to a section of one of the SWUN math documents that looked at benchmark data for the class. She then asked what another teacher was writing in that section, but before she could complete it, Mrs. Keiser called her over to talk about potentially receiving a pink slip. Obviously, this conversation took precedent over her ‘knowing her trends.’ She returned and completed the form indifferently, as it was evident that her mind was focused on the possibility of her not returning to Hoover the following year. This example alludes to the issue of job security which, as further discussed in a later section, could explain why some of these teachers chose not to act as experts in front of authority figures.

Each trimester, the teachers were required to complete a “Learning Goals” worksheet, where they had to track their students’ progress toward each of the essential standards they were to focus on during that time. They completed these types of documents frequently, and Mrs. Galarza even had a picture of the standards and pacing guide on her phone for the purpose of completing these types of tasks. This particular time, she used it to fill in the focus standards for that trimester. At the bottom of the sheet, the teachers were required to provide explanations as to why students did not make their goal (becoming proficient in a particular standard), if that was the case. Mrs. Keiser

walked them through filling these sheets out each time. She told them what to write and how to term things, “Make sure you write your mobility rate on there... tell them how often students have moved out of and come back to your classrooms.” As she stated this, many teachers avidly began typing sentences using the same terminology that Mrs. Keiser recommended.

The enactment of doubtful expertise was also noticed when I observed in their classrooms, not seen through their teaching practice, but rather in the way they perceived my presence. In their sidebar conversations with me, they often demonstrated feelings of insecurity with what they were doing, and of course the fact that I was there to observe them. This has several connotations, as it could be explained due to the nature of teacher evaluation (as described in chapter four) when observation insinuates performance evaluation. They would often come over to me in the back of the classroom soon after my arrival, and explain what they were doing and why, as if I was an evaluator. During one observation in Ms. Bahman’s room, she came over to describe what the students were doing, which was learning the “tricks” to correctly solve math word problems on the CST. She provided a shaky rationale (showing them the ‘tricks’ to solving them, rather than teaching them how to conceptually understand what the problem was asking), as if she was not necessarily comfortable with it herself. Mrs. Aaronson was reluctant to allow me into her classroom at several times throughout the study. She felt that her students (being English learners at Beginning and Early Intermediate proficiency levels) were different from the rest as she explained, “everything takes a lot of time for them.” Mrs. Jeffries exhibited a weary expression every time I told her I was coming into her

classroom. After several observations, I imagined this feeling of nervous discomfort would dissipate, but it never did. She always told me that she was not doing anything “interesting,” as if it was not worthy enough for me to come in and observe. Even her students would tell me that they knew I was coming, as she had already let them know. During testing time, the teachers were more apologetic than usual when I came in to observe. Many of the teachers made a point to tell me why their walls were bare, as Ms. Forrester explained, “They made us take off *everything*.” It was evident that the teachers were more anxious with everything they were doing during testing time, as it represented a culmination of everything they had been working toward throughout the school year. This reiterated the importance of the CST at Hoover, and was quite contrary to the teachers at Emerald Valley and their non-preoccupation with the CST.

It was understandable why the teachers at Hoover practiced a type of *restrained* expertise around the administrator and the coaches, and also why they demonstrated insecurity with me observing in the classroom. How they perceived themselves as experts was context-specific at Hoover, which also affected how they enacted their expertise. Parts of the following rationale correspond with their level of freedom and autonomy, which will be further elaborated in the section following this analysis, but necessary to discuss here as well. Unlike the teachers described in Wills and Sandholtz’ study (2009), these teachers were not often given the opportunity to use their possessed expertise and make decisions, and were conditioned to following directions, especially during staff and reflection meetings. Most meetings consisted of the academic coaches guiding them through different tasks, both logistical (e.g. completing documentation) and

curricular. During one meeting toward the end of the year, one of the coaches, Mrs. Rodriguez, guided the teachers in answering three questions on a yellow form. The third question asked, “What do your students need for the following grade level?” Mrs. Petrin raised her hand and explained that she had been using the old adopted math program to pre-teach fourth grade standards to her students, since they had finished with the SWUN program and state testing. One of the other coaches, Ms. Marquez immediately replied that she wanted her to stop using the old program and would send Mrs. Petrin, and anyone else who planned on frontloading the following grade level’s math standards, copies of that particular grade’s SWUN lessons so they can start using those. Being that testing was already completed, I initially wondered why Ms. Marquez cared so much about what these teachers were doing; however, I realized that this was another way to prepare students for the following year’s SIG requirements. It was surprising that Mrs. Petrin was voluntarily discussing her curricular choices at this meeting, but she felt safe as it was following the completion of the SWUN program and the administration of the state test. This was the only time I witnessed a teacher inquire about end of the year activities. Perhaps the teachers felt a sense of relief once testing was over and did not feel the need to ask for permission or suggestions regarding their choices for the end of the year.

According to the research (Yeom & Ginsburg, 2007; Valli, et. al, 2008) our nation’s teachers struggle with the aspect of professional expertise, because they are not often granted the authority or trust to do their jobs autonomously. As the framework specifically describes, professionals acquire the knowledge and education they need in

order to practice autonomously. Shulman (1986) and others (Elbaz, 1981; Brint, 1994) elaborate on this notion by adding that professionals must also garner experience so that they can build on their theoretical training with practical knowledge, and obtain the ability to make decisions in real-life situations. The teachers at Hoover had an abundance of training and education, but not a lot of experience with the type of expertise valued and utilized at Hoover. They also *conveyed* a lack of expertise, and therefore were not trusted by the administration and the coaches to make decisions regarding curriculum and instruction. This lack of experience also contributed to the insecurity they demonstrated when making decisions. When Mrs. Aaronson described the significant amount of training they received, she lamented, “It’s hard to incorporate everything because there’s sooo much that sometimes it gets overwhelming. You don’t know what to focus on.” Unlike the teachers at Emerald Valley (who maintained an unquestioned autonomy due to their confidence, rooted in several years of teaching experience and a strong union backing), Hoover’s teachers did not feel comfortable challenging the dictated curriculum and other restrictions because they did not know any different, and had much more to lose. Even the team’s leader, Ms. Forrester (who was not at risk of losing her position) did not feel comfortable speaking up about curricular issues. Similar to the focal team at Emerald Valley, Ms. Forrester saw value in the Excel Math program, but did not ever propose they use it. She explained, “Like teaching of the basic facts [in the SWUN program], hopefully they [students] would get it during then. The problem though, we felt it wasn’t spiraled enough. Like if you’re familiar with Math Excel, it hits all the concepts and frontloads.” I imagine that if Ms. Forrester were teaching in a different

school comprised of a more relaxed atmosphere and less curricular and instructional restrictions, she would confidently propose using the Excel Math program. Hoover's context was so different and dictatorial that the teachers restrained themselves from using a lot of their own expertise.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the third grade teachers possessed two types of, or dual, expertise. Similar to Mrs. Knight in Wills and Sandholtz's (2009) study, the teachers at Hoover *possessed* a professional expertise that they could not and did not utilize often due to their site level context consisting of stringent accountability and accompanying restrictions. They *enacted* a different and yet questionable (in the eyes of Brint and others) expertise that was appropriate in meeting the demands of a "SIG school," and even the enactment of that expertise was quite restrained. Their belief in the administrator's mission caused them to suppress their possessed expertise, as they felt it served no purpose for their particular context. In the interview data, there was one instance where Ms. Bahman mentioned that she wished she could use what she had learned in her Master's classes while teaching in her own class. Throughout the remainder of the study, the other teachers did not mention, nor state a desire to do something different from what was expected of them at Hoover. This notion could be attributed to a lack of confidence among these teachers because they did not have the courage to propose these ideas to the team, nor the administration, *or* because it was not pragmatic to do so. They did not express or demonstrate a desire to propose ideas that they thought would be more suitable for their students, while also never expressed that their expertise was being stifled or rebuffed. Perhaps they did not believe in it enough to

stand up for it or teach it behind closed doors. It was as if Hoover was an exception to what they had learned in their own educative endeavors, and a more program-specific type of expertise was warranted there. This notion is arguably a professional decision in itself as the teachers chose to enact an expertise more fitting to the school's venture (as articulated by the administrator and enforced by the SIG). It can also be posited that this was an unprofessional situation as students were being inundated with programs, test preparation, and specific instructional intervention used simply to bolster performance on the CST.

An overwhelming sense of pressure and anxiety also played a role regarding these teachers' perceptions of their own expertise. Their knowledge base was overloaded and consistently being built upon. The numerous instructional programs (SWUN math, Houghton-Mifflin, Project-Based Learning, GLAD strategies, Accelerated Reader, technology programs, and so on) newly acquired SIG requirements and terminology, the teaching strategies needed to ensure engagement of students with prominent learning differences, mobility issues, and behavior problems are all likely to make a novice's cup runneth over. When the expectation was for these teachers to know a lot about a lot, it led to overwhelming feelings of pressure, and the perception of themselves as nonexperts who knew a little about a lot. They were continuously seeking help with tasks, which they felt insecure about completing on their own. During one meeting, the teachers had to complete another "Learning Goals" form. Ms. Forrester began discussing a section of the form that talks about student mastery of specific standards. She timidly says, "*All of their multiplication facts? My students are almost there... what do I write?*" Another

teacher lamented sadly, “I know. I don’t know what to say.” Upon hearing this from different tables around the room, Mrs. Keiser yelled out, “It’s all going to be ooooookay!” In choosing activities for her class (especially following the CSTs), Mrs. Galarza asked me my opinion several times throughout the study. The issue of pressure and its effects on teacher professionalism at Hoover is a recurring finding that will be alluded to briefly in each section (as it is seen affecting all aspects of their practice) of this chapter, and discussed more deeply in the section concerning altruism. Here, we begin to see the role of pressure directly influencing Hoover’s teachers’ conceptualizations of themselves as professionals, and why they did not feel or enact their possessed expertise.

The Nature of Teacher Autonomy when “SIG is running the show” (Mrs. Keiser)

Because of their advanced level of education, professionals are granted the freedom to do what they feel is best for their clientele. At Hoover, the perception of teachers as not being experts (shared by those in authoritative or quasi-authoritative positions) speaks to the evident lack of decision-making they experienced. There was a palpable sense of authority and control built into the school structure, and this ultimately determined the amount of autonomy given to teachers. As one manifestation of structured authority, the SIG dictated most of what happened at Hoover and directly shaped curriculum, instruction, and assessment. SIG-specific accountability transferred down from the state level to the district, then to Mrs. Keiser as the principal, and finally to the teachers and their students. There were several SIG mandates in place that were “non-negotiables” as Mrs. Keiser described them. When compared to the tenet of

freedom and autonomy described in the professionalism framework, these non-negotiables impinged on the teachers' ability to make instructional and curricular decisions; and more significantly, the teachers on the third grade team did not acknowledge nor express frustration or concern regarding their limited ability to make their own decisions. They demonstrated belief in what they were asked to do, because they felt the students were showing progress as a result. For students who were not achieving, the teachers attributed it to factors outside of school, e. g. low socio-economic status, family problems, learning differences, and the like. Being that many of them were newer teachers, they followed instructions and taught what they were supposed to teach. Because this was what they became accustomed to, they perceived professionals to be teachers who worked hard at doing what was expected of them, especially at Hoover. During a group interview, the teachers were asked what they would tell a new incoming teacher to expect at Hoover. The following responses were given:

Mrs. Jeffries: "Hmm..."

Mrs. Galarza (very matter-of-factly): "A lot of hard work."

Mrs. Jeffries: "Amen..."

Mrs. Galarza: "A lot of paperwork."

Mrs. Jeffries: "Uh huh... Amen, uh huh."

Mrs. Aaronson (timidly): "Fast pace..."

Several teachers chime in: "Fast pace, *very* fast pace."

Mrs. Aaronson (seriously): "Don't fall behind."

Mrs. Galarza: "And if you fall, don't tell anybody." (laughs)

The following findings illustrate the complex differences between the level of teacher autonomy at Hoover (which was differently manifested depending on subject area and context) and autonomy as described in the professionalism framework.

The School Improvement Grant allowed Hoover to do many different things than at other schools. Having taught for several years, Ms. Forrester noticed how a SIG school was different from others in SUSD, “I think there’s probably not as much freedom [at those schools] as here.” This freedom, however, came with a price. When the grant was first put in place, it gave the administrators and a committee of teachers the freedom to explore different curricular options than those provided by the state; however, everyone must use whichever program(s) was chosen and therefore demonstrate increased student achievement on the CSTs. As Mrs. Keiser described, “You cannot deviate from the (SIG) plan.” Thus, the teachers had more curricular flexibility than teachers at other schools, but they were limited in the scope of what they could teach. They were expected to do whatever it took to show gains on the state test, and if that meant using materials and instructional styles not endorsed by the state, then so be it. As Ms. Forrester described, “[Since the SIG] I have more freedom, I do... But accountability is *absolutely* still there.” This stringent accountability caused many teachers at Hoover to focus on teaching what was on the CST. When asked her thoughts regarding the role of the CST at Hoover, Ms. Bahman explained,

Um, it’s huge (laughs). I mean, I think it drives EVERYTHING here. I mean, not just here, everywhere right now. But ultimately, I think almost everything comes down to are they going to get it because they’re going to be tested on it? And then when everything were doing is standards-based, it’s what does it say on the blueprints? Is that heavily tested on the CST? Is it not? We’re basically

picking and choosing what we're going to teach based on what's going to be on the test.

When I spoke with Mrs. Jeffries about having more freedom to teach beyond their old language arts program, she responded, "Um... I teach what's tested." Hoover is strikingly similar to Cherry Ridge Elementary in Valli, et. al.'s (2008) study, as the lowest achieving schools experienced the highest curricular and instructional restrictions. Also similar to Cherry Ridge, eighty percent of Hoover's instructional day was spent on mathematics and language arts. Approximately thirty minutes on Thursdays and Fridays were devoted to science and social studies.

As Ms. Bahman described, student achievement, as measured by the CST, dictated what happened at Hoover. The teachers at Hoover followed a pacing guide that they created in their grade level teams. When asked how they created the guide, the third grade teachers described the process of "backwards mapping." At the beginning of the school year, the teachers were given the dates that the common assessments would be administered. They were then told to design a pacing schedule that corresponded to the content of those assessments. Academic coaches and teachers from previous years created the common assessments. The teachers on the current third grade team described them as long, but formatted like the CST, which made them effective indicators (according to the teachers and coaches) as to how the students would do on the actual state test. This is reminiscent to the teachers in Pedulla, et. al.'s study (2003), when they lamented the classroom assessments were designed and formatted just like the state tests. Even with a pacing guide that they helped to create, the teachers struggled to keep up. Often times, they would be forced to move on, even though they were not comfortable

with the level of student mastery of that concept. Mrs. Galarza described the curriculum as, “A mile wide and an inch deep... you have to teach soooo much.”

Due to this significant emphasis on the CST, there was a large amount of test preparation taking place at Hoover. Like two of the schools in Valli, et. al’s study (2008), test preparation was actually built into the daily schedule, and had been since December. During a focus group interview, the teachers in the third grade team were asked if any teams at Hoover were ‘fixated’ on test preparation (stemming from my experience at Emerald Valley, where one particular teacher was discussed). Mrs. Galarza replied, “We all kind of have to... because they (the coaches) make the schedule for us too. So it’s already built in. We have an outside company that we’re using. They came in to help our fourth grade teachers for the writing (referring to the CST writing component administered to grades four and eight).” During another interview with Ms. Forester, I asked her how the climate was at Hoover since testing was coming up in a few weeks. She replied,

I think we’re really gearing things up. I don’t notice any type of climate if it’s any different out on the playground... but in my own classroom, were definitely doing lots of mock... I want to go as far as saying mock CSTs... test prep throughout the day. We do have two blocks during our day that are devoted for CST testing. We’re kind of trying to... show them how the test will look.

Some of the teachers were thankful for the test preparation materials, specifically. Mrs. Aaronson described how she liked all that they had, such as a state-issued book that was given to them, test-released questions, and websites that had downloadable documents that mirrored the format of the test. Ms. Forrester stated that they had so much test preparation material that they were not even able to use it all, and for her it was valuable.

During testing she stated, “I’m seeing that they’re [her students] able to eliminate wrong answers, even though they may not be the strongest students academically, they’re actually *taking the test* very well.” As Valli, et. al. (2008) described, as testing time approached, these teachers used these materials to substitute for the regular curriculum. There was test preparation taking place throughout several parts of the instructional day, and it clearly took priority over other subjects. During one staff meeting, Mrs. Jeffries asked Mrs. Montgomery when she did writing, and she responded, “I do it after test prep...” Despite her desire to do more art and other types of projects, Mrs. Galarza, another third grade teacher, did a lot of test prep with the students. The students had packets of released test questions, and they would work on them with her together each day. Even *during* testing days (the test sections were separated into different days) all they did was review past concepts and do more test preparation, whether Mrs. Galarza agreed with it or not.

Following the CSTs, several teachers expressed their excitement about doing what they had wanted to do all year long. Ms. Bahman, for example, was frustrated with the adopted math program (SWUN), because she wanted to teach conceptual understandings of math to her students. She described,

I’m just thinking as to how right before testing, we were doing problem solving and it was just like all those word problems, it’s so huge in this grade... and I was like draw a picture so we can see it and understand it... and it wasn’t working and it was taking forever and finally I was like, you know what, if ‘each’ is in the question its divide, if ‘each’ is in the statement then its multiply. And so hopefully now, when it’s [CST] done, and they’re getting them now... we can go back, because I feel like one good thing is Mrs. Keiser, she trusts us more now. I feel like now when testing’s done, I can, we can, we’re more free to do that kind of stuff.

Mrs. Galarza finally did a few art projects that she had expressed wanting to do for so long. Mrs. Aaronson and Mrs. Montgomery did a lot of pair/group activities where they brought both of their classes together. Mrs. Montgomery even referred to June as her “fun month,” because testing was over. Mrs. Jeffries taught her students a thematic unit on tropical rainforests. She explained, “We’re able to do more creative things that we cannot do before testing because it’s so rigid and we have to be right there with the schedule [pacing]. So definitely more freedom.” Mrs. Petrin and Ms. Forrester chose to “maintain the skills” and continue teaching skills that would be tested the following year. Ms. Forrester used Standards Plus (a test preparation program), which Hoover used prior to becoming a SIG school. Ms. Bahman expressed, “I feel once testing is over, we’re kind of like phew, we can relax,” and by “relax,” it is implied that the teachers have more freedom to do other types of activities that are *not* geared toward the CST.

When Hoover became a SIG school, the principal and the committee of teachers at that time chose to adopt a math program called SWUN. This program was expensive, intense, and needed to be followed by all teachers in order to “work.” There was and continued to be a large amount of training at the site for SWUN, as all teachers needed to learn how to teach the program, as well as continue to be coached throughout the consecutive years. This program allowed no flexibility and was considered one of the “non-negotiables” Mrs. Keiser referred to. She described the value and her implementation of the program, “The expense is the coaching. It has *excellent* coaching. The expense is pacing, all of the assessments. I bought lesson plans. They wanted the teachers to write their own lesson plans. I didn’t want to do that, they’re too busy.” In a

separate interview, Mrs. Aaronson confirmed Mrs. Keiser's idea for the implementation of the program, "With the SWUN math, everything is like basically laid out for you. You do this, you do this, you do this (motions with hands). So right now, with math, we don't really have a lot of freedom." The teachers discussed how they were told to follow the program closely, even though many of them agreed that it lacked some integral parts that they felt were needed for many students. For example, Ms. Bahman discussed how she wanted to teach the students conceptual understandings of math but SWUN did not have manipulatives, nor did it provide time for that kind of teaching. She explained, "A lot of their (SWUN) instructional strategies have been quick tricks. They focus a lot on keywords. I want them to know keywords, but I also want them to read a problem and know what it's asking. If you get what it's asking, you'll be fine." The program also did not have a reteach component, as that was supposed to be done once the program was over. Ms. Forrester described, "Yes, its pretty rigid. What I do like about it is that it ends a month early so you can reteach at the end. There is no pacing guide... it doesn't spiral. The lesson design is very straight-forward and gets to the meat and potatoes." Despite its rigorous limitations, most of the teachers believed that the SWUN program helped their students increase their math test scores. Ms. Petrin stated emphatically, "Sometimes I don't know about the way they (CST) question them, sometimes the way they question them is off. But with the SWUN, I felt there were no surprises. It was like, my kids had the most organized graph paper (the scratch paper they were given for the math portion of the CST) I'd ever seen in my life. It was just... they knew everything... what to do." Ms. Bahman reiterated this notion when she stated, "I feel like SWUN has given... I feel way

more confident in their math abilities at this stage with this grade level than I felt at this stage with all the other grade levels. So I guess in that sense, it's (SWUN) allowing me to start those things [conceptual teaching *after* the CST], which is nice." Though Hoover had an element of freedom (in following the SIG plan, and not limited to using state-adopted programs), these teachers were held to strict expectations in following the SWUN math program, as well as the utilization of other curricular and instructional strategies that would lead to an increase in student test scores. This is what made Hoover quite different from Dusty Valley (Wills & Sandholtz, 2009), in that the teachers there had a significant amount of autonomy and were not rigidly standardized. At Hoover, the teachers' decisions were much more "significantly circumscribed by contextual pressures," than those at Dusty Valley, and these contextual pressures were at the site level rather than the larger macro-contextual level (p. 1111).

The role of the academic coaches largely influenced what happened at Hoover Elementary, and how the teachers did their jobs as well. Throughout the entire school year, these coaches structured, facilitated, and supervised what the teachers did. During collaboration meetings, the teachers were required to fill out reflection sheets (used to guide their discussion) and write up detailed agendas about what they discussed, both which were turned in to the coaches. The team was also held to following an already set agenda created by the coaches. When Mrs. Jeffries talked about her experience at Hunt, she mentioned, "I'm not used to having people really watching what you're doing and watching your scores. So that's been kind of challenging this year." When asked who "people" were, she responded with "the coaches." The coaches held the teachers

accountable regarding their instructional time as well. The teachers were often asked when they were doing fluency, and when they were doing a specific section of math, and so on. Mrs. Payne described, “They [coaches] want a schedule for the whole grade level doing the same thing at the same time, and that’s fine.” What’s significant here was that most of the teachers (on the grade level team (except Mrs. Jeffries) did not have a problem with being “watched” by them, but did express that certain coaches did not view them as professionals. During a focus group interview with the team, the teachers were asked if they felt they were treated as decision-making professionals by the coaches and there was a long, awkward pause following the question. Then, Mrs. Montgomery was the only one to reluctantly respond with, “For the most part...” and no one else had anything to add to that answer. As demonstrated here, these teachers were reluctant to say how they felt regarding the coaches. This tension between them was evident, as especially seen in the interview data with the administrator and the coaches, but the teachers themselves did not speak negatively about them for fear of any potential sanctions. Mrs. Jeffries expressed how she felt the coaches were always “watching” and holding the teachers accountable in an authoritative manner; and to these teachers, that translated into not viewing them as autonomous professionals. Reflexively speaking, I understand that these teachers did not trust me in the same way as the teachers at Emerald Valley, and I often wondered why that was considering I spent *more* time at Hoover. Again, the atmosphere at Hoover was high pressure and highly authoritative. The teachers knew this and perhaps that is why they chose to stay quiet.

There were two coaches at Hoover that were responsible for teaching and facilitating project-based learning in science and social studies. They taught the model lesson during one day of the week, and it was the teacher's job to reinforce concepts from that lesson throughout the week, including the continuation of any project activities.

When Mrs. Galarza was asked what would be entailed if the teachers wanted the students do a different type of project, she responded with,

I don't think that it would come to that... because things are *sooo* delineated for us that the projects that we have, if we're doing science, the projects are already in the book... built in the book. And they bought kits with all the supplies for those.

This statement triangulates with observational data as the other teachers did not talk about nor conduct any type of project-based lessons in their classrooms (outside of what the science and social studies coaches modeled).

In her study, Dorgan (2004) found that administrators often made decisions regarding which students were placed into specific intervention programs. At Hoover, it was the academic coaches who were bestowed this task. They sorted the students into "Universal Access" groups where the teachers and coaches taught targeted interventions/enrichments with the students. This proved to be a sore subject for some of the teachers on the team as they voiced their desire to sort the students themselves. Other teachers on the team felt comfortable with the coaches doing it, because the coaches closely analyzed the data (from the common and benchmark assessments); they also didn't mind the coaches sorting the students because frankly it was one less thing to do.

Despite the fact that Hoover's teachers were held to extremely strict guidelines when it came to mathematics, science, and social studies (all subjects that involved direct

coaching and modeling), they were given the freedom to work together as a PLC in building their language arts curriculum. The SIG provided more flexibility in the area of language arts, where Hoover was not required to follow a state-adopted textbook program like most other schools in California. They were encouraged to use the adopted curriculum as a starting point, but they could add to it how they saw fit. Mrs. Montgomery explained, “She [Mrs. Keiser] lets us bring in whatever we need to bring for them [students] to access so they can do what they need to do.” The fifth grade team, for example, designed a reading and writing curriculum centered on novels. Mrs. Keiser approved as long as they continued to show proficient scores on the benchmark assessments, and they must also work as a standardized team. As a PLC, they were to all follow whatever curriculum they all agreed upon. Mrs. Aaronson clarified,

I think with language arts right now, we’re feeling a bit more freedom just because of the fact that we need a new adoption and they see that this one is lacking in certain areas. So they kind of want us to fill in the holes, you know.

Through my observations, however, I did not actually see the third grade teachers collaborate regarding their language arts curriculum. In fact during my observations, most of the teachers were doing something quite different from each other in this subject area. The only commonality they shared in language arts was doing Accelerated Reader (AR), where the students read independently and took comprehension quizzes on the books they had read. AR was another non-negotiable overseen by the coaches. Mrs. Galarza explained,

I think at the very, very beginning, people [other teachers] were more worried about ‘Am I doing it [AR] right? How do I get it started?’ but then once people went through it and then they [coaches] were really good about showing you how to work it, how to log in, how to track progress, how to set goals, all of those

things. They even put a little video on the [school] website so if you forgot. They really went through... and everything is so guided and so step-by-step that you have no choice but to get it.

Aside from AR, which was an independent activity for the students, the teachers were not collaborative in teaching language arts. The issue of CST-driven curriculum arises once again, as they individually chose to do what they thought would help their students on the state test. In this sense, there was some level of autonomy, though it was still set in the boundaries of making gains on the state test.

As discussed in chapter four, the tenets of professionalism are intertwined, and the interdependent relationship between expertise and autonomy was evident at Hoover. As Boreham (1983) explained, having expertise and autonomy is not enough to classify someone as a professional - true professionals *use* their expertise to determine what would be most appropriate and beneficial for their clientele. When analyzing these findings at Hoover, it can be argued that these teachers practiced what Wills and Sandholtz (2009) call “constrained professionalism,” in which they made professional decisions within specifically outlined parameters. The problem with this argument though is that unlike the teachers at Dusty Elementary, these teachers believed that the school’s mission to increase test scores superseded their own expertise and decision-making abilities. This belief was most evident when the teachers described Mrs. Keiser and her devotion to the school, as well as when they discussed pragmatic issues related to having a job. When we spoke about how teachers will handle the changes when the SIG and its funding are no longer available to Hoover (the class sizes will increase, the coaches’ duties will be imparted to the grade level leads, and so on), Mrs. Galarza

responded with, “You have to [handle it]. If you want to feed your family, you do.” This was how Mrs. Galarza defined herself as a professional, someone who just does because it is expected of them. This was reflective of the grade level team because the teachers did not demonstrate any level of questioning what was being done at Hoover. There was a minimal amount of complaint, but this mostly focused on their feelings of being overwhelmed with the workload and pressure, and not related to issues of limited autonomy. Their altruistic belief in doing what was best for the school (incited by the administrator and SIG) influenced how they perceived, enacted, and *rationalized* the nature of their professional autonomy.

In their work, Kerchner and Mitchell (1988) discuss how important it is for professionals to make decisions regarding whether or not a specific task should be performed. According to the literature on teacher practice, test-driven curriculum and endless amounts of test preparation have proven to be detrimental to students (Guggino & Brint, 2010; Valli & Chambliss, 2007; McNeil & Valenzuela, 2000), so why did the teachers at Hoover practice in the way that they did? Their curricular map was dictated by the CST, as was also their activities, their math program, and their immense focus on test preparation. At times throughout the study, a few of the teachers (Mrs. Aaronson and Ms. Bahman) alluded that they questioned these practices, but not enough to doubt them and replace them with something else. Though this would have been difficult to do at Hoover, teachers still have the autonomy to do things in a different way (when authority figures are not present in the classroom) and potentially achieve the same results. Ms. Bahman expressed, “I want my whole class to be a certain way, but it’s just like I think

everything, everything I'm teaching right now kind of crumbles back to the CST." In this same conversation, she later stated, "I'm still going to do whatever I can do get their scores high," which is what everything boiled down to at Hoover. For these novices, they bought into the value of the CSTs (and for some, this could also have meant ensuring job security), and were willing to follow the mandates from the SIG and Mrs. Keiser.

As discussed in the framework, professionals are not to be controlled or influenced by administrative or bureaucratic measures; however, at Hoover, the teachers' tasks were directed and structured by a "rational-level of administrative authority" in the forms of Mrs. Keiser and the academic coaches (Freidson, 1973). Hoover's curricular mandates (SWUN math, limited science and social studies as modeled by the coaches, and significant amounts of test preparation) dictated teacher practice and this phenomenon was not resisted, but rather embraced. It was evident that these teachers were overwhelmed by the demands and expectations of both the SIG and administration, and therefore welcomed this purposeful direction. As Ms. Petrin described,

The difference is that other schools, like I was at, say 'We need to fix it, we need to fix it [problems with poor student achievement],' but they're not doing anything to fix it. It's just... tell the teacher to work harder, but like how? What do you want me to do? So here [Hoover], it's like okay, you're going to do this, this, and this, and it seems to be working.

Following directions from an administrative or authoritative source would not be necessarily considered professional, but for some teachers, it was less to think about and plan (therefore decreasing their workload), and it was also proving to be successful. For Mrs. Petrin specifically, her class was showing a lot of gains on the benchmark assessments. She also disclosed, "My class is the highest third grade class..." and

following the mandates was “working” for her students. This complicates the issue of professional autonomy, because for some of the teachers at Hoover, doing what was asked made sense to them especially if it led to increased student achievement on tests. Considering their evident work ethic, following what was prescribed was not an issue of slacking off as could be posited. As Ms. Petrin reiterated when comparing Hoover to her old school,

I think they [teachers] work so much harder here. I think the difference with my principal there was like you gotta get the test scores, you gotta do it, you gotta do it, but they weren't giving you any tools to make it better. They weren't giving you anything other than your regular Houghton-Mifflin, and it's like 'Well, what do you want me to do? What else?' And here, it's like yah, they push you, but they give you tools and ideas of how you're actually going to do that.

Given their belief in the school's mission, it made sense to follow the requirements and do what they were told. In their study, Brint and Teele (2008) found that the few teachers that expressed favorable opinions of NCLB were from schools not making adequate yearly progress. They continued, “Some teachers at program improvement schools may find the clear focus, narrowed curriculum, and repetition encouraged by NCLB well suited to the epistemic level of their students,” (p. 137). Demonstrating their commitment to the curriculum, Ms. Forrester and Ms. Petrin continued to teach and reteach tested third grade standards, and pre-taught tested fourth grade standards following the CSTs, even though others on their team chose to do “fun” end of the year activities such as art projects and reading books of high interest.

The idea of autonomy given to the third grade team in the area of language arts was questionable and thought provoking. There was such a marked distinction between the stringent requirements of the SWUN math program and the freedom provided to them

in language arts. Granted, these teachers were still obligated to focus on the standards that would be tested, and were asked to use the adopted program as a baseline; however, other than that, they could decide what materials to use to supplement, which seemed uncharacteristic of everything else going on at Hoover. One possible explanation of this is a phenomenon that occurred at many program improvement schools during the era of NCLB. Low-achieving schools consisting of high English learner (EL) and socio-economically disadvantaged (SED) populations often showed gains (through intervention) in the area of mathematics. This was one way that these schools could attain “Safe Harbor” status, where they would not delve further into the program improvement category, and therefore be left alone for a period of time by district and state officials (Lee, 2004). This could have been one explanation for why Mrs. Keiser was not as preoccupied with language arts, as improving in math would buy Hoover some time.

The issue of professional autonomy was complex at Hoover as it was subject-specific and context-dependent. The teachers were accustomed to following a scripted curriculum in math, science, and social studies, but were given more freedom in the area of language arts. Despite having more freedom in this area, the teachers still kept their activities focused on the essential (tested) standards. They even formatted tasks similar to how they would look on the test. Ms. Forrester and Ms. Bahman discussed how they wished they had spent more time practicing writing strategies as they appeared on the CST, even though this section on the test did not assess writing as it actually happens. In this sense, they are likened to the teachers at Dusty Valley, because they were given

autonomy in this area, but still felt constrained to teach the assessed standards in ways that would prepare the students for the CST as well.

Utilizing this autonomy given to them in language arts was foreign to the third grade team. They did not act confidently with their decisions and also did not collaborate with one another to aid in making these decisions. This lack of collaboration would not be viewed as professional according to the framework. This issue will be further elaborated upon in the following section.

Forced Collaboration and Authoritative Evaluation

In all professions, colleagues work together and exchange and build on ideas to better their practice. They are involved in the evaluation process of their colleagues as well, whether it is collaborating to reach a consensus on the standards for evaluation, or directly evaluating one another to improve on their own as well as their colleagues' practice. The nature of collaboration among the teachers at Hoover was quite different than how collaboration is defined in the literature on professionalism. Two contextual constraints that contributed to these differences were: the presence of SIG and its accompanying mandates, and varying teacher schedules as Hoover is a four-track, year-round school, which made collaboration difficult when one or two teachers were always off at any given time. There was a lot of structured time built into the schedule for collaboration (provided by the SIG and administration), but the collaboration was not organic; it was forced. In addition, much of their collaboration focused on logistical issues, not instructional or curricular issues. The third grade teachers relied on this type of collaboration as it helped them deal with their intense workload. It was a bit of

“survival collaboration,” where they worked together as best they could to aid in reducing one another’s stress level. To them, being a professional meant working together to get the job done, and at Hoover, the job was implementing programs and teaching in ways that would increase student test scores.

At Hoover, all grade level teams were required to attend staff meetings, as well as “reflection” meetings. Mrs. Keiser explained, “We have them [reflection meetings] every week. And then we have data meetings once a month on a different day. And then, I’ve paid for a lot of substitutes for the teachers to have grade level plannings on specific times during the day.” These meetings consisted of the coaches, and sometimes Mrs. Keiser, setting the agenda and guiding most of the conversation between the teams. The agendas usually focused on data analysis and completing reflection worksheets. When asked about the meetings, Ms. Petrin replied, “We’d meet every Thursday for our meetings, then once a month for the afterschool meeting. There’s never been problems, really...” Being that the coaches set the agendas and the teachers often had several tedious tasks to complete, there was not a lot of time to organically collaborate. The teachers consistently brought their laptops to the meetings and remained fairly quiet and non-interactive throughout them. One meeting in particular consisted of the teachers sending assessment data to the coaches, completing two forms – a learning goals sheet and a document for them to fill out their focus standards for the next trimester – and filling out an agenda to send to the coaches. Several teachers left once the agenda was emailed. During the one meeting where Mrs. Jeffries had asked when the other teachers did writing, the one teacher responded with “After test prep,” and the conversation ended

there. It seemed like an opportunity to discuss how writing looked in each other's classrooms, but never got to that point. During several meetings, many of the teachers left once the required agenda items were completed. The style of questioning from the coaches during these meetings conveyed a sense of strict accountability and authority, "What community event is your team doing? How will you do it? What does the data say? Where are your weaknesses? (referring to test scores on certain standards)" In one meeting, they called out the individual names of teachers who had not yet completed an online educational technology survey that is required by the district. A feeling of tension often invaded the room during these meetings, which was most likely why teachers left as soon as they could. Their perceptions of these meetings were that they were begrudgingly required.

Outside of the mandatory meetings, the third grade team did not meet to collaborate on instructional or curricular issues. Ms. Bahman described, "We don't share sources, like I found stuff like this, with each other. I feel like we work really well together, but like the team I was on two and three years ago, we did everything, we all planned together (prior to the SIG). This one, we're a little more individual now, which I don't think is necessarily a bad thing. It really works in certain cases, and it doesn't in others." When Ms. Petrin was asked if they planned together a lot this year (outside of the structured collaboration meetings), she responded, "No... they said they used to do that in fourth grade where one person might write the lesson plans for everyone and use that, but we never tried that." Following testing, it was evident that the teachers had not discussed their choice of after-testing activities. Mrs. Galarza had her students creating

several art projects, and asked me to come in and help out whenever I could. She often asked for my opinion regarding future projects, as to which one she should do and how they should look. Other teachers, like Ms. Forrester and Ms. Petrin, were focused on something entirely different, such as re-teaching and pre-teaching tested standards for the following year.

This lack of instructional and curricular collaboration did not help teachers who already felt overwhelmed. For example, Mrs. Jeffries did not feel supported by her team when it came to needing help with some of the programs or instructional issues. When asked if there was anything that the team could do better, she responded, “Since I’m kind of the new one... uhhh... I think maybe a little bit more communication during the team time, kind of sharing what’s working for you, what’s not working. So I think that would be a little bit helpful. When a follow-up question was posed, “Is that because of the team dynamic or because of everything you have to do?” She passionately replied, “Oh yes, definitely! Oh yah, because here, I have asked for help and people are willing to help. So I think everybody is just so overwhelmed with what we have to do.” In another interview, she stated, “I really don’t hang out with those guys (the other third grade teachers), so you know, it’s different. I just do my own thing, you know.” More organic collaboration regarding instruction would have been beneficial for this team, especially for Mrs. Jeffries. She also felt unsure about the differentiated groups during Universal Access. She did not know what her fellow teammates were doing (regarding curriculum and instruction) with their particular groups. She explained, “This is my first year here with them, but that’s one thing that would be one of my suggestions next year... maybe

talk a little bit more about what you're going to do in the groups [UA]." She even expressed that she would have preferred for her students to stay with her, because then she knew for sure that their needs were being met in her classroom. She took advantage of the six weeks before and during testing (when UA was stopped), because she had more time to differentiate her students within her own classroom.

Throughout the study, a different type of collaboration became apparent among the third grade teachers. They worked together quite effectively regarding logistical issues - rotating classrooms, making copies for one another, and helping each other understand and complete SIG related tasks and forms. They kept most of the walls the same in each of their classrooms, so it was easier for a roving teacher to move in. This type of collaboration was extremely apparent toward the end of the school year, when several teachers were asked to move classrooms three days before the students' last day. Mrs. Keiser made it known that she wanted all teachers moved into their new classrooms (for the following school year) *before* the end of this year, as she wanted them to solely focus on planning future instruction during their teacher preparation days given to them at the end of this school year. It was overwhelming, and I watched the teachers come together in a way I had not seen up until that point. They grouped their students together in another teacher's classroom so they could help another teammate move furniture, put up butcher paper and borders, and so on. They worked selflessly and tirelessly to help each other, and it definitely reduced stress for each teacher required to move. Most of the third grade teachers expressed that logistical collaboration was all they needed. Mrs. Montgomery described, "I don't think it's [collaboration] been as much this year... at the

same time, we've had so much in place for the last couple of years, it's just kind of been common knowledge that this is what's going to happen." She went on to say, "We have a lot of masters that are the same, so we have printed copies at the beginning of the year or the end of the year that are for the next year. So we continue with the same type of structure as the prior year with new additions." Ms. Forrester, the grade level leader, reiterated the logistical nature of their collaboration,

Some of it is very informal, passing by. We do lots of emails, and I would say almost daily, one of us is contacting the other. We do help each other out... if someone is going to be gone and we have to cover someone's classroom. As a team, I think we do collaborate together well.

According to the literature, evaluation has been an issue with teaching in general, due to problems with the union's structure, as well as the context of accountability. At Hoover specifically, Mrs. Keiser encouraged and had future expectations for the teachers to do more peer evaluation and hold each other accountable within their own PLCs. What she may or may not have realized is that the teachers in this study were overwhelmed with the accountability placed on them from the SIG, with the coaches and the administrator as overseers of what they did. They relied on their team as a support structure in dealing with the pressure and workload that they did not feel comfortable evaluating each other.

The coaches at Hoover served a quasi-evaluative role, where they were there to supervise, determine whether or not there was a need for support, and then provided that support to the teachers (whether or not it was welcomed). As discussed earlier, the coaches structured and facilitated so much of what the teachers did, as well as held each teacher accountable for their students' scores, that the teachers did not have a sense of

accountability towards one another. One of the coaches explained that the teachers would ask a coach to talk to a teacher about something that they might need to fix, rather than talking straight to that teacher. She described, “This teacher said to me that, look... if I go to that person, it won’t be taken in the same light that it would be taken from you, because it’ll almost be as if I’m telling this other peer teacher [what to do].” The administrator and the coaches established themselves as the evaluators and therefore the teachers looked to them for oversight, not each other. Mrs. Ortiz (math coach) reiterated, “We kind of built this relationship with a bulk of the teachers and when I do broach subjects with them, oh, she’s just trying to give me some tips. She’s the math coach, so she knows a lot. She’s kind of... yah, I’ll take that tip from her. But if it’s from an equal...[shakes head].” Some of the third grade teachers, especially Mrs. Jeffries, perceived the coaches and their observations in a negative manner. From the coaches’ perspective, they were providing support, but to the teachers, they were seen as supervising and reprimanding. In one of our interviews, Mrs. Jeffries was reluctant to speak negatively about the coaches; however she was honest about how they were evaluative and how it made her feel. She expressed,

I came from a school where we didn’t have as... like they (coaches) do. You have to follow, and you should be at this place at this time. And this school, they really do a lot. I’m not used to having people really watching what you’re doing and watching your scores. So that’s been kind of challenging this year.

To clarify, I asked if by “they” she meant the coaches and she responded, “Yeah, the coaches.” I continued pressing by asking if they were the ones holding the teachers accountable for test scores and the like. She replied,

The ones here? Um... yah, they're watching. And if they feel the need to pull you out and talk to you or give you some coaching, they will do that. I had a hard time with it because you know, when you're spending a lot of time in the classroom and after hours and then you have people who... so it was just new.

During a whole-group interview with my participating teachers, the team was asked if they felt accountability towards one another. They hesitated with confused expressions and explained they did know what the question meant. After clarifying the meaning of the question, they answered it in terms of pacing and being on the same lesson as everyone else (referring back to the logistical nature of their collaboration). They then proceeded to explain how difficult pacing was with a multi-track school. Similar to how Mrs. Matthews felt as though she was on a treadmill, trying to keep up with her teammate, Mrs. Jeffries also expressed that she had a difficult time keeping up (Wills, 2007). In a group interview, she revealed, "Sometimes, Ms. Forrester will say, 'No, I'm like that too [being behind in the pacing],' but otherwise they look like they got it going on."

Similar to Emerald Valley, the definition of "evaluation" at Hoover was different from that in the literature on professionalism. It was contextually defined (and defined in the union contract) as an observationally based assessment performed by the administrator. The teachers at Hoover knew that they were consistently held accountable for what they did by the coaches, but did not revere them as they did Mrs. Keiser. Though Mrs. Keiser mentioned that she wanted them to hold each other accountable in their grade level teams, she also embraced the fact that the teachers felt significant accountability towards her and her expectations. After our first interview, Mrs. Keiser and I were walking down the hallway from her office. She was discussing the purpose of

her next appointment for the day, which was meeting with a teacher to go over each and every student's progress in her classroom. She whispered to me how the teachers were not used to proving why a student should be retained or promoted, and that now they know to have all of their data ready to justify their decision-making. Her tone throughout this conversation was one of implication (along with a lot of raised eyebrows), as though she wanted the teachers to internalize this level of stringent accountability. Ms. Bahman explained how she perceived this practice,

Mrs. Keiser really holds you accountable to each student. We'll have data meetings and she'll put your students' scores up there and it's like 'Okay, why is this kid dropping?' She goes through every kid with every teacher, so she's looking at every single student in the school... 'So their CST score was here and their unit test is here, what's going on?' So we're kind of being monitored that way too, which is good, because sometimes I come out of those meetings and I'm like, 'What have I been doing?' She does those meetings every trimester, before report cards.

It was evident that the teachers internalized this level of accountability, to a point where, as Ms. Bahman's quote conveys, they embraced it (despite the additional workload). Being held accountable by administration was part of their professional practice.

For the teachers at Hoover, there was yet another source of evaluation, a new procedure created by district officials. Mrs. Keiser volunteered Hoover to be a pilot school in using this new evaluation system. This system separated the teacher evaluation into multiple parts – administrator observation and evaluation, student proficiency on chosen priority standards, and prior student test scores on the CST. Since this year was a pilot year for the system, the teachers were not very concerned about it. Mrs. Keiser also framed it as though it was not important enough to worry about and that *she* would guide them through it. She asked certain teachers to come see her after staff meetings if they

were unsure of what to write on their evaluation forms. She would provide them with the right words they needed to complete the forms. Even with this system being piloted, the teachers based their professional conception on how they were being evaluated by Mrs. Keiser and the coaches.

The nature of collaboration and evaluation at Hoover was contextually and socially constructed in ways that did not fit with the professional framework. The teachers lacked organic collaboration focused on professional practice issues, like curriculum and instruction. Though there was built-in collaboration time, they did not internalize or embrace the work done during these meetings because it was inorganic, led by the coaches (not themselves), and compulsory. This was demonstrated by their interactions during these meetings, as well as their desire to leave as soon as the agenda items were completed. Due to their overwhelming workload, these teachers collaborated on issues that made sense to them (e.g. rotating classrooms), which can be considered a professional decision in its own right. This notion is problematic though, in that these teachers were merely dealing with their circumstances, instead of making collaborative decisions that led to appropriate and meaningful learning experiences for students.

The lack of professional collaboration at Hoover can also be attributed to ideological differences. When looking at the third grade team specifically, these teachers did not all buy into the articulated mission of the administration. Mrs. Jeffries, for example, struggled all year to keep up, collaborate, and negotiate what she wanted to do with what was expected of her. The other teammates were aware of Mrs. Jeffries' beliefs and struggle, as it was mentioned in a few of the interviews; "There's some people on our

team that are assertive and you know a little more resistant.” As one of the few teachers voluntarily transferring from Hoover, it is possible that Mrs. Jeffries might have chosen to stay had she felt more supported. There were, of course, other reasons why Mrs. Jeffries wanted to transfer, which will be elaborated upon in the following section on altruism.

As the framework argues, collegial evaluation is performed to maintain a desired level of proficiency for that profession. Authority is not and should not be a factor; however, as mentioned in chapter four, the structure of the teachers’ union and their adopted contract language conveys a different connotation of evaluation. At Hoover specifically, this type of authoritative evaluation was manifested out of necessity. Mrs. Keiser could be likened to an overseer at an educational factory, where hierarchy of some type was needed for the SIG tasks to be completed. She needed these mostly novice teachers to feel a strong sense of accountability to someone or something, and that was done effectively at Hoover. It was important to Mrs. Keiser to ensure that all of Hoover’s teachers were working toward the same goal of increasing test scores.

Altruistic Work in “This High-Pressure Cooker” (Mrs. Keiser)

Professionals are “doing full-time the thing that needs doing” (Wilensky, 1964, in Brint, 1994, p. 32) and place the needs of their clientele above all else. In order to understand the complicated nature of altruism at Hoover, it is important to reiterate that most of the teachers at this school believed in the mission articulated by the principal and coaches. They felt that helping students improve their CST scores was the central focus and would ultimately benefit the students, and the school. With that being said, a

significant recurring theme was found in several sections of the data. The teachers were confronted with an overwhelming workload and immense amount of pressure on a daily basis. During several interviews and discussions, the teachers expressed feelings of inundation (and for a few, all out frustration) regarding all that they had to do. As seen throughout the previous sections of this chapter, this issue affected every area of their professionalism at Hoover – how they conceptualized themselves as experts, autonomous decision-makers, and collaborative teammates. As a researcher and teacher, I often questioned how these teachers rationalized all that they did, and the answer lies in the nature of their altruism. They were devoted to doing what they thought was best for their students; even though doing what was best was framed in such a questionable way at Hoover. They relegated their massive workload to factors outside of their control, and to them this was all a part of being a professional at Hoover Elementary.

During all of the initial interviews, each teacher was asked why they went into teaching. For some of them, there were several teachers already in their family (both of Ms. Bahman's parents were teachers in a neighboring district); others expressed that they always felt a passion to be in education and work with students (which is why three of these teachers began as an aide or tutor of some kind). Theoretically speaking, these answers are all altruistic in that these teachers wanted to teach for the right reasons (devoting themselves to meet the needs of our society, as described in the framework). At Hoover though, their notions of altruism were evident and at the forefront of their work, but manifested in a way that was different from what they originally imagined.

The ideal thus became working diligently and exasperatingly to help students achieve higher scores on the CST.

Nichols and Berliner (2005) found that teachers practicing in the era of NCLB often complained about lack of time for both instruction and other aspects of teaching. Due to the requirements of the SIG and Mrs. Keiser's expectations, the teachers at Hoover experienced endless amounts of time constraints. Dorgan (2004) discussed how the administration of benchmark assessments dictated the pace of teaching and learning in many teachers' classrooms. Ms. Forrester corroborates this finding when she passionately explained,

Things move fast here. They move really fast. I think the thing that kind of, I was just talking to my team this last week, it's like there's so many different reports they're expecting from us and different ways that we can show data, but it's like asking the same ways. We're like, 'We're already showing you this.' So I think that's the thing that... assessing and all of that is... that's what becomes stressful. I have less time to teach. To me, *that's* the biggest stress, not so much are our students going to perform, but if I had *more* time to actually teach and not assess.

When discussing her teaching experience over the last five years, Mrs. Jeffries stated, "I've gotten more patient. I definitely know what I am doing much better. I've gotten more teaching strategies... uh, I don't know. Just the time management still... seems like it's still a lot of hard work and all those hours still. So that's what I need to get better at."

Significant to Hoover (and adding to the literature base on teacher practice), some teachers complained about time constraints regarding paperwork to be done outside of teaching. There were a lot of tasks that needed to be completed at numerous times throughout the study. Most of the third grade team did not discuss them negatively, but very matter-of-factly. Ms. Petrin stated,

Some of the teachers at my old school would have thrown a fit if they had to do it [referring to all of the paperwork], but I'm like, I don't mind working hard. We're working smart, we're getting results from it. But the first couple of months I was here, I was like making a list of all these things that were due and I was overwhelmed. But once you get in the habit of what they [coaches and administrator] want every time, it's like okay, it's not that bad. And they'll give you a calendar for when everything's due. I'm fine and I'm organized like that, but I think some of the other teachers get a little overwhelmed, if they're not up on it. Because I know one of the newer teachers for our grade [I assume she referred to Mrs. Jeffries here, but did not clarify], she's here 'til almost dark every night. And she just seems very overwhelmed.

Mrs. Montgomery felt similarly to Ms. Petrin as she stated,

I think that if you can keep... I don't want to sound like... if you can keep up or not. Like I said, it's second nature. It's just something I always... that's how we've always done it. I expect myself to do it. I pace myself. If I have to get it done, it gets done.

Mrs. Jeffries struggled the most with these expectations and due dates. She never ate her lunch in the staff lounge because she told me she needed to use that time to do work. She expressed that she felt bad about "missing out," but then explained, "You know, it got to the point where I said, I can be in there [staff lounge], but then I need to be in here because this year is like I said, just so overwhelming in what the expectations are and you have to be ready with either this or that." During an observation near the end of the year, she was in the back of the classroom scurrying around and busily working on some files. The students were working on Father's Day cards and then watched an episode of "Schoolhouse Rock." As I initially approached her, she says (exasperated), "I tell you... this school... has sooo much paperwork and filing." She spent the next two hours trying to monitor student behavior while also trying to get papers together for each file. Mrs. Jeffries felt rushed to complete her filing because Mrs. Galarza needed to move into her classroom that same day. In fact, Mrs. Keiser told Mrs. Galarza that she had two

hours to change classrooms. Mrs. Galarza explained that Mrs. Keiser would rather them spend the time now (not coincidentally after testing) than at the beginning of the next school year (before students arrive) where they can spend time planning for instruction. Upon running into Mrs. Keiser during the last week of school, she told me that everyone is “just trying to hold it together the last few days.” I remark how the students tend to check out at this time of the year, and she responded, “Oh, the *teachers* are checked out!”

In their study, Valli and Buese (2007) recognized the effects that NCLB had on teacher practice and morale. There were new expectations and a significant increase in the amount of teacher tasks related to standardized testing. The teachers at Hoover experienced a shift in their thinking as well. Initially they expressed that they wanted to become a teacher for reasons excluding test-based achievement. When asked the question, “How do you define successful teaching and learning in your classroom?” every teacher on the third grade team responded with student proficiency of the standards as measured by assessments, both district level and state level. Being that this focus on the CST had overtaken previous altruistic notions of these teachers, they often expressed feelings of pressure, while constantly attempting to do what they could to help the students achieve. Ms. Bahman lamented, “That’s already what our whole everything is geared toward, so... I don’t know how I can change that much more. Well, I know a billion things I can change, but you know.” Ms. Bahman was not the only teacher who felt this way. When asked if the teachers felt more pressure at Hoover than at their previous schools, several agreed. Mrs. Jeffries stated, “Yah, it’s definitely more (pressure) here, definitely. I think it’s the expectation, because it is a low-performing

school and I think the pressure that principals have, they're going to put down on the teachers. So definitely much more here than at Davis [previous school]." Mrs. Galarza discussed how the pressure of the CSTs influenced her perception of student progress,

Before the kids grasp it, you have to move on to the next thing, you have to move on to the next thing, because if you don't they're not going to have it. They're not going to have an exposed to it and that's the problem. And I think that's the danger with that is that we are so worried about exposing them to everything and to make sure they get exposed to this and that they cover all of these things... that many times we have to move on and kids get left behind, in our promise not to leave anybody behind.

Through all of the hard work and frustration, the teachers at Hoover understood the importance of the test and the implications associated with it. A few of the teachers agreed that "some" type of accountability was necessary for our education system; however, they still expressed feelings of resentment towards the test and the usage of the scores. Barrett (2008) discusses this NCLB-related phenomenon where novice teachers have been conditioned to "more efficiently navigate within the current performance model of official pedagogic discourse, [however] this does not imply that they are necessarily personally, morally, or professionally comfortable with what this entails" (p. 1023). When asked if the CST was an effective indicator as to how well the students are learning, Mrs. Aaronson vigorously shook her head and replied,

I just think that the state test is written at a very high level, you know we don't necessarily teach that way. I mean we're always pushing them forward, and we're teaching them at a proficient level, hoping they get there. But we know realistically that most of our kids are not proficient. If they come in at first grade level, if at the end of the year they get to a second grade level, I feel like I've done my job. I can't get a first grade level student to third grade by the end of the school year. That's almost, you know, impossible... it's humanly impossible.

Reminiscent to the findings of Valli, et. al. (2008), Diamond and Spillane (2004), and Barrett (2008), Ms. Bahman described how the coaches chose the “bubble” students for targeted intervention groups,

That’s another thing about CSTs, it makes you kind of focus on those kids, but what about the bottom ones? They need to move up too, but when the focus is on AYP [academic yearly progress] and not on API [Academic Performance Index], then it’s like ‘ahhh,’ you’re valuing the kids in different ways based on their score. There was a math bubble group where I had four kids pulled out this year and a language arts one where I had three pulled out.

Barrett (citing Gillborn & Youdell, 2000) refers to this phenomenon as “educational triage,” where teachers focus on intervening with those students who have a chance of passing the CST, rather than those who do not. During the week before testing time, Mrs. Galarza was asked how she had been feeling. She explained her anxious thoughts, “I’m stressed, the kids are stressed. We’re all stressed. It’s difficult. It’s difficult because you’re working, you’re trying, but it’s also sad because a lot of the highest kids aren’t going to count because it’s such a revolving door.” This “revolving door” alludes to the pressure the teachers felt regarding the incoherent relationship between the CSTs and the student population at Hoover. Issues of attendance, mobility, and socioeconomics strongly influenced the students’ achievement level, which contributed to their level of frustration. Mrs. Galarza continued, “It’s super high mobility [here] and you see that it’s hard too because the kids that are high-performing are the ones that leave. They don’t stick around in the area for very long, and it’s the low-performing ones that stay and the high-performing ones that leave.” In a later conversation, she explained that only thirteen of her twenty students’ scores would count, as they’re the students who had been there since October of that school year. These teachers understood that being a professional at

Hoover meant working hard, but they often expressed that they felt thwarted when it came to outside factors. Mrs. Aaronson explained quite passionately,

There are so many factors that I take into consideration, because the test is a test and there's no human emotion involved. But when you're with these kids five days a week, six hours a day, for ten months, you get to know them on a personal level. And you know, well, he's not doing well because his grandma is in the hospital, or Dad's in jail again... they're homeless again, you know. There's so many factors that impact their education that aren't taken into consideration, especially for a school in the area that this school is in.

This altruistically compromising issue of outside school factors relates to an issue discussed previously in the section concerning expertise. The factors of mobility, low socioeconomics, and so on also contributed to why these teachers felt insecure in their expertise. In many reflection meetings, teachers were overheard lamenting about how poorly their students performed on certain benchmark assessments. During a meeting in April, the teachers were to analyze the students' scores on the final benchmark and report their findings on the "Classroom Data" form. Ms. Bahman sighed, "I thought the test was hard..." and Mrs. Aaronson agreed, "I don't even want to look at mine [scores]." During another staff meeting, Mrs. Rodriguez (one of the data coaches) was presenting changes to the CST directions for administration (DFA). The teachers asked specific questions about the guidelines, and why some of the changes had been made (e.g. the students were no longer allowed to underline or write notes on the test booklet). Mrs. Rodriguez did not know the rationale behind the changes and continued to explain other restrictions. The teachers began to show nervousness, anxiety, and frustration, as several "sighs" were heard throughout the group. This insecurity they projected stemmed from

the lack of confidence they had in the students' ability to do well on the CST. These teachers often felt powerless in helping their students succeed on the tests.

Along with feeling somewhat defeated regarding student achievement, these teachers also felt there was nothing they could do to help the situation. During one interview, Ms. Bahman mentioned how she talked with her parents about the environment at Hoover, "They say, 'Wow, that's a lot,' but for me, that's all I know... you know? Because I've only been here. All I have to compare what we do is to what my parents tell me and they say if they were asked to do that, then their staff would just have a fit." Ms. Bahman represented most of the teachers at Hoover, because that really was all they knew. They acknowledged that the weight of the CSTs was overwhelming and at times frustrating, but felt that that was just the way it was. As the union representative for her school, I asked Ms. Bahman if any teachers had filed a grievance regarding the work environment and she responded, "I haven't seen anything like that. I feel like it's such a big thing that it's like, 'What can we do?'"

In his work, Brint (1994) discusses how the definition of professionalism has evolved due to changes in our social context. Originally, professionalism was viewed using a "social trustee" lens, where people chose to perform a profession because it was the right thing to do, the devotion of oneself to their society. As our society (and most importantly, our economy) has changed, so has the definition of what it means to be a professional. Currently, professions are those occupations that garner profit and continue to feed the economic system. As the framework states, now teacher practice is often viewed as not professional, because marketplace style thinking is more highly valued,

versus traditional social trustee-ism. Perhaps the teachers at Hoover, and how they conceptualize themselves as professionals are an example of a new teacher ideology, one that places value on something more easily measured. Though they once held traditional altruistic beliefs regarding teaching and learning, they stifled those to make room for modernized and more practical (economical) beliefs. In his discussion regarding the changing moral commitment of professionals, Brint states,

Most professionals now justify their work on the basis of its technical complexity, not its social contribution. Professionals are becoming less likely to emphasize selfless service to clients than to emphasize the market demand for expert services,” (p. 82).

In their own way, they potentially redefined what it meant to be a professional teacher during the era of NCLB.

Overworked Practitioners in a Professionally Stifled Context

The context at Hoover Elementary (the SIG, especially), the experience levels of the teachers, and how they were perceived greatly affected how they conceptualized themselves as professionals. As Mrs. Montgomery stated, dealing with all of the pressure and expectations was just “second nature” to them, and though with some reluctance, they dealt with it and continued to work hard. They believed in their administrator, and the School Improvement Grant, and therefore did what they could to increase student achievement. All of the teachers (whether agreeably or not) measured student achievement using the same standards as the federal and state governments – proficiency on the California Standards Test. The few teachers that had little to no efficacy in the CST and its use as a tool to measure achievement *still* did what it took anyway, displaying an “It is what it is” type of attitude. As Barrett (2008) discusses in his work,

despite following through with what was asked of them, these teachers still felt a tension between their beliefs and original altruistic passion and the demands and expectations placed on them due to the SIG and the administration. Mrs. Keiser and the academic coaches clearly articulated the school's mission on a daily basis and the teachers on my participating team definitely bought into it, enough to work diligently at implementing what they were asked. They wanted their students to do better (on the test), and wanted the school as a whole to look better in the eyes of the community and the state. To many of the teachers on my participating team, professionalism was doing what's best for students in accordance to CST performance expectations. This "do what it takes" attitude led many of Hoover's teachers to feel overwhelmed with their workload, but they continued to perform the tasks, often without question.

Interestingly enough, the SIG was designed to help low-performing schools by providing them with more funding and curricular freedom. At Hoover, however, the presence of this grant further limited the amount of freedom and autonomy the teachers had, as well as increased the level of pressure they felt regarding student performance on the CSTs. The findings at Hoover have political implications when it comes to programs like the School Improvement Grant, as its enactment looked quite different from its design and intentions. This notion also reiterates the importance of context (as well as the role of the administrator) and how one low-performing school can look completely different compared to another (even within the same district).

As witnessed by Valli and Buese (2007), too many demands and expectations placed on teachers can cause discouragement and ambivalence to administrative goals.

Though this has not happened at Hoover, it is a future possibility, as the altruism of these teachers was starting to become severely compromised. Brint (1994) reiterates, “The pressures of working with needy people lead many human service providers to disengage emotionally, and sometimes, to worry more about following authorized procedures than about solving problems,” (p. 59). This is the path that potentially lies ahead for the teachers at Hoover. As Mrs. Keiser described, the level of support that came with the SIG would only continue for one more year; therefore, the teachers were going to be expected to perform the same duties without the extra funding, and without the coaches. This transition consisting of additions to their workload could cause these teachers to develop an apathetic attitude as described in Valli and Buese (2007) and Brint (1994); or it could even result in their defection as Smith and Kovacs (2011) describe. Although, if Mrs. Keiser planned to stay at Hoover, it is possible that her charismatic way of inciting passion could be all these deeply altruistic teachers need, thus reinforcing the potential power of the administrator in studies looking at teacher professionalism.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Future Research

As the findings of this study indicate, the question regarding the status of teacher professionalism is no longer one of whether or not it exists, but rather *how* it is being perceived, conceptualized, and practiced. The nature of teacher professionalism is one that cannot be dictated by macro-level decision making because its manifestation varies according to context. As will be discussed later in this chapter, there are systemic and structural restrictions that arguably constrain teacher professionalism when looking at the issue writ large; however, conceptualizations of professionalism as well as the enactment of professional practice can best be understood through observation and analysis at the site level where teaching and learning occur.

Discussion

At both Emerald Valley and Hoover Elementary, the environment and its accompanying contextual factors directly influenced how the teachers conceptualized themselves as professionals and their enactment of that professionalism. For both sites, the school culture and the nature of teacher professionalism were shaped by several contextual factors, such as the physicality of each school, their levels of achievement, the role of the administrators, and the varying amounts of teacher experience. On their own, these factors were significant when looking at the nature of teacher professionalism at each school; however, they were also extremely interconnected and when taken together, they provided a clear picture of how and why teacher professionalism manifested as it did at both sites.

Unexpectedly, and not found in the existing literature, the location of each school proved to be a significant contextual factor when looking at teacher professionalism. Schools that are remote and far-removed, such as Emerald Valley, are often overlooked by district oversight, especially when paired with another factor such as high achievement. The teachers at Emerald Valley embraced their anonymity and unabashedly described themselves as “out in the sticks,” rarely receiving a visit from district personnel. The sheer physical beauty of the school itself and its surrounding area further enforced the relaxed culture at this particular school. Juxtaposed with the crime-stricken environment surrounding lower socioeconomic urban area schools, such as Hoover Elementary, the teachers at Emerald Valley did not feel an added level of stress regarding their physical location. The physical context at Hoover, however, was quite different and reflective of the pressure and constant stress that the teachers there endured. Oftentimes, the students at Hoover fled the poverty and emotional difficulties that they experienced at home for the safe haven of their classrooms. This, in relation to achievement and the role of the administrator, established an atmosphere of constraint for the teachers at Hoover, whereas for Emerald Valley, these factors together provided a culture that fostered autonomy.

When reviewing the current literature on teacher practice during NCLB, level of school achievement was a significant indicator as to how the teachers perceived themselves as professionals, and the level to which they could or did enact that professionalism. Teachers at schools that were classified as low achieving often experienced immense pressure and far more curricular and instructional constraint than

those teaching at high achieving schools (Diamond and Spillane, 2004; Pedulla, et. al., 2003; Valli, et. al., 2008; and Stillman, 2011). Though these findings were consistent among several studies, this study demonstrates the importance of looking closely at a school's context and becoming a participant observer to understand teacher perception(s) and analyze teacher practice. Teachers at higher achieving schools, like Emerald Valley, may possess more autonomy than their counterparts at low achieving schools, but this does not equate to a definition of teacher professionalism more in line with the professional framework. In the case of Emerald Valley, the teachers there embraced their longstanding status of high achievement, lack of district and administrative oversight, and therefore significant amount of autonomy. They regarded this level of trust as the rationale for them to using own expertise to make decisions, often not professionally collaborating with colleagues (or those outside their school whatsoever), and not always acting in altruistic ways. Some of the lessons resulting from this practice were not necessarily meaningful for the students, and some could even be described as what they have always done year after year.

In the literature, teachers at low achieving schools experienced the most constraint and this led to a diminished sense of themselves as professionals (Pedulla, et. al., 2003; Stillman, 2011; Nichols and Berliner, 2005; Valli and Buese, 2007; and Valli, et. al. 2008;). At Hoover, the novice teachers I studied demonstrated quite the contrary. They were operating in an environment that was indeed constraining, especially regarding curricular and instructional freedom. These teachers were held to such rigid standards, with a rather small amount of allotted autonomy, and yet still demonstrated

professionalism in ways true to the professional framework. Their school's level of achievement did not necessarily dictate how they would conceptualize themselves as professionals and enact professional practice. They were bound by certain restrictions that arguably affected professional aspects of their practice, but these teachers exhibited a willingness to continuously increase their knowledge base, collaborated with each other frequently (albeit mandated by administration), and demonstrated an astonishing level of altruism, especially given their professionally stifling situation.

Administrators are often viewed as the first level of accountability for teachers. During this era of high stakes accountability, principals have found themselves in various roles and enact these roles to varying degrees. Due to pressures associated with NCLB and state test scores, principals have operated in conflicting roles, whereby they wish to foster a collaborative atmosphere at their site, while also attempting to manage their teachers in ways that restrict their professionalism (Tschannen-Moran, 2009). Much of how principals enact these conflicting roles depends upon other influential factors, such as their professional orientation³, as well as school achievement (as test scores are often an indicator as to the type of pressure they are facing). This level of ambiguity reiterates the importance of focusing on school context and all of the corresponding influential factors. In some cases, principals can ameliorate the sanctions imposed by legislative

³ According to Tschannen-Moran (2009), a principal's professional orientation refers to how they perceive and conceptualize professionalism for themselves and members of their staff. In her work, she found that the principal's professional orientation significantly correlated to how the staff members saw themselves and their colleagues as professionals.

accountability in an effort to bolster teacher professionalism (Wills and Sandholtz, 2009); whereas at other sites, the administration dictates the curricular and instructional expectations and thereby directly holds the teachers accountable (Stillman, 2011; Dorgan, 2004; Tschannen-Moran, 2009). The description of principal as ameliorator is similar to the style witnessed at Emerald Valley. Mr. Dorton exuded a significant amount of respect and trust towards his teachers, and therefore afforded them with an abundance of autonomy. The teachers were expected to follow the California standards, but how they went about teaching the standards was clearly up to them. As stated previously, there were even times when the lesson(s) they were teaching was somewhat questionable, as it was not always in line with the standards framework. In the context of Emerald Valley, the relaxed administrative style reinforced a strong sense of teacher professionalism that had been previously conceptualized by the teachers, mostly in the form of autonomous decision-making.

The style of administration at Hoover directly shaped how the teachers there saw themselves as professionals. Their conception of professionalism was based on hard work and measured by students' scores on formal assessments, which was exactly how Mrs. Keiser described her expectations for her teachers. Almost single-handedly (paired with the School Improvement Grant and its expectations), Mrs. Keiser developed and shaped how her teachers thought and acted as professionals. This phenomenon of an influential administration must be looked at carefully though, as the level of teacher experience was a correlating factor contributing to the nature of teacher professionalism at both Hoover and Emerald Valley.

Being veteran teachers, and having a strong bond to add to that, the teachers at Emerald Valley were well versed in different types of curricula, various teaching strategies, and the ongoing educational politics that happened throughout the years. They had been there and done that, making them feel as though they had the appropriate expertise and knowledge that warranted them significant teacher autonomy. They respected Mr. Dorton as their leader and perhaps even the captain of their ship (to reference a common educational metaphor), but they were clearly the ones rowing in a specific direction, which was the same course they had been taking for many years. At Hoover, however, the situation was quite different. The mostly novice teachers at this school looked to their administrator for direction, and she unabashedly put forth guidelines and expectations that were often non-negotiable. Being fairly new, and having only worked at this school, many of these teachers acted as though this was the norm, or the norm for them at Hoover specifically. The curricular and instructional restrictions were part of their professional practice as they believed that they were to follow those in an effort to increase student achievement on the state tests. This was evident in their practice and also the way they described Mrs. Keiser. They held her in such high esteem, as she was the model for what she expected from them. To use Mrs. Keiser's words, "Nobody's getting a lifeboat," referring to reluctant teachers and herself as the ship's captain, to reiterate that they were all in this situation together.

As the situation at Hoover indicates, the authority given to administrators contributes to the influence they have regarding teachers' conceptualizations of themselves as professionals. At Hoover, there was another source of authority

influencing the context. The coaches, though part of the same collective bargaining unit as the teachers, were positioned, and positioned themselves in ways that strongly affected the teachers' conceptualizations of their work. This finding elucidates the complex and careful role that coaches can play. Depending on how they are positioned by the administration (and whether or not they embrace that positioning) and the cultural context of the school, they can be viewed as a support mechanism or another source of stress and de-professionalization for teachers.

The Status of Teacher Professionalism

According to the literature, the sanctions associated with NCLB and high-stakes accountability compromised the nature of teacher professionalism, and therefore led to a decrease in meaningful learning experiences for students (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Nichols and Berliner, 2005; Valli and Buese, 2007; Valli, et. al., 2008; Pedulla, et. al., 2003; , Stillman, 2011; Wills and Sandholtz, 2009; Wills, 2007; Diamond and Spillane, 2004; Brint and Teele, 2008; Valli and Chambliss, 2007). Using the four tenets of the professional framework allowed me to look more closely at this suggested phenomenon. In looking at Emerald Valley, a context where autonomy was fostered and utilized, and expertise (via experience and previous education) was abundant, this still did not equate to consistent meaningful learning experiences for the students there. Through my analysis, it was evident that the lack of academic collaboration and peer evaluation, as well as altruism at Emerald Valley affected the nature of teacher professionalism and ultimately the education provided for the students. In the case of Hoover, even though the teachers were altruistic and had significant amounts of knowledge and expertise, the

learning experiences were largely limited to a narrowed curriculum and test-related activities. In both contexts, there were instances and areas of evident professionalism; however, neither school demonstrated all four tenets of professionalism in accordance to the framework. This is integral to understanding the conceptual definition of teacher professionalism. To achieve the goal of meaningful learning for all students in a school context, I argue that all four professional tenets must be exhibited. Knowledge and expertise, freedom and autonomy, collaboration and evaluation, and altruism must be at play, manifested in the teachers' and administrators' conceptualizations and practice.

Using the conceptual framework would be a place to start when looking at ways to bolster teacher professionalism. As stated above, concrete enactment of the framework's four tenets would establish a context fostering professionalism, and thus increase the opportunities for meaningful student learning. What makes this issue complex is how exactly to go about that. Many researchers argue that professionalization of teachers needs to occur in a top-down manner, while others believe it can transfer from the bottom-up.

From a legislative standpoint, NCLB was designed with several goals in mind. Aside from achievement-based accountability, the legislators behind NCLB wanted to strengthen the practice of teaching. Thus was the impetus for the "highly qualified" movement that led many teachers to increase their knowledge base by taking on extra coursework (usually in the form of classes offered by district-level staff development departments). Interestingly enough, this part of the legislation was not as publicly known as the legislation's other aims, e.g. all students reaching proficiency by 2014, and

therefore, professional trust for teachers did not increase. Darling-Hammond (2005) argues that obtaining this trust is imperative in order for teachers to be viewed as professionals. Like Brint (1994), she discusses how this trust is acquired through continued education and building a foundation of exclusive expertise, therein strengthening the “barriers to entry” for the teaching profession. In her work, she begins by analyzing the nature of current pre-service teacher education in our country in comparison to other nations. In countries such as Germany and France, pre-service teachers are required to get degrees in more than one subject, as well as undergo two years of specialized pedagogical training that usually entails rigorous lesson preparation, teaching, and peer evaluation. In Japan, the requirements are strict and extensive as the teachers attend graduate school to begin their program and then undergo a yearlong internship for teacher training with a highly competitive examination following that. Darling-Hammond also notes how these teachers are ranked in salary and prestige much higher than those in our country. In Japan, their annual salary is similar to those of engineers. The induction process is supportive and longstanding, so to ensure that beginning teachers feel prepared to teach on their own. Also, noteworthy is that teacher shortages are also rare in these countries (p. 238-239). The way they are positioned and prepared in these societies sets the tone for how they are viewed as professionals. In the U.S., after a yearlong (if that) credential program, consisting of various lengths of student teaching, the beginning teacher is often left to “sink or swim” once on their own.

Like Darling-Hammond (2005), Wise (2006) argues that the professionalization of teaching should occur at a structural level, but with a specific invocation to look at the wording used, as he laments in an interview regarding the current state of teaching,

The purpose of accreditation is to make sure that institutions properly prepare teacher candidates and other educational specialists for their work, but accreditation by itself is incomplete in providing a quality assurance because it is based on what it is that colleges do as opposed to what each individual is capable of doing as he or she becomes a practicing member of the profession. And there enters the role of licensing.

He believes that the current “certification” that our state offers to teachers is not enough to garner the trust that Darling-Hammond refers to. He also goes on to discuss the nature of teacher assessment and how it should be based on a system of multiple measures founded on a mutually agreed upon “statement of ethics,” (p. 162-3). Wise strongly recommends that the standards (and therefore assessment practices) for teaching be revamped and more aligned with something similar to that of NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education), as he sees this as a way to instill notions of self-regulation using more stringent performance-based standards.

Along with the strengthening of entry-level standards to the profession of teaching, Darling-Hammond (2005) argues for an increase in appropriate and effective professional development for teachers. The workshops they attend at the district-level, especially, are fragmented and irrelevant to what they are doing in the classroom. Other school systems outside the U.S. allocate more of their financial resources to increasing the level of expertise for their teachers. Their staff development time is spent designing curriculum, preparing lessons, and doing research on teaching. Teachers collaborate with colleagues and perform peer evaluation of each other’s teaching. This herein would

ultimately contribute to a stronger level of expertise for teachers, which would be the starting point for bolstering teacher professionalism according to these authors.

The ideas expressed above address the need for increased standards upon entry of the profession, but what about the nature of the practice itself? Wise (2006) describes the idea to implement a “statement of ethics” for the teaching profession, but the inevitable question from many researchers would be: What good is a statement of ethics if the work teachers do is consistently impinged upon and their ethics compromised by political issues outside their control? Perhaps the issue that also needs addressing is the freedom and autonomy to make decisions with this acquired expertise that Darling-Hammond and Wise discuss.

Looking at professionalization from a macro-level perspective is arguably rational; however, the findings of this study pose problems for this top-down notion. As the teachers at Emerald Valley demonstrated, giving more autonomy to teachers does not ensure meaningful learning for students. There is much more involved, such as ensuring opportunities provided for academic collaboration and a theoretical mind shift regarding collegial evaluation. Relating to what Darling-Hammond (2005) discusses, learning and internalizing these contextual and structural processes could be an integral part of pre-service education, the accreditation process, as well as district and school staff developments. The significant idea to remember here is that everything manifests differently within the school context, and this is imperative to acknowledge when any macro-level changes are implemented in education.

The above arguments address bolstering teacher professionalism in a top-down manner, where the changes come from something larger that ultimately trickle down to influence teacher practice. Helterbran (2009) suggests the opposite approach, as she argues teachers should improve their professionalism individually from the bottom up. She posits, “It is essential that teachers take a proactive look at their profession and themselves to strengthen areas of professionalism over which they have control,” (p. 123). Her work details ways in which teachers can “take the reins” in professionalizing themselves. Teachers should engage in collaborative planning, frequently reflect on their practice, continue to grow their knowledge base, and demonstrate a confident and positive attitude in all areas of their practice. Upon doing these things, Helterbran maintains that teachers will be viewed as professionals.

The notions illustrated in Helterbran’s work can be seen in the findings at Hoover Elementary. The teachers there professionalized themselves and their work within their professionally stifled context. Surrounded by curricular and instructional mandates, they continued to operate in professional ways: using their expertise when given the opportunity to make autonomous decisions in their classrooms, collaborate on academic issues, and continue to do what they believed was best for their students. Yes, there were indeed limitations on what they could and could not do; however, as Helterbran suggests, these teachers professionalized themselves through what they *did* in their practice. When considering the question, does professionalization come from within or outside of teaching? As this research demonstrates, the answer lies in the context. There is a constant negotiation between what happens outside of teaching and what occurs within

each school. As meaning-making individuals while co-constructing meaning with others (administrator, colleagues, and students), teachers choose to conceptualize this negotiation in ways that are sensible to them, thereby exhibiting what they deem as professionalism.

Questions for Future Research

In their work, Brint and Teele (2009) discuss an overarching concern expressed by many educators throughout this past era of high-stakes accountability. Teachers and researchers alike question the status of education and how our most recent graduates may experience difficulty with problem-solving, critical thinking, and social interaction. Their educational experience has been one focused on testing and content knowledge, not necessarily skill-building that can be used in the real world. This recent critique of education supports the impetus for the Common Core State Standards Initiative. This state level initiative attempts to place more curricular and instructional autonomy in the hands of teachers, and yet there will still exist some type of standardized state assessment. Will that assessment (or future sanctions associated with it) influence teacher professionalism in ways we have seen before? Given that NCLB is still active legislation, what will accountability look like in the future with Common Core? And subsequently, how will that affect teacher professionalism? This is something that remains to be seen.

Findings from this study also lead to questions regarding the teachers' union and its structure, especially when looking at the nature of altruism at Emerald Valley, and the restrained expertise practiced at Hoover. Because, as Mitchell and Kerchner (1986) describe, the teachers' union is structured as a second generation union, which focuses on

negotiating for wages, benefits, and working conditions, and not the nature of teacher practice itself. Being organized in this manner challenges teacher professionalism as described by the framework. When a large part of Emerald Valley's staff was refuting the salary freeze that was being proposed to help bring back counselors, they were operating in a way that was not considered professional. When the teachers at Hoover were not questioning, nor taking issue with the professionally-stifling and high-pressure environment surrounding them because they didn't view that as a collective issue, that was not considered professional. When teachers at both schools defined evaluation in a way that speaks to contractual language, and not peer evaluation as the framework describes, that also was not considered professional. The structure of the union, though not often seen as affecting teacher professionalism and practice, inherently influenced some of the happenings at both of the school sites in my study. This issue poses many questions, considering that the structure of the union arguably affects the nature of teacher work, and has yet to be extensively researched.

Limitations

The limitations of this study concern length of time and generalization. As with any case study, researchers need to spend a certain amount of time in their study's context, so to get a lay of the land and become familiar with everything and everyone. This time span is also necessary in order to develop a strong rapport with the study's participants. At Emerald Valley, I became absorbed into their self-described "amoeba" rather quickly. Though they demonstrated a reluctance to learn from outsiders (especially those from the district office), they embraced the idea of someone coming in

to learn from and/or about them. They were quite candid in their interviews, even early on, and this allowed me to gather a lot of data regarding their perceptions and conceptualizations of their work. At Hoover, however, my experience was very different. It took a significant amount of time to develop a rapport with my participant teachers, and even then, everything was so rushed that it was difficult to hold a conversation with them. Towards the latter part of the study, I perceived a stronger sense of trust from the Hoover teachers, but considering that it was already June (after testing), the teachers were focused more on end-of-the-year procedures, versus their norm. If I had more time, I would have liked to carry the study into the beginning of the following school year to see how that looked at Hoover.

The nature of teaching is complex, filled with ongoing processes of construction and reconstruction of meaning. Because of this, I knew just how important it would be to study teacher professionalism in the context of the school, where I could interact with teachers and the administrator on a regular basis. Due to time constraints and myself as the only researcher, I had to focus a large part of my study on participant grade level teams and the teachers within them. Using the data from those teams, and the handful of moments I had with other teachers and school staff, I made generalizations about the school as a whole. This is difficult because I do feel that I had a rich understanding of each school and the workings within them, but having spent a lot of time with certain grade level teachers obviously limited my time with other staff members.

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