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The Policy Behind the Problem:
How Education Reform Impacts the Teaching Environment

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The Policy Behind the Problem:
How Education Reform Impacts the Teaching Environment

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Advisor: Richard Rubinson, Ph.D.

An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
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Abstract

The Policy Behind the Problem:
How Education Reform Impacts the Teaching Environment
By Kristin Joye Gordon

Public schools in the United States face numerous challenges. One challenge arises out of the emphasis on school and teacher accountability. The current educational policy orientation, with its use of sanctions in Needs Improvement schools, is drastically changing the nature of schools as workplaces. Given a persistent problem with teacher attrition, there is an urgent need to examine factors that affect public school teachers' work experiences and career plans. This research examines how No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability policies affect teachers' experience of their work.

This study draws on empirical and theoretical work on the organizational structure and loose coupling of schools, workplace culture, and teachers' meaning making, to investigate how NCLB affects teachers' work experience. Specifically, I explore teachers' working conditions, career plans, and job satisfaction, as well as the strategies used by educators and schools to manage these intense changes. To investigate these processes, I use a mixed method research design. I analyze the statistical relationship between NCLB, measured by Adequate Yearly Progress and Needs Improvement status, and school working conditions using the Quality Learning and Teaching Environments survey from seven school districts throughout Georgia. I combine this analysis with data collected from thirty in-depth teacher interviews. Interviews were conducted with teachers in three schools at different NCLB sanctioning levels in a single Georgia school district. These data inform my investigation of the process and effects of policy implementation and the strategies used to manage these changes.

Results show that Needs Improvement status is intimately connected with the level at which policy is embedded in school operations and teachers' work experiences. As the intensity of school sanctions grow, teachers increasingly construct work meaning and strategies in relation to policy requirements. In the sanctioned schools, this dynamic process of implementation and response, called shifting, yields a tighter coupling of formal administrative structure and teachers' work. Conversely, established work practices and meanings in the unsanctioned school remain unhindered by policy requirements. These findings have important implications for academics studying school structure and processes as well as for policy makers seeking to improve our approach to public school accountability.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

In spring 2006, a Dekalb County school district just outside Atlanta confronted a difficult situation. Two Dekalb middle schools, Sequoyah and McNair, had experienced multiple, consecutive years of poor academic performance. Under the guidelines outlined by *No Child Left Behind*, these schools needed to improve their test scores or face serious sanctions. The Dekalb County School District was left with no other choice than to impose reconstitution after the schools failed to pull up their test scores. This means that all of the teachers at Sequoyah and McNair had to reapply for their jobs (Torres 2006).

During that same spring, I spent a lot of time thinking about events similar to those occurring at Sequoyah and McNair. I wondered what an action like reconstitution was like for teachers. Even more, I wondered how the threat of sanctions affected teachers' feelings about their work. The impact of accountability policy, and *No Child Left Behind*, was growing right in front of me. In 2006, it seemed we reached a critical point in accountability reform and major policy changes were truly affecting teachers' work. After four years of research, interviews and investigation, many of my original concerns are confirmed.

As *No Child Left Behind* (*NCLB*) celebrates its eighth anniversary, a complex situation in American public education continues to emerge. School-based accountability policy, such as *NCLB*, is exerting a new level of control over the work of schools by holding teachers, schools and school districts accountable for the academic achievement

of their students (*NCLB* 2002). This federal accountability policy mandates the measurement of academic achievement across student subgroups and the implementation of sanctions in "Needs Improvement" schools. While previous research indicates that teachers do not object to accountability measures, there are indications that this policy, and its sanctions, are "intensifying" the work of public school educators (Costigan and Crocco 2004).

The sanctions associated with *NCLB*, such as school reconstitution, are only one part of this increased intensity. In fact, there are many vivid examples that the accountability movement is growing in strength and salience for educators. For example, over the last several years, many Georgia schools have been under investigation for suspicious activity on standardized tests. The Atlanta Journal Constitution first brought these testing anomalies to public attention. In their initial report in December of 2008, they identified approximately a dozen schools that had extraordinary gains in test scores between the spring and summer Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT). After state investigation, four schools were accused of cheating (Perry 2010). By June 2009, one principal was arrested and prosecuted on a felony charge for falsifying state documents – the state standardized test responses (Torres and Badertscher 2009). A pattern of suspicious testing activity continues in the state of Georgia. In February 2010, Georgia ordered the investigation of suspicious test erasures in 191 schools. Even the task force set up to monitor the investigation has been accused of scandal. This pattern of cheating reveals just how intense the pressure to do well on standardized testing has become.

Most recently, teachers in a poorly performing Rhode Island school were fired after a failed attempt to negotiate work adjustments with the school district. Under pressure to improve student performance at Central Falls High School, the district tried to arrange additional instruction time for the students. Unable to agree on an acceptable rate of pay, the school district opted for one of the remaining federal options for reform and fired 93 teachers, administrators and staff (Henry 2010; Henry 2010b). The accountability movement in this country has a significant and intense impact on the work of public school educators.

All indicators suggest that efforts to centralize education and increase external accountability are growing. The current education reform agenda includes such programs as the Common Core State Standards Initiative (National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers 2009), tying Title I money to the adoption of national standards (Klein 2010), and merit pay programs connecting teacher pay to student test scores (e.g. Georgia Senate Bill 386). Arne Duncan, United States Secretary of Education, stated on March 3, 2010 that the current agenda aims towards a, "smarter, more targeted federal role to give states and districts as much flexibility as possible, while ensuring as much accountability as possible" (U.S. Department of Education 2010). These programs are not inherently problematic; however, implementing the programs within the United States educational structure can create difficulties. As evident by the conclusion of this dissertation, the United States' current public education context opens the door for the manipulation of reform efforts. It is this unanticipated result that raises concern and the need for research. Surprising examples such as standardized testing

scandals and school firings, illustrate that these experiences are very real in the lives of teachers and worthy of sociological inquiry.

Simultaneously, the United States is experiencing an ongoing teacher shortage. Some argue that this shortage is the result of increasing student enrollments and teacher retirements (Darling-Hammond 1984; National Commission for Excellence in Education 1983). Others suggest the cause is high rates of teacher turnover (Ingersoll 2001). It has been established that teachers' career choices are influenced by organizational factors (Ingersoll 2001). However, there are gaps when it comes to examining how the implementation and consequences of accountability policy, such as *NCLB*, affect teachers' career decision-making. An intense work environment and a growing teacher shortage produce an urgent need to understand how accountability policies affect schools as workplaces.

This dissertation seeks to address this issue. Specifically, I ask:

1) Do *No Child Left Behind* accountability policies impact the working conditions in schools? If so, how?
2) How do *No Child Left Behind* accountability policies affect teachers' job satisfaction and career plans?
3) How do educators and schools interpret and manage the experience of working under *No Child Left Behind*?

This study draws on empirical and theoretical work in sociology of education and sociology of work and organizations to examine how the environmental demands associated with *NCLB* impact schools as workplaces. This dissertation makes three theoretical and empirical contributions. First, this study contributes to work within the

sociology of education by developing a more complete understanding of the relationship between educational reform and educators' working conditions, job satisfaction and career planning. It also explicates specific mechanisms used by educators to respond to environmental influences while negotiating their own internal work demands. Second, this research draws on the empirical findings to develop a conceptual framework which illustrates how teachers make meaning of *NCLB* under distinct structural conditions. Third, this project draws together and extends theory on school structure, workplace culture, and organizational sensemaking and questions the validity of many of our long held assumptions about the structural organization of schools.

To investigate these processes, I use a mixed method research design. I conduct a quantitative analysis of The Quality Learning and Teaching Environments Initiative Survey (QLTE). This survey collected information about working conditions from educators in ten school districts throughout Georgia. I combine the QLTE with policy data from The Georgia Department of Education to examine the statistical relationship between *NCLB* sanctions and the working conditions in schools. I investigate the process and effects of policy implementation and the strategies used to manage these changes through thirty in-depth interviews with teachers across three middle schools in a single district in Georgia.

The strength of this research design is threefold. First, the mixed-method design strengthens validity via triangulation in the investigation of working conditions. Second, it contextualizes the qualitative findings within statewide trends and focuses the qualitative research process. Lastly, the design of the study enables theoretical development at both the individual and organizational levels.

In this chapter, I provide historical background on accountability and high stakes testing in the United States. This background information outlines the dominant features of *No Child Left Behind* and sets the stage for the analyses by introducing the major objectives of the policy and the tools for achieving the intended goals. After introducing the policy, I briefly outline the structure of this dissertation.

Historical Background: A Nation at Risk to *No Child Left Behind*

Robert Linn (2000) suggests that there have been five waves of education reform focused on testing and assessment. Reforms of the 1950's emphasized tests in tracking and selection. In the 1960's, these tests were used to assess program accountability. Minimum competency test programs dominated the reforms of the 1970's, while the 1980's ushered in reforms focused on school and district accountability. Lastly, Linn argues that the 1990's brought a focus on standards-based accountability systems. As we examine the historical progression of education reform, two structural patterns emerge. First, we see a pattern of what Ravitch (2000) calls "unrelenting attacks on the academic mission of schools" (p. 15). Schools become a battle ground of education reform. When new education legislation is passed, resistance to change is typical. Resistance often can lead to buffering, attempts at protection from significant changes. If those attempts fail, schools and districts can become susceptible to corruption. For example, the recent Georgia testing scandal illustrates how schools, unable to avoid the penalties of poor performance, corrupted the test results in an effort to protect the core of their work. Second, there are also examples of the limited federal authority over education in the United States context. While this is not surprising, it does illustrate the federal

government's reliance on rhetoric to encourage particular reform efforts. With few exceptions, like Title I funding, the federal government traditionally held little actual authority in education. *NCLB* changed this dynamic considerably.

The journey to *NCLB* begins with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act passed in 1965. This act punctuated a period in the United States' education reform history when the prevailing concern was educational equity. These equity issues were indicative of the political climate at that time and dominated the political landscape, particularly Brown vs. Board of Education of 1954 and a decade later, the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The events of the early 1980's brought the United States squarely into a period of accountability reform. While efforts at accountability had been underway for some time, these efforts focused on the integration of scientific approaches to education (Kuchapski 2001) to the achievement of compensatory education (Linn 2000). These objectives of accountability shifted in the 1980's. In fact, there was a growing concern that the proposed solutions to educational inequalities were undermining students' academic performance. This concern peaked with the release of *A Nation At Risk* (National Commission for Excellence in Education 1983). The release of this report propelled accountability back into public education and the public eye.

A Nation At Risk was the final report prepared in response to a federal commission investigation of the state of American education. Drawing heavily on newly available international comparative data, the report connected the United States' lagging competitive edge to inadequacies in the public education system. Most notably, the report decried the "rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and

a people" (National Commission for Excellence in Education 1983). The primary culprits for ineffective schools included: leveled teacher expectations; insufficient time spent on academics; and a diluted, fragmented curriculum. Placing American achievement statistics against those of other nations led the authors to conclude that our, "once unchallenged pre-eminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world" (National Commission for Excellence in Education 1983).

Weiss (2003) argues that this report, despite its weaknesses, did draw attention to the importance of educational policy and led to comprehensive school reform efforts. Particularly, *A Nation At Risk* spurred the academic standards movement and led to a focus on school accountability. A *Nation At Risk* provided the impetus for educational restructuring in the standard-raising movement of the 1980's and 1990's. Serious reform efforts by a variety of organizations, businesses, and academia attempted to address this crisis. Two reform efforts responding to the education crisis were Clinton's *Goals 2000* and Outcome-Based Education.

Outcome-Based Education is a reform model popularized during the early 1990's as one way to prepare students for work in a modern society. This model was implemented in school districts across the nation in an effort to develop specific learning outcomes, or standards, accurate assessments, and to hold students and teachers accountable for achieving specified goals (Brogan 1994). *Goals 2000*, Clinton's primary education legislation passed in 1994, also embraced this approach. *Goals 2000* funded the development of state standards and assessments. While the policy also authorized the establishment of a federal board to review national and state standards, the board was

abolished by a Republican congress in 1994 (Ravitch 2000). *Goals 2000* and Outcome-Based Education were two efforts that increased our reliance on testing, academic standards, school choice, and the dissolution and reconstitution of ineffective schools (Schneider and Kessler 2007). It was estimated that just one year after the release of *A Nation At Risk*, there were already 275 state task forces generating reform recommendations (Glasman and Glasman 1990). This was a period marked by state-level, standards-based reform in response to federal encouragement.

The 1990's continued much of this trend. With the first four reauthorizations, the primary focus of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* was to provide assistance to students with low-income and poor academic achievement using funds provided under Title I of the law. In 1994, however, the *Improving America's School Act* (IASA) gave the standards-based reform efforts some teeth. Previously, *Goals 2000* encouraged the voluntary development and adoption of state standards. *IASA* actually required content and performance standards and complementary assessments be implemented for students served with government funds. Prior efforts to develop consistent standards for all students, Title I or not, meant *IASA* connected federal funding with standards development and assessment for all students in all states (Schneider and Kessler 2007). *No Child Left Behind* also embraced standards-based reform, but ushered in a new wave of federal involvement into the work of schools.

No Child Left Behind and the Teaching Environment

President George W. Bush signed the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (*NCLB*) into law on January 8, 2002. With the passage of *NCLB*, the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965 (ESEA) was reauthorized, yet was quite different than previous reauthorizations. *NCLB* was the first reauthorization to require that a single statewide accountability system be implemented in all schools and districts (*NCLB* 2002). With this legislation, the relationship between state and local educational agencies and the federal government fundamentally changed.

NCLB's goal is to improve achievement and educational equity in the United States by reducing the achievement gaps between traditionally advantaged and disadvantaged groups. To achieve this goal, *NCLB* holds schools accountable for producing gains in academic achievement among all racial, ethnic, special education, limited English proficiency, and low-income subgroups of a school. The final goal, as outlined by *NCLB*, is to achieve 100% proficiency in reading and mathematics in all subgroups by the academic year 2013-2014 (*NCLB* 2002). Accountability is only one piece of *NCLB*. The policy also outlines additional state and district "flexibility" in the allocation of federal education funds, support for scientifically proven education programs and practices, and increased parental options through school choice and supplemental services for schools that are not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (*NCLB* 2002).

NCLB creates a complex web of directives for states, districts, schools, and teachers with the potential to address long-standing issues of educational inequality.

However, as research on the implementation and effects of *NCLB* mount, it becomes apparent that there are significant unanticipated consequences for teachers and working conditions in schools. The direct impact on teachers and working conditions derives from three primary components of the policy: high-stakes, test-based accountability; school sanctions and supplemental services; and the highly qualified teacher requirements.

Accountability

Accountability in schools is certainly not a new concept. While the use of testing to assess student competency has been around for years, newer standards and accountability movements during the last several decades examine the quality and impact of schools on student outcomes. These accountability systems were transformed from exclusively state-driven initiatives into federally mandated programs with the passage of *NCLB*. Historically, state-based accountability systems define standards, develop tests to assess performance, and identify sets of expectations for schools (Chubb 2005). This federal accountability plan, unlike previous state systems, set the goal of 100% proficiency in reading and math in all subgroups by the academic year 2013-2014 for all states. Then, *NCLB* gave states control over the development of assessments, setting annual proficiency levels, and outlining the rates of progress necessary to meet this federal objective.

Accountability movements rest on the notion that schools transform inputs into outputs through multiple production processes. Hoffer (2000: 530) states,

> Accountability systems are intended to work as quality control mechanisms. In the current U.S. policy context, they can be viewed as an alternative to the kinds of market controls that an expanded system of choice might provide. The accountability system sends codified signals (e.g. test scores and dropout rates) about school effectiveness to education administrators and to external constituencies.

In this quote, Hoffer explains that accountability systems are implemented to control the quality of education by making the results of these production processes transparent. *NCLB* codified this "quality control mechanism" into law in an attempt to reduce the persistent achievement gap in the United States. This solution to the achievement gap rests on the assumption that deficiencies within schools (teachers, principals, teaching mechanisms, etc.) are the cause of achievement inequality. Thus, the logical reform from this perspective is to hold schools and districts accountable for student performance via sanctions.

While schools and school districts are held accountable for an extremely optimistic academic standard (100 percent proficiency), what makes *NCLB's* accountability plan different from previous initiatives is that school and school district reports must be organized to show test scores across various subgroups. This major change requires states to test and report achievement for all students in every district and is considered one of the most positive outcomes of *NCLB*. Despite this positive aspect of *NCLB's* accountability initiatives, the mechanisms used to implement this system have produced some problems for teachers and changed working conditions in schools.

First, there has been considerable inconsistency in the development of state accountability plans. While *NCLB* increased the amount of federal oversight, the responsibility of developing standards and assessments was left under the purview of the

states. This division of labor resulted in several problems that affect teachers. In 2002, when *NCLB* was enacted, only 19 states had created standards and assessment systems to meet the expectations of the 1994 *Improving America's Schools Act*. Thus, states that were less prepared struggled to create and submit accountability plans by *NCLB's* May 1, 2003 deadline. In addition, the policy required states to define their proficiency levels and set annual performance expectations. This task resulted in broad inconsistencies between states. Some states set their initial standards low to ensure success, while other states did not. The result was little comparability across states in both proficiency definitions and annual performance goals. This inconsistency led then Secretary of Education Rodney Paige to accuse schools of trying to "game the system" (Paige 2002). It was also difficult for teachers to quickly implement these inconsistent plans. In many cases, teachers actually ended up working under dual accountability systems. In an effort to comply with federal requirements, many states layered their new federal accountability plans on top of existing state plans. These plans often adopted quite distinct methods of assessment, standards, and expectations thus creating a complicated situation that teachers were left to decipher (Sunderman et al. 2005).

Second, there is considerable debate over the relative impact schools can have on student achievement even in the best of circumstances. Research in the sociology of education has shown that the largest predictors of student achievement in the United States are home background effects such as socioeconomic status and peer group influences. These findings suggest that the relative impact of schools on student achievement is less than the factors that lie outside of the control of schools, and thus teachers (see Riordan 2004 for review of this literature). In contrast, recent research to

evaluate the impact of state accountability systems shows that student achievement outcomes are related to the quality of the school system and teachers (Haycock 2001; Peske and Haycock 2006; Riordan 2004).[1] This contradiction in the literature lays an interesting backdrop for further assessment of how *NCLB's* high-stakes accountability plan impacts teachers and their work experience. Accountability systems assert that schools do play an important role in student achievement and that this contribution should be measured and used to improve the effectiveness of schools. What remains to be investigated is if teachers feel that they are being held responsible for something outside their control or if they value the standards and expectations being set by the recent accountability initiatives. It is also possible that teachers' perceptions will vary depending on the organizational conditions, climate, and composition.

Third, due to the measurement of subgroups rather than individual students, teachers are not able to fully assess how much of the improvement was the result of actual "value-added" by the teacher and school. These factors may have an impact of teachers' perceptions concerning their own personal accountability (Guthrie 2005; Hanushek 2005).

Lastly, the high-stakes testing involved with current accountability plans raises several problematic issues for teachers. Much debate exists around the extent to which test preparation is pulling time away from other curriculum and reducing the existing

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[1] This is part of a large area of research examining effective schools. Effective schools research confronts the work by Coleman et al (1966), Jencks (1972) and others that argues that schools contribute relatively little to student achievement after home background effects have been controlled. Effective schools research asserts that schools and teachers are important factors in student achievement and that these resources vary significantly from school to school. For a review of the literature, see Riordan 2004. For an introduction to research on the impact of high-quality teaching, see Haycock 2001.

curriculum into "scripted sound-bites" that teachers deliver (Costigan and Crocco 2004). How this increased emphasis on high-stakes testing under *NCLB* impacts teachers' career plans and satisfaction is yet to be fully determined. Not only are the stakes high for students, but with *NCLB* the stakes have also increased for teachers. The provisions outlined by *NCLB* specify that failure to meet state proficiency standards result in mandated school sanctions to "improve" the effectiveness of that school in the deficient area. The impact of the sanctions attached to *NCLB* on teachers' experience and how they make sense of their work is one of the primary factors to be examined in this research.

Sanctions and Supplemental Services

In accordance with *NCLB*, each state was required to develop and implement an accountability plan. Each year all public schools utilize state tests for reading, mathematics, and as of 2007 science, to ascertain if the school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is a measurement of year-to-year student achievement on the state examinations in each of the subgroups specified by *NCLB* (low-income, race and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and limited English proficiency). States, as a part of their accountability plans, are required to specify annual measurable objectives for each of these subgroups, and are able to determine and report if they have met these objectives. If a school or school district is unsuccessful at meeting AYP for two consecutive years, the school or district is labeled as "in need of improvement", or "Needs Improvement" for short, and becomes subject to a series of sanctions.

Assistance given to Needs Improvement schools is part of a larger school improvement plan designed to enhance performance in the subject areas or subgroups that resulted in the failure of AYP. Once a school is labeled Needs Improvement, sanctions are imposed, beginning with mandatory school choice options and increased professional development for teachers and the principal. At least ten percent of Title I funds must be used for professional development in Needs Improvement schools. If the school fails to meet AYP for a third year, then new sanctions are imposed. First, students from low-income families are given the option to received supplemental services from a public or private sector provider approved by the state. These services are paid for with school Title I funds. Following the fourth year, "corrective actions" must be taken. Corrective actions may include: replacing the school staff, implementing a new curriculum, decreasing management authority at the school, appointing outside experts to advise the school, extending the school day or year, or reorganizing the school internally. Similar corrective actions can be imposed on a district that fails AYP for a fourth year with the addition of reducing or deferring programmatic and administrative funds and abolishing the school district. After five years of failure to meet AYP, a school must be restructured by the school district. Restructuring can include: reopening the school as a charter school, replacing all or most of the school staff connected with the failure, or giving authority over the school to the state or a private company. Throughout each stage, all schools labeled as in need of improvement are entitled to technical assistance provided by the state and school district (Essex 2006; *NCLB* 2002).

Understanding the effects of the sanctions imposed on Needs Improvement schools is vital for examining the impact *NCLB* has on teachers and school working

conditions. Some evidence has demonstrated that accountability systems without sanctions are not as effective at improving student achievement as those with sanctions (Hanushek 2005). Indeed there is some evidence to suggest that strong accountability systems actually reduce teacher turnover. The argument in this research is that a well-defined, goal-oriented school improves the productivity and working conditions in the school thereby reducing turnover (Carnoy and Loeb 2003). In contrast, evidence that the sanctions associated with *NCLB* are producing a demoralized workforce and increasing turnover is mounting (Southeast Center for Teaching Quality 2004; Sirotonik 2004; Sunderman, Kim, and Orfield 2005). What remains to be studied is how sanctions reshape the working conditions in schools and impact teachers' career plans and job satisfaction.

Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements

The final piece of the legislation that is particularly problematic for teachers is the Highly Qualified Teacher requirements. This component of the policy required all teachers to be highly qualified by the end of the 2005-2006 academic year (*NCLB* 2002). Currently, all new teachers hired by Title I schools must be highly qualified (Essex 2006). To be highly qualified a teacher must have an undergraduate degree, be certified by a state-sanctioned program, and demonstrate subject matter competence in their core instructional area (*NCLB* 2002; The Teaching Commission 2004). What makes this piece of *NCLB* innovative is the requirement that teachers demonstrate subject matter competence. To demonstrate competence, new elementary and secondary teachers take a test in their primary instructional area. More experienced teachers may either take a test

or meet the state designed high, objective, uniform, state standard of evaluation, otherwise called HOUSSE (Moe 2005). HOUSSE provisions allow increased flexibility for states to define the requirements for veteran teachers.

Similar to the underlying assumption of the accountability plan, the assumption behind these requirements is that teacher quality is critical to student learning. A growing body of literature demonstrates that high-quality teachers do influence learning and help to explain increases in student test scores (Darling-Hammond 2000; Darling-Hammond and Youngs 2002; King Rice 2003; Peske and Haycock 2006; Wayne and Youngs 2003). While this is in stark contrast to early studies on teacher quality (e.g. Coleman et al. 1966), the perception influencing policy is that teacher quality does matter, particularly in subject matter competence.

While the mandate itself seems straightforward, the implementation is challenging. Moe (2005) asserts that three primary problems have surfaced during the implementation of the highly qualified teacher requirement: measurability, politics, and information. Moe suggests that this requirement has been extremely problematic because states are unable to accurately measure the qualifications of their teachers, are affected by strong state political groups such as teachers unions, and cannot gather and report accurate information on teacher qualifications from an exceedingly decentralized school district. In addition to these problems, the federal mandate built in so much flexibility with the HOUSSE provision, and continues to build in flexibility for rural areas and hard-to-fill subjects, that considerable corruption of the intent of the highly qualified teacher requirement resulted. For example, many states are not truly requiring subject area competence from the veteran teachers in an effort to safeguard their jobs (Moe 2005).

These factors are increasingly complicated by state and district level policy environments and local labor conditions, both of which can strain the retention of quality teachers.

The highly qualified teacher component of *NCLB* aims to resolve the persistent achievement gap among advantaged and disadvantaged student populations by leveling the distribution of qualified teachers. Thus, this initiative has important implications for teachers. First, the requirement outlined in *NCLB* may be understood as an affront on their professional expertise, particularly experienced teachers. Veteran faculties are being sent the message that their experience is insufficient and may interpret this as an attempt to "deprofessionalize" them. As Lortie noted in his seminal study of teachers, teachers feel that their experience is what makes them legitimate professional teachers (Lortie 1975). *NCLB* emphasizes subject matter knowledge over years of experience; however, the distortion of the policy in the HOUSSE standards has sent a different message saying that in most states experience does count.

Second, while the goal of having a highly-qualified teacher in every classroom is admirable, research shows that there is a persistent teacher quality drain plaguing schools serving disadvantaged populations. Sunderman and Kim (2005b) show that teacher qualifications are related to school poverty level, minority enrollments, and the number of years the school failed to meet AYP. These findings link *NCLB* accountability and highly qualified teacher initiatives. Not only do these two characteristics seem to go hand in hand, but they also magnify the problems of teacher attrition and mobility. Sunderman and Kim (2005b) find that the sanctions attached to *NCLB* actually encourage teachers to leave schools that are not performing adequately, thus creating an even more disparate distribution of highly qualified teachers on the basis of accountability

performance. These intersecting effects makes understanding *NCLB's* impact on teachers' work experiences even more crucial to the future of our public school system.

Dissertation Overview

This dissertation explores how *NCLB* impacts teachers' work experiences in six subsequent chapters. In the second chapter, I present a theoretical framework for understanding how teachers make sense of their work under distinct *NCLB* structural conditions. I build this framework drawing on theory of the structure of schools, workplace culture within schools, and organizational identity and sensemaking. Constructing this framework across levels of analysis allows me to link macro structures with micro-level processes. Specifically, I explore how dual perspectives on the structure of schools support the generation of a unique workplace culture. This culture, in turn, frames the sensemaking process for teachers and highlights the importance of identity and work meaning across several domains.

Chapter three contains a detailed overview of the research design, data, and analysis. Utilizing a mixed method approach compliments the multi-level theoretical framework. Quantitative survey data offers insight into broader patterns of relationships among *NCLB* and teachers working conditions. To answer questions of process, I conduct in-depth interviews with 30 educators in 3 Georgia middle schools.

In chapter four, I develop a conceptual model of schools under *NCLB*. Drawing on the data collected from teachers, this model illustrates a dynamic process of sensemaking occurring within schools under *NCLB*. Specifically, I demonstrate how the

policy environment with the varying intensity of sanctions shapes how teachers make sense of and respond to policy.

Chapter five presents the detailed analysis of working conditions drawing on both quantitative and qualitative analyses. In accordance with the schools position along the sanctioning spectrum, teachers experience different working conditions inside the school. In response, teachers construct work meaning and develop adaptive strategies in relation to their policy position. These findings reveal the *NCLB* spurs active change within schools producing both positive and negative outcomes for teachers.

In chapter six, I assess the impact of *NCLB* on teachers' job satisfaction and career plans using in-depth interviews. Job satisfaction and career plans are windows to explore the short and long-term consequences of *NCLB* for teachers. The data illustrate how school position, relative to policy, is a vital factor in teachers' construction of job satisfaction and career plans. Similar to working conditions, teachers actively integrate policy into these aspects of their work to varying degrees as a function of the school sanction intensity.

The seventh, and final chapter, summarizes the empirical findings and draws them back to the conceptual and theoretical frameworks. I also discuss the primary findings and implications of this work. In brief, these findings lead to the extension of dominant theoretical frames on the nature of school structure to more fully incorporate current environmental context brought about by *NCLB*. I also outline the future directions for this research.

Chapter 2: Theory

This dissertation investigates the impact of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) accountability policy on teachers' experience of their work. Specifically, I ask:

1) Do *No Child Left Behind* accountability policies impact the working conditions in schools? If so, how?
2) How do *No Child Left Behind* accountability policies affect teachers' job satisfaction and career plans?
3) How do educators and schools interpret and manage the experience of working under *No Child Left Behind*?

Prior to answering these questions, I first provide a theoretical framework for the exploration of these issues. The development of the theory on schools and schooling is vast. This expansive literature produces abundant choices for how I might approach my research questions. It is possible to approach the issue from the individual level and look at the micro processes resulting from accountability. One option would be to start at the meso level and look only at management of policy demands by school level administrators. Another alternative would be to examine political structure and organization involved in the production of accountability policy. This study, both theoretically and empirically, draws on the strength of all these levels of analysis. I build a theoretical framework for understanding the experiences of teachers that embeds our understanding of individual behaviors and perceptions within the structural and cultural context. Specifically, I weave together structural accounts of educational organization

with theory on culture context and sensemaking to understand teachers' personal work experiences under *NCLB*. I make three primary theoretical assertions:

1) The structural organization of the United States' public school system contains an inherent tension arising from structural position. This tension results in dual perspectives by teachers and administrators on the nature of school structure.
2) The workplace culture of teachers, which is intimately connected to teachers' structural perspective, provides a frame for the crafting of work meaning and response strategies.
3) *NCLB*, by attempting to penetrate the work of schools through sanctions, began a process of drawing together formal administrative structures with the core work of teachers. To the extent that the tighter coupling is occurring in a school, it disrupts work processes and the dominant cultural frame. Both of these shifts prompt teachers to craft new work strategies and meanings. As strategies and meanings are crafted, teachers' understandings and actions serve to reproduce loose coupling or support efforts at tight coupling.

I introduce this framework in two stages. First, I review the current theory on the structure of public schools. Here I illustrate how organizational position conditions the perspective of teachers and administrators on the structure of schooling. Second, having glimpsed inside the dual views of school structure, I explain how these conditions shape the development of a unique workplace culture within schools. Taken together,

workplace culture and structural conditions set the stage for an exploration of how teachers make sense of their work under *No Child Left Behind*.

Structure of schools

Schools are best conceptualized as open systems (Scott 2003). In this formulation schools can be viewed as, "…congeries of interdependent flows and activities linking shifting coalitions of participants embedded in wider material-resource and institutional environments" (Scott 2003: 29). By definition then, the work of schools is a product of, and participant in, the organizational environment. In this process of organizing, the interests and objectives present in the environment consistently penetrate the work of schools. Never is this interaction between environment and schools as visible as when new reform policies appear.

Accountability policy, and *NCLB* specifically, aims to raise academic achievement to a minimum standard and reduce the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students by holding schools, school districts, and states accountable for student performance. To attain these goals, accountability systems are designed to evaluate the effectiveness of schools and teachers using various measures of student performance. These systems rely on students' scores on standardized tests to signal the level of school effectiveness to education administrators and community members (Hoffer 2000; *NCLB* 2001). If these test scores do not demonstrate sufficient academic achievement for all students, otherwise called Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), then the solution is to address the continued problems of schools and teachers by

"tightening the ship" through the use of sanctions (Ingersoll 2003). Sanctions can include school choice, supplemental services, and school restructuring.

This approach seems logical given the highly decentralized and complex structure of schooling in the United States. The structure of schooling is based on the need to efficiently educate large numbers of children. To complete this task, rationalized bureaucracy would seem the best organizational form from an administrative viewpoint (Bidwell 1965; Ingersoll 2001; Weber 1946). With this organizational structure, academic tasks and assessments must be standardized and the work of teachers regulated. However, for many who study the structure of schools, this vision of school organization is at odds with how teachers' view their task. According to several classic works on teaching, the practice of educating children does not lend itself to highly regulated processes (Bidwell 1965; Lortie 1975, Waller 1932). In this view, teaching requires fluidity. Inside the classroom, teachers are thought to be most effective when they operate with relative autonomy and are able to adapt to the differing needs and demands of individual students.

Not only does the process of teaching require autonomy and flexibility, according to these accounts, but the structure of schools also isolates teachers in classrooms. Lortie (1975: 23) states, "the subsequent work relationships of teachers have been marked by more separation than by interdependence; most teachers still spend most of their time working alone with a group of students in a bounded area". Thus, the American structure seems to be composed of two sets of structural needs, that of bureaucratic regulation by administrators and autonomy by teachers.

The typical response to resolve this contradiction in structural needs, as theorized by the open systems perspective, is the loose coupling of the technological core, teaching, from the structure of schooling. Bidwell (1965) suggests that this structural looseness allows teachers and schools to exercise considerable autonomy while the district and state systems continue to be hierarchically organized. By loosely connecting these components of the organization, the school is better able to manage environmental demands without having to make excessive changes to the technological core. This process may provide stability to the organization. Considerable research has identified schools as the ideal typical, loosely coupled system (for example Dreeben 1973; Elmore 2000; Meyer and Rowan 1978).

One of the strategies to maintain this loose coupling is organizational buffering. Thompson (1967) first articulated the concept of organizational buffering. He proposed, "under norms of rationality, organizations seek to buffer environmental influences by surrounding their technical cores with input and output components" (p. 20). More recent research in this area has tweaked the definition of buffering slightly. Lynn (2005: 38) states, "buffering is the regulation and/or insulation of organizational processes, functions, entities, or individuals from the effects of environmental uncertainty or scarcity." Both of these definitions suggest that organizations try to protect their central tasks from environmental uncertainty. Some argue that the structural looseness maintained by buffering strategies will prevent attempts to increase external control from affecting the instructional core of teachers' work (Meyer and Rowan 1983). However, *NCLB* has ushered in a new phase of environmental uncertainty.

More than any other policy, *No Child Left Behind* diminished the ability to separate the core of teaching from administrative demands. *NCLB*, like many of its reform predecessors, attempts to influence student achievement by regulating the activities of states, districts, and schools. In order to meet the challenge of improving student performance, *NCLB* actively attempts to gain some control over the internal activities of teaching. However, unlike many of the previous reforms, this policy seems to be much more effective at coupling the technical core of schools and administrative structure.

Despite *NCLB*'s endeavor to tightly couple teaching and administrative control, this separation remains a key factor in the recent literature on the structure of schools. In fact, the literature suggests that one's perspective of the structure of schools is determined by their own position in the system (Ingersoll 2005). From an administrative standpoint, where schools are compared to a rationalized bureaucracy, schools appear disorganized. This perspective is called the *school disorganization perspective* and is characterized by a lack of control over the internal operations of schools.

From the disorganization perspective, increasing control over school processes can rectify problems originating in schools, whether academic or social. In other words, to fix problems of education, this view suggests "tightening the ship" (Ingersoll 2005, 2003; Rowan 1990). For example, current government initiatives to increase teacher accountability through the use of high-stakes testing and teacher quality initiatives all respond to the assumption that teachers are relatively autonomous in their classrooms. Certainly the "view from the top" reveals thousands of autonomous teachers in individual classrooms responsible for one of the most important tasks in society. The enormity of

this job, and concern over the ability to maintain standards in education, helps explain the federal and state governments' concern over increased accountability. Current accountability policy is written from the disorganization perspective.

While the view "from above" may paint schools as structurally disorganized, teachers and some reform parties have a different perspective. The *disempowerment perspective*, or view "from below", suggests that schools seem to be ideal examples of hierarchically and bureaucratically controlled organizations.[2] According to this perspective, teachers feel disempowered since they perceive themselves to be overly regulated and subject to top-down authority structures (Ingersoll 2005, 2003; Rowan 1990). For example, teachers dealing with the day-to-day demands of working with children feel enormous pressure to meet bureaucratic expectations. On top of the overwhelming amount of paperwork associated with instruction, student records, and parent involvement, teachers also manage pressures to increase the performance of their students. Against popular assumptions, research shows that teachers do not object to accountability measures (Sunderman, Kim, and Orfield 2005). In fact, teachers agree that they are responsible for improving student achievement and those teachers who are unable to improve achievement should leave the profession. However, teachers feel an exorbitant amount of pressure from the current sanctions associated with accountability measures (Costigan and Crocco 2004; Sunderman, Kim, and Orfield 2005).

From the disempowerment perspective, accountability policy initiatives are perceived as a bureaucratic intrusion into the classroom designed to regulate class

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[2] Several variations of this perspective exist, each asserting that a different party in the school is disempowered: students, parents, principals or teachers (Ingersoll 2005, 2003).

activities. In this way, current accountability movements can further disempower teachers, possibly affecting work satisfaction and career decisions. In contrast to the disorganization perspective, the solution to disempowerment is not to "tighten the ship", but to decentralize control over school processes. This could take the form of increasing teacher autonomy and professional status while freeing teachers from the burden of bureaucracy (Ingersoll 2003). Teachers interpret their work from the disempowerment perspective.

Debates arising from these differences in perspectives are crucial for interpreting the impact of educational policy on teachers. Each of these competing views on school organization offers a way to understand the implementation of policy and teachers' responses to the changes mandated by reform. Operating from the disorganization perspective, we understand how administrators conclude they must increase control over the core activities of teachers in order to meet federal and state mandates. The job of organizing large numbers of autonomous teachers towards this central task begins to feel like "herding cats". The disempowerment perspective however, creates a very different view of the same goal of improving student achievement. From below, teachers struggle to accommodate accountability expectations while also managing the diverse backgrounds and disadvantages of their students and maintaining a sense of professional control over their classrooms.

The effort from below is complicated by a considerable amount of uncertainty in the "technical core" of schools. This uncertainty is a continual and dominant feature of teachers' work. The "clients" are varied and the "technology" is complex, indeterminate, and interactional. The "products" of schooling are both student academic achievement

and social development. In other words, the product of schooling is academic knowledge and skills as well as the "'production' of adults from children" (Ingersoll 2003: 140). This complexity of the core tasks of schooling makes management of additional demands even more important.

Teachers are particularly challenged by their inability to control achievement differences arising from variation in home background (such as socioeconomic status, parental support, and special needs students' ability levels). While the debate continues over the effects of schools, considerable research demonstrates that many of the causes of educational inequalities lie outside of the school system (Coleman 1966; Entwisle and Alexander 1992, 1995; Gamoran 1995; Jencks et al. 1972). However, most education reform, including *NCLB*, focuses on schools and teachers. This is a reasonable response by educational policy makers, given they embrace the "view from above" and their realm of control is limited to this particular institution. While efforts to resolve educational inequalities originating, or reinforced, within schools are extremely important, their effectiveness is hampered by the strength of broader societal inequalities.[3] Inside the classroom, teachers struggle to overcome the strength of home background to improve student learning and meet *NCLB* expectations.

Teachers' work experiences are fundamentally shaped by the assumptions arising from these competing views of educational organization. Policy is designed from above and implemented from below. While both perspectives embrace the same desired

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[3] Ironically, in more centralized and highly regulated systems, the relative power of schools to resolve educational inequalities increases (e.g. Park 2006, Heyneman and Loxley 1983). The United States' educational structure may actually render attempts at rectifying educational inequalities by restructuring only educational practices and processes less effective. Regardless, such efforts are a necessary and important part of the ongoing attempts to reform U.S. education.

outcome, improved student achievement, their structural perspectives create distinct paths to accomplish this goal.

Linking School Structure, Workplace Culture, and Teachers

This research focuses on how teachers understand and make meaning of their work within these dual structural perspectives and conditions instigated by policy. The theoretical approach to this research assumes that structure, culture, meaning, and action are linked in real and dynamic ways within the school context. Substantial bodies of literature probe this assumption (e.g. Giddens 1976, 1981; Orlikowski 2000; Sewell 1992). Structurational and practice theory focus on drawing out the connection across these multiple levels of the social system. The literature illustrates the many ways individual and collective action are in fact a process of structural enactment. This perspective makes structure part of an active practice (Orlikowski 2000). Rather than structure acting on individuals and organizations, structure becomes part of the action occurring among and within. For example, the dual structural perspectives on schools are enacted in the process of policy development, implementation, and even in how teachers make sense of these conditions in their own work.

As structures are enacted, what is the enduring effect on the structures? This is in fact a dynamic process. In other words, as individuals enact structure, in this case the structural perspectives and conditions of *NCLB*, they in turn either reinforce or transform the structural arrangement. An excellent formulation of this dynamism, is found in Giddens' duality of structure (1976, 1981). This is not the same duality as explained

above in the case of schools, but rather the affirmation of a recursive relationship. Sewell (1992) summarizes Giddens' conception of this duality. "Structure shapes people's practices, but it is also people's practices that constitute and reproduce structures. In this view of things, human agency and structure, far from being opposed, in fact presuppose each other" (Sewell 1992: 4).

Others have explicated the nature of this process. Orlikowski (2000) extends structuration theory by incorporating a practice theory lens. Drawing on this theoretical perspective, she illustrates how humans enact emergent structures through repeated use of technology. This in turn leads to the reconstitution of structure. Put more simply, as people use technology they constitute and reconstitute the structure of technology use.

Yanow (1996) applies this frame to the study of policy. Taking an interpretive approach, she suggests that all public policies are embedded with meanings. As the policies are implemented, these meanings are open to interpretation by the "policy targets." Through this interpretive process the policy becomes a component in the meaning making and action of those interpreting the policy "text". The interpretations prompt actions which then become new "texts" interpretable by others. In other words, as teachers make meaning of the policy and develop responses, their responses inform the meaning and structure of the policy.

One fascinating element connecting these dynamic processes is culture. Similar to the enactment of structure, Sewell (1992) asserts that "culture is a form of structured practice." Swidler (2001) extends this line of thinking to offer a theoretical frame for understanding how culture can be a structured practice. She states (2001: 76), "cultural practices are action, action organized according to some more or less visible logic, which

the analyst need only to describe." The visible logic in this study begins with the tension created by the structural organization of schools. These tensions support and develop the cultural content of schooling. Both the structural organization of schools and the cultural composition of teachers work are enacted as teachers navigate *NCLB*. The next section explores the workplace culture of teachers in more detail.

The Workplace Culture and Meaning Making of Teachers

Those who study work and occupations describe the teaching job as feminized, poorly compensated, high demand, and of questionable professional status (e.g. Allen 1993; Williams 1995).[4] With all these negative characteristics, one might wonder why teachers enter the occupation. Research shows that many teachers, similar to people in other service-oriented work, are motivated by an altruistic ethic (Farkas, Johnson, and Foleno 2000; Ingersoll 2003; Lortie 1975; National Education Association 1996). This means that many teachers enter the occupation in an effort to serve others and improve society with less concern for pay and status.

As previously discussed, this desire to serve others generally takes place in a highly isolated environment. Teachers primarily work in classrooms with little interaction with one another. Referred to as the "egg crate" model, this organizational structure isolates teachers that entered the occupation in order to serve others. As Ingersoll (2003: 170) states, "Therein lies an irony – teachers serve others and serve

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[4] Compared with other occupations in the United States, teaching is relatively well compensated. However, pay scales vary dramatically between states. For example, average salary in Georgia public schools in 2007 was $52,537 while in New York pay averaged $64,336 (NCES 2009b).

society, but they often do so alone." The unique workplace culture of teaching is shaped by this unusual combination of teacher traits and school structure. Ingersoll (2003) summarizes it best,

> Given the combination of a highly altruistic workforce, a highly isolating environment, and high demands, it is not surprising that one of the most pervasive aspects of the culture of teaching is an ethos of individual responsibility and accountability…Alone in the world of their own classroom, it is up to each teacher to make a success or failure of the job (170).

This sense of individual responsibility and accountability suggests that teachers take on the task of trying to educate large numbers of students with relatively little assistance. The result of this ethos is that the individual teacher feels largely responsible for the success of their classroom, even without external accountability measures.

Personal accountability and service orientation are two elements among many in a cultural repertoire, or "toolkit", from which teachers draw to construct their work (Swidler 1986). The structural stability created by effective loose coupling has protected the contents of the cultural toolkit from undergoing significant change as environmental conditions shift. Thus, this stability has led to a culturally embedded meaning of work for teachers that has endured, despite previous reform efforts, and is largely taken for granted. Swidler (1986) states, "as certain cultural resources become more central in a given life, and become more fully invested with meaning, they anchor the strategies of action people have developed" (p. 281). Teachers have imbued the cultural components of their toolkit with great meaning and have "anchored" their strategies in these cultural understandings.

NCLB, unlike any previous reform effort, is disrupting the stability of this relationship through its use of sanctions in Needs Improvement schools. *NCLB* is in the process of drawing the core work of teachers into greater alignment with formal administrative structures. As this structural shift occurs, efforts to buffer the work of teachers with loose coupling grow ineffective, particularly in sanctioned schools. With this protection waning, the shifting structural conditions are weakening the ability of teachers to draw on the existing set of cultural tools, or even more, rendering these "strategies of action" ineffective. Teachers working in schools are left to construct new work meanings as the organization, and the individual members of that organization, struggle to adapt.

Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001: 179) demonstrate, "The social context provides employees with the materials they use to build the experience of work" (Salancik and Pfeffer 1978). Teachers' social context is composed of both the framework created by structure and the workplace culture. Structurally, Dreeban (1973), reminds us that, "the central classroom activities of teachers—instruction and classroom management—are not primarily determined by high level policy decisions; they cannot be viewed as 'following orders'" (p. 453). His assessment of the structural looseness in schools asserts that teachers work experiences are largely separate from policy initiatives. This pattern of separation is particularly evident in the dual perspectives on educational structure. While these competing perspectives on educational structure still dominate our understanding of the schooling process, there is reason to believe that *NCLB*, with its unprecedented increase in federal input into school operations, has changed the nature of this relationship.

With the passage of *NCLB* there was a marked surge in the demand for accountability within schools. In an open system, boundaries are not firm. This policy is penetrating the blurry boundaries of schools and challenging the buffering strategies used to loosely couple school technologies in the past (Lynn 2005; Scott 2003; Thompson 1967). Specifically, *NCLB* requires that the technological core be made more apparent to the public "clients" and that teachers are held responsible for the uncertain "products" of schooling. By drawing the actual work occurring within schools closer to administrative structures and control, *NCLB* produces a tighter coupling between these dual spheres. In addition, the dynamic link between structure, culture, meaning, and action directs us to examine the ways in which teachers' meaning making and actions contribute to coupling efforts. As teachers enact this policy, their own actions and understandings also serve to either reproduce or transform the existing structural relationships. In other words, efforts at tight or loose coupling are reinforced by the meanings and actions of teachers as well as policy makers and administration.

The dynamic process by which *NCLB* results in tighter coupling is occurring in all states and districts; however, this process is best examined in schools undergoing sanctions. In these contexts, which are actively experiencing attempts to control the operations at the technical core, the penetration of boundaries, ineffectiveness of buffering, and response strategies are heightened. By looking across schools at different levels of sanctions, this coupling process embedded within the dual perspectives on school structure is revealed.

Culturally, as the structural conditions shift, this impedes teachers' ability to rely on prior strategies of action. Teachers must construct new work meaning drawing on the

shifting structural and cultural conditions. As discussed above, the culture of teaching embraces a view of teachers work dominated by altruism, service to society, concern for children, and an ethos of individual responsibility. All of these distinctive cultural elements are focused on the intrinsic value of the work. In fact, one could argue that the culture of teaching generates an understanding of the purpose of teachers' work that draws on the intrinsic satisfaction found in service to others, particularly children. The very purpose of teachers' work may be undergoing fundamental changes due to these shifting structural conditions. Yanow (1996) suggests that all policy carries meaning that must then be interpreted by is "policy targets." NCLB, derived within the view from above, certainly carries meaning in its interpretation of where the problems lie in education and how best to address them. Teachers respond to these meanings and must confront these competing notions about the meaning and purpose of their work. *NCLB*'s focus on academic outcomes tends to draw teachers away from the traditional notions of the purpose of their work. In fact, some might argue that *NCLB* refocuses teachers on external measures of success such as standardized test scores, Adequate Yearly Progress, and school sanctions. The very mechanisms used by *NCLB* to increase external accountability may be inadvertently shifting teachers' own measures of success from intrinsic to extrinsic factors. Just like the changing structural relationships prompted by *NCLB,* teachers are in the process of negotiating and making sense of these changes in their work.

Teachers must negotiate and adapt to shifting structural and cultural conditions resulting from increased external accountability under *NCLB.* One way of framing this

process is through the theory on sensemaking in organizations.[5] While this study is not an investigation of sensemaking itself, this literature offers a useful way to understand the experiences and responses of teachers working under *NCLB*. Weick (1995: 4) explains, "The concept of sensemaking is well named because, literally, it means the making of sense." He goes on to add that, "Feldman (1989: 19) talks about sensemaking as an interpretive process that is necessary 'for organizational members to understand and to share understandings about such features of the organization as what it is about, what it does well and poorly, what the problems it faces are, and how it should resolve them'" (Weick 1995: 5). Teachers face a new set of problems under *NCLB*. Increasing environmental uncertainty, accompanied by continued uncertainty at the core of teacher's work, places teachers in a situation where they must make sense of these problems and generate new ways of working to resolve them. In fact, research on sensemaking reveals that it is just in these moments when work experiences are perceived as problematic that sensemaking processes are likely to occur (Barker Caza 2007; Weick 1995). Operating within the disempowerment perspective, teachers identify many issues brought about by shifts in structural conditions and cultural understandings as problematic.

First, operating from the disempowerment perspective, teachers are likely to perceive the tighter coupling of schooling and administrative structure as an intrusion into the only space in the school they control – the classroom. Second, changes in workplace culture might leave teachers feeling frustrated and confused about the purpose of their

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[5] Several potential theoretical frames might be useful to understand this process. For example, one could use symbolic interaction to understand the creation of meaning for teachers under these conditions (Blumer 1969). However, I draw on the sensemaking (Weick 1995) and meaning making (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, Debebe 2003) literature because they allow for the full exploration of organizational and individual level processes.

work and how they should measure success. Teachers may feel conflicted about increasingly focusing on external measures of success like test scores, while becoming less able to embrace the intrinsic factors, like interpersonal relationships with students. Lastly, *NCLB*'s use of labels to categorize a school's academic performance may be particularly problematic for teachers. *NCLB* categorizes schools as either Distinguished or Needs Improvement. Schools meeting academic expectations are Distinguished, while those schools which fail to meet Adequate Yearly Progress are labeled as Needs Improvement. In popular media, Needs Improvement schools are often called "failing" schools. Along with these labels comes a series of sanctions and additional resources. Teachers are likely to interpret these labels, sanctions, and even the resources, as problematic. Labels, in particular, are problematic for teachers because they call the identity of the school, and their professional identity, into question. By labeling a school as "failing" the value of the work done by the members of that school is diminished (Roccas and Brewer 2002). Fine (1996) argues that individuals engage in the process of sensemaking to attempt and reclaim work value. The labels in particular, can devalue the work of teachers within the school. In other words, if the school is perceived as not doing an adequate job at improving student performance, then the explanation of those "from above" is that the school and its teachers are deficient or ineffective. As members of this work group, the devalued identity of the school plays a crucial role in explaining how teachers understand their own identity and work role (Barker Caza 2007; Roccas and Brewer 2002; Tajfel and Turner 1986). Thus, in this heightened devalued state it is probable that the process of organizational sensemaking and individual meaning making will emerge. In these contexts, teachers work together to make sense of these changes.

Through contextually grounded sensemaking processes, work meaning emerges (Wrzesniewski et al. 2003). In other words, as teachers actively engage the process of sensemaking, they also craft work meaning. An examination of working conditions, job satisfaction, and career plans gives a window to understand this process.

Drawing from the theoretical frame developed in this chapter, I expect three fundamental relationships to emerge in the data. First, I expect that the structural tensions between the view from above and below will serve to organize the sensemaking process occurring within schools. Second, I expect teachers' meaning making to be a function of both their structural position as well as the shifting cultural frames. The variation in structural and cultural conditions across schools is likely to produce variation in the work meanings and strategies developed by teachers. Lastly, I expect to uncover a dynamic process whereby structure informs teachers' meaning making and action. This process in turn reproduces or transforms the structural relationship between the work of teachers and the administrative environment.

Conclusions

This chapter outlines a theoretical framework for understanding teachers' work experiences under *NCLB*. To begin, I outline how schools, as open systems, allow for the emergence of dual perspectives on the structure of education – disorganization and disempowerment perspectives. *NCLB* was derived "from above". Consistent with this perspective, *NCLB* attempts to resolve problems of unequal academic achievement by further regulating the technical core of teaching. Unlike many of its predecessors, I find that *NCLB* has effectively penetrated to the classroom level and produced change in the

workplace culture and work lives of teachers. However, this is insufficient to help us understand what is actually happening within schools. To grasp the effects of these structural and cultural changes, we need to look inside schools and examine how teachers are actively making sense of and crafting their work across different school contexts (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001). This dissertation accomplishes this task.

In this research, I examine the nature of teachers' work at key points along the *NCLB* sanctioning process. At each of these points we find teachers actively constructing work meaning in relation to the structural context. As we move across the sanctioning spectrum, we find that teachers have unique ways of understanding and responding to the policy. Specifically, I examine the impact of this process on teachers' working conditions, job satisfaction, and career plans. By employing the theoretical framework developed here, I embed teachers' lived experiences within these larger structural and cultural forces, thereby generating a broader understanding of this dynamic process.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methods

Introduction

Public schools are one of the most important social institutions in the United States and they are faced by numerous challenges. One of these challenges arises out of the current emphasis on school and teacher accountability. Few disagree that schools and teachers should be high quality and instruct each student to the best of their ability. However, the current educational policy orientation, with its use of sanctions in Needs Improvement schools, appears to drastically change the nature of schools as workplaces. In an attempt to investigate the nature of this change, I explore the ways in which *No Child Left Behind*, or *NCLB*, affects teachers' perceptions and work environment. Specifically, I ask:

1) Do *No Child Left Behind* accountability policies impact the working conditions in schools? If so, how?
2) How do *No Child Left Behind* accountability policies affect teachers' job satisfaction and career plans?
3) How do educators and schools interpret and manage the experience of working under *No Child Left Behind*?

To answer these questions, I employ a mixed method approach. Specifically, I combine data from the Quality Learning and Teaching Environments Initiative (QLTE) with 30 interviews of middle-school teachers in three distinct school contexts. A mixed

methods design is particularly suited to answer my research questions. This approach allows for the exploration of larger patterns among teachers working under *NCLB* accountability. In addition, I gain an in-depth understanding of the processes and meanings of work for teachers in schools at different *NCLB* sanctioning levels. In this chapter, I explain my mixed methods approach in detail. Specifically, I outline my methods, measures, data collection processes, and analyses. (See Table 1 for a Summary of the Study Design)

Research Design

To appropriately address the research questions, I employed a mixed method design. First, I assessed the empirical relationships between *NCLB* sanctions and the working conditions in schools using secondary survey data. This data was provided by the Georgia BellSouth Quality Learning and Teaching Environments Initiative (QLTE).[6] I combined these school-level data with *NCLB* measures from the Georgia Department of Education. This analysis provides the necessary background information to focus and contextualize the qualitative portion of my study.

The qualitative portion of this study is designed to examine the *NCLB* implementation process and the meaning of this process for teachers. To capture these data, I conducted in-depth interviews with teachers, principals, and district-level administrators. All of the educators interviewed worked for the same school district,

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[6] I would like to thank the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia and the Office of P-16 Initiatives for granting me access to this valuable data. This Initiative is funded by BellSouth Georgia and the BellSouth Foundation. More information about the initiative can be found at http://www.qlte.org/.

Lowe County Schools.[7] Lowe County Schools also participated in the QLTE in 2005, thereby allowing for the triangulation of data across the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study (Creswell 1998). To examine the dynamics of the implementation process across *NCLB* contexts, I selected three middle schools, each at a different level of *NCLB* sanctioning. The strength of this design is that it allows for the initial uncovering of broad empirical relationships across the state of Georgia. Then, with data from a single district included in the survey, I incorporated feedback the teachers provided about their actual lived experiences from each distinct school context. This analysis illuminates the process of meaning making and adaptation occurring within schools. The validity of data and findings are bolstered by combining the data and methods in this way. The specifics of these data sources and my research design are outlined below. (See Table 1 for a summary of the study design.)

Quantitative Methods

A multilevel theoretical framework and conceptual model requires both individual and organizational-level data. As stated above, I used two sources of quantitative data in this project. The analysis of these data serves three primary functions. First, it establishes a relationship between *NCLB* sanctioning and working conditions in schools. Second, it provides a body of findings that exceeds the single county where I conducted the qualitative research. Third, the analysis focuses my qualitative study by identifying specific factors examined in more detail through the interviews. Specifically, the

[7] Pseudonyms are used throughout the dissertation to protect the confidentiality of respondents.

quantitative component of this project allowed me to address one of my four primary research interests:

- Exploring the statistical relationships among *NCLB* sanctioning and teachers' assessments of school working conditions.

In January 2005, the Georgia BellSouth Quality Learning and Teaching Environments Initiative (QLTE) conducted a pilot survey of ten public school districts throughout Georgia on the working conditions in their schools. Georgia modeled this project after a similar initiative in North Carolina underway since 2002. The Georgia initiative aims to provide detailed data from teachers about the working conditions in their schools and what they need to better serve students. This study assumes that working conditions are key to teacher effectiveness and student achievement. The surveys, which include predominantly closed-ended responses and a few open-ended questions, assess five domains of the working conditions in schools: time, facilities and resources, leadership, empowerment, and professional learning. (A copy of the survey instrument is available in Appendix A.)

QLTE selected ten participating districts according to their geographic and demographic diversity as well as school district and community leadership. A total of 157 schools participated in the pilot study. While these districts are not a representative sample, they do span Georgia geographically as well as representing urban, rural, small, and large districts. With over 7,000 educators responding to the survey, the overall response rate exceeded 83%. Unfortunately, a technical error in the data collection process prevented the identification of schools in three participating counties. Thus, this

analysis includes all teacher respondents in the seven counties for which complete data is available (N=3,214).

The survey was quite a success in Lowe County[8]. The QLTE collected 1,232 responses from Lowe County Schools. Out of the total responses, 80.9% were teachers, 4.6% were administrators, 4.2% were counselors/media specialists, and 10.2% were paraprofessionals. Lowe County's participation in the QLTE made them a logical choice for the qualitative component of the project.

QLTE data are available through the Georgia Board of Regents. To gain access to the data, I completed a written request and data use agreement. These documents outlined the purposes of the study and ensured respondent confidentially and the proper use of data. After an initial meeting with the Director, I submitted the required forms and was granted permission to use the data.

Measures

Dependent Variables

The QLTE survey is designed to measure the extent educators agree or disagree with specific elements of the five domains of working conditions. For each domain, a series of statements assess various components of the working condition and records the educator's level of agreement through their response on a Likert scale [range 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree"]. Since the aim was to assess the impact of

[8] Pseudonyms are used throughout the dissertation to protect the confidentiality of all respondents.

NCLB sanctioning on working conditions, I created a single measure of each domain to be used as a dependent variable. Thus, I needed to find a meaningful combination of these statements to formulate a single measure that gauges the importance of that working condition domain for the respondent. To do this I utilized factor analysis techniques for data reduction purposes.

I used principal-components factor analysis with orthogonal varimax rotation to reduce the data and determine the proper selection of items within each working condition domain. Most items within each domain loaded cleanly along a single factor. Using a cut off of factor loadings greater than .55, a generally accepted indicator for "good" fit, I narrowed the items to a single set used to measure the domain. This procedure produced a single factor structure for each of the following working conditions: time (Chronbach's α=.7748), facilities and resources (Chronbach's α=.7836), empowerment (Chronbach's α=.9298), and professional development (Chronbach's α=.9024). The one exception was the leadership domain. Leadership loaded across two factors. Exploration of the indicators revealed that two distinct concepts were indeed being assessed in the survey instrument within the leadership domain. Factor one examined school mission and overall direction. Factor two measured the actual activities and evaluations of the school leadership. Since factor two measured the actual concept of leadership most closely related to the theoretical premise in this research, I used this set of items to generate the measure of leadership (Chronbach's α=.9103). The result of this process was the creation of a single variable that captured all of the items included in the domain measuring the appropriate underlying factors. These measures served as dependent variables in my quantitative analysis. Detailed information on the items

included in each domain, along with factor loadings, and alpha levels, can be found in Table 2.

Independent Variables

Additionally, the QLTE collected demographic information (gender, race/ethnicity, and years of teaching experience) from each respondent. To account for the influence of individual identity and group membership on evaluations of working conditions within the school, these data were included as individual-level control variables. Table 3 provides a complete list of variables. The survey instrument is in Appendix A.

To incorporate measures of *NCLB* policy and the implementation of sanctions in the sampled schools, I linked the QLTE data with School District reports to the Georgia Department of Education. Specifically, I collected data from the School Report Cards filed and publicized on the Georgia Department of Education Office of Student Achievement website.[9] I drew two types of data from these reports. First, I used the 2004-2005 reports to draw demographic and compositional data during the time of QLTE data collection. These data items include: percentage of students with disabilities, percentage on free and reduced price lunch, percent minority enrollment, percent limited English proficiency, total school enrollment, total number of full time teachers, and Title I status. These items serve as organization-level control variables to account for the

[9] School report cards are available for examination on the Georgia Department of Education Office of Student Achievement website. This site can be found at http://reportcard2005.gaosa.org/k12.

impact of school context and composition on teachers' reports of working conditions. Second, I used the 2003-2004 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) reports to the Georgia Department of Education. I used the prior year's data since they indicate the AYP designations in effect during the 2004-2005 school year when QLTE data collection occurred. From these reports I included: previous year AYP status, number of years in Needs Improvement status, and an indicator for each sanction currently imposed on the school. These measures of *NCLB*'s influence served as the primary independent variables under analysis.

I assessed the impact of *NCLB* in two ways in this statistical model. First, I measured *NCLB* using the total number of years that a school has been in Needs Improvement status.[10] From this perspective, I examine the cumulative impact of *NCLB* on teachers. This approach assumes that *NCLB* may intensify over time and the prolonged exposure to sanctions may produce distinct interpretations of working conditions by teachers. Second, I measure *NCLB* using the results of the prior year's AYP. This measure captures the immediate impact of the failure to meet AYP. From this perspective, the long-term effect of *NCLB* sanctions would have a lesser impact than the result of the last year's attempt to meet AYP. To capture the distinct effects of *NCLB*

[10] Sanctions are outlined by *NCLB*; however, states retain some power in deciphering the actual services to be provided to schools. While this variation across states is significant for national assessments of *NCLB*, this study focuses on a single state. Since all data was collected within the state of Georgia, sanctions are consistent across schools in similar Needs Improvement status.

requirements, I included both policy variables. [11] A complete list of variables is presented in Table 3.

Quantitative Analysis

Using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analyses, I tested the relationships between *NCLB* and teacher's reports of working conditions while controlling for individual attributes and school composition and context.[12] The complete list of variables and their sources are summarized in Table 3. Having constructed a single indexed measure for each working condition domain, I ran a separate model predicting each working condition. The full OLS model is:

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[11] Needs Improvement and AYP are related to one another (r = 0.48). A school's status is the total of all AYP results beginning after the second consecutive failure. In other words, if a school does not meet AYP for several consecutive years, then they are, by definition, further along in Needs Improvement. What is unique about these measures of *NCLB* is that they capture distinct segments of time. Number of years in Needs Improvement captures the duration of sanctions in the school. AYP just records the result of the previous year's effort. Since each measure tests a different type of relationship with the dependent variable, both measures were utilized. The models presented here include both Needs Improvement and AYP. Separate models were tested to see if each measure made a distinct contribution to the dependent variables when considered alone. In most of the models, the results were unchanged. However, in the models where there was a change, years in Needs Improvement no longer produced a significant effect. This difference in results is the product of the moderate correlation between the variables and the direction of the coefficient. Including both variables in the same model presents a more accurate assessment of the simultaneous effect of the *NCLB* conditions. Thus, I chose to present those models.

[12] Given the clustered structure of the data, teachers within schools, another way to analyze the relationships between policy and working conditions using multilevel modeling (Raudenbush and Byrk 2002). Since teachers are nested within schools, treating teachers as independent observations may obscure an effect of schools and conflate the residuals. Multilevel models enable the partitioning of variance into two components: teacher and school. The school residuals indicate unobserved school effects that may impact teachers' assessments of working conditions. Additionally, treating teachers as independent observations may lead to the underestimation of standard errors in traditional OLS models. This may lead to the researcher to overestimate statistical significance. In this research, I chose to use OLS regression models. However, to substantiate my findings and account for school effects, I also ran multilevel models. Findings from these statistical tests produced remarkably similar pattern of findings. With the exception of two coefficients, grades taught in the time model and limited English proficiency in the professional development model, all of the coefficients had the same direction of relationship. The levels of significance did shift downward as one might expect; however, the overall pattern of findings persists.

$$Y_{1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \ldots + \beta_{11} X_{11} + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y_{1a} = Time

Y_{1b} = Empowerment

Y_{1c} = Facilities and Resources

Y_{1d} = Professional Development

Y_{1e} = Leadership

Policy Variables:

X_1 = Needs Improvement

X_2 = Adequate Yearly Progress

Individual-Level Control Variables:

X_3 = Teaching Experience

X_4 = Race

X_5 = Gender

Organization-Level Control Variables:

X_6 = Grade Level

X_7 = Title I

X_8 = Disabilities

X_9 = Limited English Proficiency

X_{10} = Minority Enrollment

X_{11} = Faculty Size

All models include both measures of *NCLB*, number of years in Needs Improvement and prior year AYP results, as well as individual and organizational controls. Each model has similar sample sizes ranging from N=2812 to N=2897. These statistical models establish a relationship between *NCLB* sanctioning and working conditions in schools, provide a body of findings that exceeds the single county where conducted my qualitative research, and focus my qualitative study by identifying specific factors that I examine in more detail through the interviews. The results of these analyses are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 and presented in Table 4.

Qualitative Methods

Despite the usefulness of the quantitative data, to fully assess the process and meaning of *NCLB* implementation in schools, I collected qualitative data. Through qualitative methods, I sought to "witness how those studied perceive, feel and act in order to understand their perceptions, feelings and behavior more fully and intimately" (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland 2006). There are several reasons a qualitative research design was necessary for this study. First, quantitative research designs are particularly good at assessing outcomes; however, they are less adept at illuminating the *processes* that led to these outcomes (Maxwell 1998). Since this study emphasizes process-oriented research questions my design must enable me to capture this type of data. In addition, I formulated a project intent on capturing the *meaning* of the implementation process for teachers. In other words, I wanted to explore how my

respondents made sense of the events and behaviors associated with *NCLB* implementation. This type of nuanced interpretation is something best revealed by a qualitative design (Creswell 1994). Thus, a qualitative design using in-depth interviews allowed me to address specific research questions that could not be answered using QLTE data. In particular, the interview data allowed me to address three of my particular research interests:

- The meaning of working conditions for teachers working under *NCLB*.
- Teachers' understandings of their job satisfaction and career plans.
- How schools and teachers interpret and manage *NCLB*.

To collect these data I conducted in-depth interviews of teachers across three schools. In addition to interviewing teachers, I also interviewed school and district administrators in charge of implementing *NCLB*. In total, I conducted 54 teacher, 6 school-level administrator, and 3 school district administrator interviews for a final sample size of N=63.[13] I selected these respondents to represent the multiple organizational levels outlined in the theoretical framework.

Case Selection

The process of case selection involved both practical and theoretical criteria. To accomplish both of these goals, I employed a purposeful sampling technique based on convenience. This technique allowed me to focus the sample around the purposes of the

[13] My original sample included school and district administrators. For a variety of reasons discussed in this chapter, I did not include these data in the analysis presented here. My future research will draw on these omitted data.

research (Creswell 1998; Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998). In designing this study, I prioritized variation in key theoretical areas while minimizing potentially distracting differences. To do this, I selected schools within a single district. By controlling potential district- level effects, which are predominantly structural and cultural issues, I focused my study on within district variation. For example, by sampling within a single district I held constant the formal process of implementation, district- level accountability plans and criteria, implementation timing, test structure and content, and district context issues such as locale and shared history. If I had chosen to sample across districts, these issues may have influenced my data and analysis in ways not relevant to my specific research questions.

I also considered several theoretically relevant factors to select a school district. I needed a district that had the potential to exhibit differences in levels of *NCLB* sanctioning. To accomplish this, I focused on school districts that had not met AYP, thus had a large number of schools not meeting AYP, as well as districts with moderate to large student enrollments. Having a considerable number of schools experiencing *NCLB* sanctions was vital for this project. Without schools undergoing sanctions, I would not have an implementation process to study.

Prior to selecting a research site, I met with district administrators in six different school districts (three in North Carolina and three in Georgia).[14] I identified Lowe County as the best available site based on fit with the theoretical criteria described above

[14] During the summer of 2006, I also conducted pilot interviews with teachers. This pilot study was made possible through the financial support of the Emory Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. This pilot project helped me refine my interview protocol and establish comfort in conducting the interviews prior to the start of the study. Participants for this pilot study were recruited through a snowball sample of teacher acquaintances.

and several practical concerns. The practical concerns included its participation in the pilot study of working conditions, permission to study the district, and proximity. Lowe County met both the practical and theoretical criteria making it a good choice for this research.

Lowe County has seen tremendous growth. Since 1990, Lowe County's population grew over 40%. Much of this growth reflects a rising immigrant population. Cotton mills dominated agricultural production until 1945 in Lowe County. Agriculture remains the dominant industry but the specific crops have diversified. Lowe County's economic base has become increasingly diversified and now includes over forty-seven Fortune 500 firms, 300 plus manufacturing and processing businesses, and forty international companies.[15]

Increased school enrollments and ethnic diversity have accompanied this population growth. At the time of data collection, Lowe County enrolled over 23,000 students in over 30 schools (this is a 3% increase over FY2004). To teach these students, the district employed 1,618 certified staff. In 2004-2005, Lowe County reported 46% of students eligible for free and reduced lunch and 20% of the student enrollment had limited English proficiency. While Lowe County has a very small percentage of Asian (1%) and African American students (5%), they have a relatively large Hispanic student body (28%) (Governor's Office of Student Achievement 2006). Increasing enrollment means that schools in Lowe County have a growing demand for teachers. This demand puts pressure on the district to encourage teacher retention. Evidence of this is seen in

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[15] All historical and demographic information on Lowe County was collected from their school website.

their willingness to participate in the QLTE survey. Lowe County seems to be paying attention to the importance of retaining highly qualified teachers. Despite this special attention to working conditions and the retention of teachers, the Lowe County school district has failed AYP for three consecutive years. The year prior to data collection (2004-2005), 10 schools (32.3% of schools) in Lowe County failed to meet AYP. While some schools are doing very well, others must offer school choice options and supplemental services, change school leadership, and one school in the county is at-risk for reconstitution next year. Given this tremendous variation in sanctions in a context of general support for teachers and interest in improving working conditions in schools, Lowe County is an ideal site to investigate my research questions. Having selected an appropriate district, I moved forward with gaining access to respondents.

Gaining Access, Sampling and Recruitment

Theoretically, schools included in the sample must be experiencing different levels of sanctioning. To control for large differences in school structure and focus the study on public education, I included only traditional public schools. This means that charter, magnet, and private schools were not considered. In selecting teachers, I limited my investigation to classroom teachers responsible for student instruction.

The intensification of the work experience may vary with the student population served, especially if a majority of students fall into a key subgroup. For example, a teacher with predominantly limited English proficiency students may feel greater pressure to meet test expectations than a teacher with predominantly English speaking students. In order to account for these differences in intensification, I made every effort

to sample classroom teachers providing instruction to a diverse selection of students according to the *NCLB* subgroup categories.

Prior to selecting the teacher and administrator samples, I had to complete several important practical steps. Following the defense of the proposal, I immediately submitted my application for IRB human-subjects research approval.[16] As soon as approval was received (IRB ID #683-2006), I applied for permission to conduct research in Lowe County schools. After a few weeks, I had permission to contact principals and began the process of selecting my cases. During the summer following the defense of my proposal, I completed all of these steps and selected three school sites.

I selected schools based on the following criteria: level of sanctioning imposed in fall 2006, school location (more urban or more rural), school composition (specifically free and reduced lunch levels and race and ethnic composition), grade level (elementary, middle or secondary), and school size. After reviewing the school population in Lowe County, I decided to investigate middle schools. Middle schools were a particularly good choice for several reasons. First, the structure of *NCLB* places additional emphasis on testing during the middle school years. Second, Lowe County contains sufficient middle schools to provide adequate variation in *NCLB* sanctions. Third, middle schools generally have sufficient student populations that schools are required to count most student subgroups in AYP. For these reasons, I chose to pursue Lowe County middle schools. The primary focus of this study was to understand the impact of *NCLB* accountability implementation on school and individual level processes, thus I selected

[16] IRB application (approval number IRB ID #683-2006) includes documents outlining the proposed research and recruitment materials. To review the materials and see the official documentation of IRB approval, see Appendix B.

middle schools that demonstrated a range of variation in sanctioning while relative similarity on as many of the other criteria as I could control.

In Lowe County, the school principals must grant final permission to conduct research on site. Since I desired to recruit participants in faculty meetings, it was vital for me to receive permission through formal channels. Thus, after identifying several schools that met my sample criteria, I called the school principals. I followed up each phone call with a formal letter outlining the research project and requesting permission to recruit participants (see School Recruitment Letter in Appendix C). After the letter was sent, I met with each principal to outline the research plans and request access to a faculty meeting for recruitment. In addition, I scheduled a formal interview with the principal at this first meeting. Throughout this initial contact with school officials, I emphasized that the research was completely voluntary, confidential, and would not use any school time. Each of the three schools selected welcomed me and granted me permission to conduct research. The first school selected, Parkside Middle School, was classified Needs Improvement- level 1 and implementing school choice for the first time. The second school, Greenway Middle School, was at Needs Improvement- level 7 and undergoing school restructuring and contract monitoring. The final school selected, White Plains Middle School, was a Distinguished school, meaning that they had continually met annual yearly progress.

After gaining access, I began teacher recruitment. To recruit participants, I attended faculty meetings during the early fall of 2006. During these meetings I introduced myself, explained the topic of the research and the importance of the study, and asked for volunteers. To protect confidentiality, all teachers that desired to

participate dropped their name and contact information off in a sealed box as they left the meeting. I reassured all of the teachers at the meeting that the interviews would not use any school time, were completely voluntary, and strictly confidential. These initial meetings produced a significant number of respondents. I followed up with each of the teachers through email to schedule the interview day and time. In cases where there were an insufficient number of respondents, or where I desired to recruit a teacher in a theoretically relevant position, I used snowball sampling. The majority of this communication took place over email. Samples of all of the recruitment communication can be found in Appendix C.

A second wave of sampling was necessary prior to the analysis phase of the project. After conducting interviews with the complete sample, a review of my data revealed that I surpassed the point of saturation. This means the data contained redundancies and additional interviews were unlikely to produce new concepts for exploration (Creswell 1998; Strauss and Corbin 1990). Thus, to make the data quantity manageable and more meaningful, I chose to conduct the analysis on a subsample of teacher respondents (N=30, 10 teachers per school). Since experiences are likely to vary according to organizational position, I drew a purposive subsample of teachers across subject, grade, and teaching experience. Special education teachers are often at the crux of *NCLB* implementation, thus I included one special education teacher from each school. When multiple teachers fit the same criteria, respondents were selected at random. The final sample represented the diversity of teachers within each school. Tables 6 and 7 contain a summary of the complete sample and subsample characteristics.

In-depth Interviews

All of the interviews took place in the respondent's classroom or office. There was some initial concern that teachers would be uncomfortable conducting the interview at school. However, all respondents preferred meeting at school. Interviews ranged from one to two and a half hours long. At the start of each interview, I reviewed the purposes of the study and gave the respondent a copy of the consent form to review and sign. The consent form outlined the purpose of the project, interview procedures, known risks and benefits, strategies employed to maintain confidentiality of records, contact information, and reassurance that study participation was completely voluntary. Respondents who chose to participate signed the form, and I began recording the interview (see Consent to be a Research Participant in Appendix B).

As a researcher, I have an obligation to not harm the group I am studying. As Lofland et al. (2006) advocate, I "started where I was" and chose to study a population that is meaningful to me. I come from a family of teachers and am proud to be married to a public educator. Thus, it was my concern for teachers and their well being in the current policy context that led me to this research. One of my objectives was to carefully design the interview so that it left teachers a neutral psychological state. Given my personal insights into the lives of teachers, I felt strongly about remaining sensitive to the effects of the interview process. Thus, I chose to embrace an appreciative approach in the design of my interview guides (Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987; Quinn 2000). If interviews focused solely on the problems associated with the process of implementation, they might cause additional stress, demoralization, and sadness. I tried whenever possible to evoke what is working, what might work, and what is valuable. In addition to

being a less harmful way to interview, I hoped to produce more useful data for positive change in the future.

While utilizing an appreciative approach, the interviews collected pertinent information in each of the areas under investigation including: *NCLB* influences on work in the school, working conditions in schools, organizational and individual capacities, management techniques, work satisfaction, and career plans. The interview guides consisted of both open- and closed-ended questions to assess teachers' experiences and perceptions (see Teacher Interview Guide in Appendix D). During the interview process, I sought out the respondent's story of their experiences under *NCLB*. Beyond the story, I paid careful attention to their feelings, how they represented themselves, their contributions, and the role of others in this process. As I listened to the respondents, I pushed past simple "answers" to evoke detailed stories through the retelling of their experiences and their own imaginings of what could be in their school or school district. My primary strategy for gathering this rich data was to structure the interview guide around five key sections: Beginnings, Strengths and Values, Changes, Imagining, and Concluding Thoughts. Within each section, I captured all relevant data for this project through appreciative questions whenever possible.[17] Each interview was digitally recorded to allow for detailed transcription. At the conclusion of the interview, all respondents selected a pseudonym and were given $25 for his or her time. These funds

[17] Principal and administrator interviews followed a similar format and covered the same topics; however, in these interviews I focused on organizational contributions to each area and the specific response and interaction of that respondent with teachers in the participating school(s). Appendix D contains the Principal and District Administrator Interview Guides.

were supplied by a National Science Foundation Dissertation Improvement Grant award # 0701533.

Following the interviews, I recorded field notes describing the environment, my initial thoughts, any disturbances, and respondent emotions or actions that would not be perceptible in the recording. With the financial support of a National Science Foundation Dissertation Improvement Grant, I sent a significant portion of my interview recordings for transcription by a professional transcriptionist. Following transcription, all of the documents were imported into MaxQDA, a qualitative software program, on a password-protected computer for analysis.

Analysis

I conducted a total of 63 interviews during the fall of 2006. Each interview lasted between one and two and a half hours. This data collection effort yielded approximately 95 hours of recorded conversation and 1480 pages of transcripts. To analyze the interview data, I used MaxQDA, a qualitative software program. This program drastically improved data management and made detailed and iterative analysis much easier. Prior to beginning analysis, I performed an initial read of each transcript. Since I did not do the transcriptions myself, this gave me the chance to check for problems and gather some first impressions about the nature of the data. I found this process very helpful because it allowed me to review on the interview in its complete form before focusing on individual passages.

Using the theoretical literature as my guide, I generated an initial start list of codes, coupled with operational definitions and decision rules for each (Miles and

Huberman 1994). All transcripts were examined and codes applied to the relevant sections of text. I began the analysis process using an "open coding" technique. Open coding is, "The analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data" (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 101). This process involved both inductive and deductive coding. By reading the text carefully and selecting pieces of relevant material based both on emerging themes as well as knowledge of the existing literature and my conceptual model, I was able to reduce, arrange, and label the data. For example, based on my reading of the literature and conceptual model, I knew that the working conditions in schools are important for understanding the process of implementation and teachers' perceptions. Thus, I included in my starting list of deductive codes labels for leadership, time, empowerment, facilities and resources, and professional development.

As I proceeded with the coding process, I continued to build and refine my codebook containing definitions of codes and criteria for the usage (see Qualitative Codebook in Table 9). Building on the coding process, I used MaxQDA to facilitate the retrieval of coded texts and started to create analytic memos. I wrote analytic memos to record themes, relationships, and ideas that emerged throughout the process (Glaser 1978). I continued to develop the code list until all the relevant categories were saturated (Lincoln and Guba 1985). All decisions made during this iterative process were recorded in methodological memos so the analytic decisions are explicit. This "audit trail" allows for validation of methods and findings once analysis is complete (Guba 1981; Miles and Huberman 1994). Throughout this process, I created matrix and network data displays. Such displays reduce the vast quantity of text associated with qualitative data to, "a visual

format that presents information systematically, so the user can draw valid conclusions and take needed action" (Miles and Huberman 1994: 91). In sum, my general approach was to use coding and memos to identify topics. Topics were then clustered into categories. These categories were grouped into patterns and organized in matrices, which eventually revealed explanations to answer the research questions.

Methodological Limitations

This research design and data have many strengths; however, like all research, there are also limitations. Secondary data often presents researchers with certain limitations. The QLTE, while arguably one of the best sources of detailed data on school working conditions in Georgia, presented some obstacles. First, during data collection there was a technical error that prevented the identification of the respondent's school for three participating counties. Since my analysis necessitated connecting teachers to school variables, I had to omit these counties from my sample. Second, the survey did not collect information on teacher pay. Prior research shows that while pay is not the primary predictor of satisfaction, it is an important indicator (Ingersoll 2001). Including a control for teacher pay would have strengthened the model specification. However, since all of the teachers work in the same state, and they share a similar pay scale, I have reason to believe the inclusion of this variable would not significantly alter the findings.

The qualitative design and data also presented some obstacles. First, I was concerned about the choice to interview teachers at school. I worried that teachers might be hesitant to discuss the job satisfaction, career plans, and working conditions while at work. However, I quickly learned that this was not a problem. Teachers freely discussed

positive and negative attributes of their work. Lastly, the qualitative analysis is limited by the decision to exclude the administrator data. I collected interviews from six school administrators and three district administrators. The data produced during these interviews added an additional level of understanding to this dynamic process. Unfortunately, I had to make the difficult decision to save this analysis for later publication due to time factors. I am eager to pursue this analysis in my later work.

Conclusions

This process, while it sounds orderly and linear, was in fact an ongoing and iterative effort that spanned almost two and a half years. As many others have noted, the experience of doing research is "messy business" (Maher 1997). However, by combining methodological approaches, diverse sources of data, and careful analysis, this research endeavor proved more than fruitful. The next chapter begins our journey through these findings, introducing the three schools selected for analysis, and presenting the conceptual framework developed throughout this dissertation.

Chapter 4: A Glimpse Inside the Schools

Understanding how a policy such as *No Child Left Behind* affects the internal operations of a school requires first-hand experience and examination within the school itself. Moving beyond measuring student outcomes and assessing the structural inputs, the experience and meaning making occurring within schools is a vital component for understanding the full impact of *NCLB*. These data are found at the juncture of policy structure and school culture offering a window into the process of implementing *No Child Left Behind*. Each of the three schools chosen for study gives a glimpse through this window.

To examine a process over time requires longitudinal data. While the study design employed here is not longitudinal, each of these three schools' status corresponds to a vital stage along the policy's course. Thus, by examining the story of change across these three cases, a process of adaptation to *No Child Left Behind* and accountability requirements can be inferred. These data reveal that within each school a distinct reality emerges in response to the school's current position along the *NCLB* spectrum. In other words, teachers develop unique ways of understanding and relating to their work as they negotiate the changing school context and adapt to the requirements and expectations of *NCLB*.

This process of meaning making and adaptation is rich and multidimensional. Each school included in the sample represents one stop along this path. As schools are brought under increasingly intrusive sanctions, the members of that school are forced to

change their everyday work habits and perspectives. Thus, looking across three schools you see parts of this process of adaptation and hear directly from the teachers what this process looks and feels like in their everyday work lives. The requirements and demands of *NCLB* policy, within the context of each school, lead teachers to identify and describe three versions of the modern public middle school reality: Established, Shifting, and Shifted.

White Plains, a Distinguished school that has never experienced any *NCLB* sanctions, represents an Established reality. Life at White Plains is largely unaffected by *NCLB*. Parkside, a newly identified Needs Improvement school, implementing school choice, has been recently bombarded with the demands of *NCLB* policy and is entrenched in creating new ways of working under these conditions. This school represents a Shifting reality. Lastly, Greenway, an advanced Needs Improvement school undergoing state contract monitoring and school restructuring, has invested considerable time developing new ways of adapting to the demands of *NCLB*. While these adaptive strategies may or may not be effective, Greenway teachers have settled into the reality of the school's status. This does not mean that they do not desire a change in the status or that their experience is not one of instability, but their stories reveal that they have already created new ways of working and *NCLB* is a regular fixture in their perceptions of their work – a Shifted reality.

School Introductions

Before delving into the various ways *NCLB* policy has shaped the schools, it is important to understand the schools' culture and history. The three schools chosen for

study have many similarities. They are all middle schools educating students grades six through eight. They are all located in the same county in an area that spans just less than 18 miles. They all have experienced leadership. Despite all of the similarities, when you enter these schools, you experience three distinct realities.

White Plains Middle School

Opened in 1999, White Plains has the distinction of being the newest middle school in the district. In addition, White Plains is notable for its location in an extremely affluent area of Lowe County. The path to White Plains takes you past upscale residential areas and shopping centers. When the development gives way, you are met by beautiful, natural surroundings. The drive into the school parking lot is lush with trees and edged with well manicured lawn. As you enter the school, you walk into a wide, clean hallway with a glass enclosed office immediately to your right. The office, which is also spacious and clean, is a calm and orderly place. Students waiting for their parents or to be seen by administrators, sit in comfortable chairs along the walls. Several staff work behind a large desk answering phones, making announcements, and tending to students and guests in the office. Over the month and a half that I spent visiting White Plains, I was always greeted quickly, asked to sign in, get a name tag, and directed to my location. I was impressed with the efficiency of the office and always felt welcome in the school.

The remainder of the school appeared just as clean and organized as the office. Classrooms were generally large and had windows to let in natural light. Teachers took

steps to decorate the bare walls and make classrooms more inviting. Since the school is relatively new, the floors and walls remained unmarred. However, their growing student population, in part a function of *NCLB*'s school choice component, has resulted in the addition of portable classrooms behind the school. For the teachers I spoke with, the existence of these trailers reduces the overall beauty of their "new" school.

Demographically, the student body composition is relatively homogeneous. In fall of 2006, when data was collected for this study, out of the 1153 students enrolled, 72% were white. The next largest racial/ethnic group was Hispanic at 16%. Economically, 32% of the students enrolled were eligible for free and reduced meals. To qualify for free meals, a family of four must earn no more than $28,665 annually. For reduced priced meals, a family of four must earn less than $40,793. All students in families receiving food stamps or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) also qualify for free and reduced meals. Only 5% of the student body was considered Limited English Proficient (Governor's Office of Student Achievement 2006).

White Plains' student composition is a reflection of the surrounding community. The most current census data reveal that within the White Plains census tract, approximately 3% of families fell below the poverty line in 2000. The median household income in the White Plains census tract was approximately $56,375. Approximately 92.4.2% of the population was white and 4.6% Hispanic (The United States Census Bureau 2000). Since White Plains is labeled a Distinguished school, they are an option for students choosing to transfer out of a Needs Improvement school. Thus, the student body composition also reflects these transfer students coming from other parts of the county.

Along with a beautiful school building, White Plains is noted for its outstanding academic performance. White Plains is labeled a Distinguished school. This means that White Plains has continually met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and has never been listed as a Needs Improvement school. The success on state standardized tests is a source of pride for the teachers and administration. However, their understanding of how they produce and maintain this academic success is nuanced.

Consistent with the literature on social class and academic engagement (Lareau 1989), White Plains is also notable for its tremendous parental involvement. The Parent Teacher Association hosted many fundraisers and booster events throughout the year. The high parent involvement was also evident in the teacher interviews. One respondent, Jane T., stated, "The parents here are more involved and I think that is more of the reason why we're not on the bad list yet…I actually have parents who care." This heightened involvement appeared as an important factor in maintaining the quality of education at White Plains as well as the high test scores.

As a Distinguished school, White Plains experiences *NCLB* differently than the teachers in the two needs improvement schools. When the influence of *NCLB* on teachers in White Plains is examined, it is the lack of impact that is most notable. Teachers' stories and perspectives reveal that they only feel a minimal effect of *NCLB* on their everyday work. Beyond the stress of the actual standardized test, the CRCT, and the demands of incorporating transfer students, accountability pressures largely do not intrude into their work lives. This is why I classify White Plains as an Established reality. With a firm Distinguished status, and a population able to support this status, teachers focus their time and energy on the "traditional" activities of teaching. Beyond

this, they are mostly free from worry about the ramifications of policy on their work experiences. They are concerned with the effects of this accountability approach on their profession and colleagues at other schools, but as teachers in a Distinguished school, they are offered added protection from the pressures of *NCLB*. They work under the same accountability structure as other schools; however, their success has enabled them to continue their current operations largely unchanged. Their experience of work is Established and remains relatively untouched by *NCLB*. Edward, a teacher at White Plains, states, "We do what we do here. And so why fix it if it ain't broken? You know, something's broken and then you fix it. You know, there's nothing broken." Edward's statement that there is "nothing broken" at his school illustrates how the teachers talk about the impact of *NCLB* on White Plains. From their point of view, the school is succeeding because it is a well functioning school with high performing students, thus *NCLB* need not intrude on their work.

Parkside Middle School

Parkside is nested in a busy commercial area. As you wade through traffic and construction, Parkside appears perched behind a small taco stand. The school sits on a large plot of land, but this land is relatively bare and covered by parking lots and playgrounds. The school is generally in good repair, yet, there are some indications that this is an older school building located in an area perceived as unsafe. As you enter the school you immediately encounter locked glass doors and must call the main office on a nearby monitor to be "buzzed" inside. This added security is a comfort to many in the

school; however, as a visitor it certainly sends a message that security is a concern. Just like White Plains, there is a large glass window immediately inside the door allowing the office staff to observe the front entrance. Upon entry into the office, I was always greeted by cheerful staff and vibrant conversation. The office space was tight, crowed, and always full of activity. The principal's office opens directly into the main greeting area. It was not uncommon to hear the principal shouting greetings to students, parents and other visitors in the waiting area. In general, this space felt cramped and busy, but always welcoming and full of life.

The classrooms at Parkside are full of personal touches. Teachers have decorated their rooms to make them stimulating and educational. The hallways and floors are clean. While the building is older, teachers and administrators have done their best to make the physical space attractive and sanitary.

Only four miles away from White Plains, the student composition at Parkside is very different. Out of a total enrollment of 939 students, 53% are Hispanic with the next largest racial group being white with 37% of the student population. Mirroring the racial and ethnic composition, 25% of the student body was considered Limited English Proficient. The families of students at Parkside are significantly more economically disadvantaged than White Plains families. In fall 2006, when this research was conducted, 68% of the student body qualified for free and reduced lunch as opposed to 32% at White Plains (Governor's Office of Student Achievement 2006).

The community composition is also significantly different than White Plains. According to 2000 census data, the surrounding community is 20.4% Hispanic and 76.1% white. Poverty rates are much higher than White Plains with between 3.2% and

7.3% families falling under the poverty line within the surrounding census tracts. The median household income in the Parkside surrounding area was approximately $49,875, over $17,000 less than the median in the White Plains area (The United States Census Bureau 2000).

Despite the school's perceived strong community connection, teachers reveal that maintaining adequate parent involvement is a struggle. For teachers, the community composition plays a large role in the decreasing parental engagement. As poverty and the minority population grow around Parkside, teachers perceive that parents are less able or willing to participate in their child's education. Language, work schedules, and not valuing education are frequent explanations offered by teachers for parental disengagement. When asked if she had a sense of why the parents feel like they can't help their students at home, Katie, a Parkside teacher, answered,

> Most of them don't have a high school education. When you don't have a high school education and you only understood math up to maybe the third or fourth grade level, and then you have a language barrier on top of that, being able to actually read the English words to be able to explain the directions, it's hard.

There is also a sentiment that the parents do not value education in the same way as White Plains parents. Alisha notes,

> We do our job probably even harder and better than some of the teachers at schools like White Plains where they don't have these kinds of kids and all they [the teachers] have to do is show up. The kids [at White Plains] already care and the parents already care. We have to try to make these kids care and make the parents come in for conferences.

Academically, Parkside is positioned at the midpoint between White Plains and Greenway. Parkside has a history of outstanding academic achievement. However, under the new accountability requirements of *NCLB*, Parkside found itself grouped with a

less prestigious set of schools – the Needs Improvement schools. Parkside first failed AYP in 2005. Following its consecutive failure in 2006, Parkside entered Needs Improvement status and fell under the sanctions outlined by *NCLB*. Most notably, Parkside began implementing school choice. Of the families that chose to leave, many now attend White Plains. Despite the close proximity of Parkside and White Plains, the schools' AYP status and student body compositions make them very distinct school environments.

Parkside had just entered their first year of AYP sanctions when I conducted my research. This change in their school status played a dominant role in how teachers described their day-to-day work lives and their perceptions of their work. Teachers were just delving into the process of adapting to new demands placed on the school and additional AYP pressure. In addition, teachers were attempting to come to terms with the meaning of being a school in Needs Improvement for both themselves as well as the community. As they described these changes in their work environment and their efforts at adapting, it became clear that this was an active process of change. Their experience of their work reality was in flux. Thus, Parkside illustrates a Shifting reality occurring as the school responded to new *NCLB* sanctions and accountability requirements.

Teachers at Parkside were aware of the ramifications of AYP failure and very concerned about improving school performance to avoid additional sanctions. They were not completely preoccupied by the demands of the policy, but they were more than aware of these issues and actively changing their everyday work tasks in response to the new policy conditions. Not only were they changing the way they worked, but they also described many ways in which becoming a Needs Improvement school prompted a shift

in their understanding of, and relationship to, their profession. Mary Beth, an experienced teacher at Parkside, described that *NCLB* and its components, particularly the standardized test by which the school is assessed, "looms." She states, "It's not like it's every day, everything, every minute, but it just kind of hangs. It kind of looms." *NCLB* requirements are always present in Parkside teachers' minds, prompting efforts to adopt new strategies and improve their performance. Courtney further illustrates this fact when she described the general orientation towards testing at Parkside.

> It is something that is always on my mind. It restricts much of the creativity that makes learning so much fun. We've got to cover this, we've got to cover this, we've got to cover this because that CRCT is coming up and it gets even worse after January because we know it is coming.

Teachers at Parkside are in the midst of Shifting their work routines and understandings in response to new policy-driven, external demands.

Greenway Middle School

Greenway lies deep in a rural area of Lowe County. On the three mile drive between Parkside and Greenway, the urban, busy commercial area gives way to agricultural and farming land. To get to the school one must drive down a winding two-lane country road. Rising and falling with the rolling hills you enter a new territory that seems quite far from the busyness behind. The school itself is poised atop a beautiful hill surrounded by tall trees. Greenway is large and sprawling. The building's entrance is an expansive but dimly lit hallway. The halls are painted in the school's colors, but with no additional décor. The main office, situated near the entryway, does not have a clear view

of the front doors. Upon entering this large office, I was typically greeted by one of the staff. However, the office's size results in considerable space separating staff from the door. Thus, my entrance into the space often went unacknowledged until I came closer to the desk. The office was generally quiet, with a few students coming and going and the phone ringing occasionally. The staff was cheerful and gladly helped me sign in and find the interview room. Down a small hallway just off the main office lies the principal's office. While not far away, this hall distanced the principal somewhat from the activity in the main office.

Greenway feels like a maze. Expansive, long hallways give the sense of space and can leave a visitor feeling lost. The hallways are neat and floors are clean; however, there was very little decoration. This was not the case when I entered the classrooms. Teachers put a lot of effort into decorating their own work spaces, making them vibrant and stimulating environments. Most rooms were large but not all had windows to allow for natural light.

Demographically Greenway resembles Parkside. The student population is almost evenly split among their two largest ethnic groups with 42% Hispanic and 44% white. Only 18% of the 883 students enrolled in 2006 qualified for Limited English Proficiency. However, 72% of Greenway students qualify for free and reduced lunch. By this measure, Greenway is the most economically disadvantaged school in the sample.

Greenway and Parkside fall within the same zip code, thus, the demographics of the two areas are similar. Despite many similarities, Greenway shows slightly more economic disadvantage. Within the Greenway census tracts, 7.8% to 8.5% of families fall beneath the poverty line with a median household income of approximately $44,469.

While the area is majority white with 81.7% of the population, a growing number of Hispanics reside in the area. The most recent census data reveals between 19.5% and 25.6% of the area's population is Hispanic. (United States Census Bureau 2000).

The similarities between Greenway and Parkside also include parental involvement trends. Just like Parkside, Greenway's teachers often comment on the lack of parental involvement. Again, ethnicity and poverty are the most frequent explanation for lack of parent participation. Consistent with the literature, Greenway teachers note that parents separate themselves from the work of the school and teacher (Lareau 1989). Greenway perceives its lack of parental involvement as an impediment to their academic success. Open House Night presents parents with a rare opportunity to come to the school in the evening, meet teachers, and ask questions about the curriculum. Bob commented on the open house turnout.

> I was really unhappy with our open house day. I had one student out of almost 100 show up. Between the three science classrooms, we had four students. That was it. Those four students of course cycled through and so that means the entire eighth grade staff was here on open house night for four students. And that's parental involvement.

The majority of teachers are very proud of the school and students despite the persistence of the *NCLB* Needs Improvement label. Greenway entered their 7th year of Needs Improvement the year I conducted my research. At this stage of sanctioning, Greenway was implementing school restructuring and state contract monitoring. These advanced sanctions meant that representatives of the Department of Education and the Regional Education Support Agency (RESA) were frequently present in the school. This external assistance is intended to offer support and guidance as Greenway continued the

school improvement process. As a result of their advanced Needs Improvement status, Greenway experienced lots of contact and supervision by external education specialists and agencies.

An extended duration under *NCLB* sanctions meant that teachers here had spent considerable time adjusting to their Needs Improvement status. While this did not make the label easier on their sense of identity or pride, it did mean that they had more time to adapt to the policy in other ways. Greenway teachers established strategies in response to the sanctions and fully incorporated being a Needs Improvement school into almost every aspect of their day to day work.

Greenway is distinct from White Plains and Parkside. First, unlike White Plains, Greenway is in constant contact with the requirements and consequences of *NCLB*. It is the fact that they do not get a break from the reality of *NCLB* that has produced the depth and extent of change within the school. Second, they have existed in this pressured state for considerably longer than Parkside. The forces prompting change and action within the school are not new, thus they are no longer in the process of "Shifting" their understanding or approach to their work. Rather, teachers at Greenway have already Shifted. They have established strategies to respond the best they can under this policy condition. Sally offers an illustration of the Shifted school context.

> We're in what, the sixth or seventh year of Needs Improvement? It has really changed the attitudes and atmosphere at the school, especially last year when we almost made it. Just that one category…But, the administration I think they get stressed, as well as the teachers because they're trying not to let us see the stress or get us too stressed out, but they've been great as far as trying to come up with new ways and ideas for the school. When I first started, they didn't have a [school improvement] team that I knew about. Since I've started, a lot of things have changed. They've really been focusing on the No Child Left Behind. But

> the atmosphere, overall, I think they are dealing with it pretty well as far as not getting too stressed.

It is important to note that these strategies are an attempt to adapt to persistent instability in the school. Despite the unstable environment, Greenway's teachers and leadership continue to construct an approach that helps them cope with the challenge. *NCLB* has been fully integrated into their work and is deeply entrenched in the way they understand their role and the role of others involved in the school. Thus, Greenway illustrates a Shifted reality.

Conclusions

The classification of schools into the three types of realities provides a conceptual framework outlining the specific ways that *NCLB* shapes schools' cultures, teachers' experiences, and work environments. The classifications describe the many ways that accountability policies, like *NCLB*, can affect schools as workplaces. To investigate this issue further, the next chapter examines the working conditions in schools. Empirical relationships are uncovered using secondary survey data and detailed descriptions offered by teachers during the in-depth interviews. This mixed method approach gives a more complete picture of the relationship between *NCLB* policy and teachers' perceptions of their working conditions.

Chapter 5: Working Conditions

Schools are places to educate and socialize children, but they are also workplaces for teachers and administrators. To fully understand the impact of educational policy on teachers, one must examine the nature of working conditions within schools and how they vary under distinct policy conditions. An examination of working conditions is particularly important given the multitude of literature that asserts many of the deficiencies of public schools are related to inadequacies in the working conditions, financial, and social support given to teachers (e.g. Carnegie Forum 1986; Conley and Cooper 1991; Darling-Hammond 1984, 1995; Holmes Group 1986; Rosenholtz 1989; Sergiovanni and Moore 1989; McLaughlin and Talbert 1993; Weis et al. 1989). Similarly, there is a growing body of evidence which links work conditions within schools, particularly various forms of non-salary institutional support, to growing teacher attrition (Brill and McCartney 2008). In fact, a recent review by Johnson et al. (2005) demonstrates that the "character" of the workplace dramatically shapes teachers decision to enter and remain in the profession. In a climate of growing teacher attrition, it is important to focus on the issues teachers themselves cite as primary reasons for leaving the occupation: one of which is dissatisfaction with workplace conditions (Hanushek and Rivkin 2007; Ingersoll 1999; National Center for Education Statistics 2004; Reichardt, et al. 2008).

There are multitudes of ways to define working conditions. In most workplaces, working conditions are typically measured via the material benefits and resources of the

job, the climate of the workplace, and an employees' perception of these factors as demonstrated by their job satisfaction or professionalism (Kalleberg 1977). However, schools are not traditional workplaces. So, the question remains, which working conditions are crucial to the work of teachers? A detailed report released by the Center for Teaching Quality (Berry, Smylie and Fuller 2008) quoted Sykes (2008) as saying,

> A main issue concerns how to bound and demark the concept. From one angle the question might be, 'What does not count as teacher working conditions?' The concept seems capacious to the point of conceptual vacuity. Anything and everything associated with schools, communities, teachers, students, et al. might conceivably be related to the conditions of teaching work. Here again some form of stipulation seems necessary, which in turn relies on theory. Relatedly, there is not a commonly accepted set of categories and sub-categories that make up teacher working conditions, no canonical understanding that allows for constant comparisons. One can imagine such categories; indeed these are coded into various instruments, but no established usage or justification has been formulated.

Within education, many have tried to identify the possible categories of critical work conditions for teachers (Futernick 2007; Johnson 2006; Smylie and Allen 2005). Johnson (2006) carried out one of the most comprehensive efforts. Using case studies, Johnson built a framework for understanding working conditions in schools. She identified seven features of schools which combined create the context for teachers' work (Johnson 1990). These features include: physical, organizational, sociological, political, cultural, psychological, and educational policies. Within this comprehensive framework, the unique structure and workplace culture of schools make five distinct working conditions crucial to the work of teachers: time, facilities and resources, empowerment, leadership, and professional development.

Both the disorganization and disempowerment perspectives highlight the importance of these five working conditions. In fact, one could argue that the salience of

these five conditions is a function of the dual perspectives on school structure. The structural space produced in a loosely coupled system leaves these five core elements largely to the discretion of teachers and schools. This space may also produce a significant amount of variation in working conditions across schools. In other words, the structural space creates a set of conditions where "those below" exert considerable control over the working conditions in schools, and teachers tend to formulate their assessment of their school on the basis of these conditions.

However, in the current accountability context, the view from above identifies these same five attributes as important tools for producing change within schools. This view, which drives the construction of policy, asserts that schools are disorganized and attempts to draw the work of teachers in closer alignment with administrative structure by regaining some control over the internal aspects of schooling. In particular, the view from above seeks to manipulate working conditions to redirect the work occurring within schools in a way best suited to accomplish stated goals. In a context where the formal administrative structures are tightly coupled with the core work of schooling, these conditions are controlled from above. This centralization results in is less variation in working conditions across schools thereby reducing their salience among educators (e.g. OECD 2000; Park 2006).

I examine these five working conditions for several reasons. First, they are identified by education researchers as key factors to understanding teachers' experience of their work (Futernick 2007; Johnson 2006; Smylie and Allen 2005). Second, these five conditions were identified and isolated for study by the Center for Teaching Quality. The Center for Teaching Quality organizes research efforts across several states,

including Georgia's Quality Learning and Teaching Environments Initiative, which assess how policy influences teachers' working conditions. Third, I examine these five factors due to their theoretical relevance to accountability policy. As I will explain in more detail below, it is the objective of the policy to reshape these factors within schools. Thus, to the extent that the policy has penetrated to the classroom level, teachers are likely to report an influence of policy on their experience of time, facilities and resources, empowerment, leadership, and professional development.

This chapter is divided into three major sections. To begin, I offer a review of the literature on the five working conditions selected for study. Next, I present the quantitative findings produced using multivariate regression analysis. This analysis investigates the empirical relationships between a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status, Needs Improvement duration, and teachers' assessments of school working conditions. I conduct this analysis using a combined dataset which draws on the Quality Learning and Teaching Environments Survey and district reports to the Georgia Department of Education. Lastly, I present the findings from my qualitative analysis of teacher interviews across three middle schools in the same Georgia school district. These data add a layer of understanding to the analysis and offer tangible examples of teachers' lived experience under *No Child Left Behind*. I attempt to further validate the findings and add depth to the final analysis by combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Overview of Five Working Conditions

Time

Research demonstrates that teachers in the United States spend more time in front of the classroom teaching and controlling the classroom environment than teachers in many other nations (OECD 2003; Schaub and Baker 1991; The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality 2004). Not only are teachers spending more time working on classroom related activities than other nations, the total number of work hours is increasing over time (Darling-Hammond 1997). Time is a valuable resource for teachers. They need time to teach the curriculum, plan lessons, attend professional development training, and if possible, to collaborate with other teachers. However, beyond these teaching tasks, a considerable amount of time is consumed by non-essential duties such as bus and lunch patrol, hall monitoring, and committee work to name just a few. In contrast to the popular belief that teachers do not work full days, a recent study indicates that teachers spend approximately 50 hours completing instructional duties each week, some of which are paid and others of which are not compensated (National Education Association 2008).

The consumption of time is important to teachers as they evaluate their working conditions since many teachers believe that more time on instructional tasks, collaborative efforts, and planning would result in improved student learning (Berry et al. 2008; Sunderman, Kim, and Orfield 2005). The use of time is particularly salient in the current policy context. One survey shows that 70 percent of teacher respondents had

insufficient time to cover curriculum outlined in their state standards (Doherty 2001). Teachers report that as a result of state mandated testing, more time is being spent on tested subjects than non-tested subjects as well as on students close to proficiency than those students already proficient or severely behind (Sunderman, Kim, and Orfield 2005). Given the general pattern of enlarging required curriculum, teachers are likely under increased constraints to cover only the current standards. With a limited allotment of time to cover state standards and the increasing relevance of this coverage for performance on high-stakes end of year tests, teachers are likely to find the redistribution of time under *NCLB* has important implications for their evaluations of this key working condition. I expect teachers in this study will report similar patterns in the redistribution of their time; however, the intensity of this redistribution effort and its actual impact on the work and strategies of teachers will likely vary across school sanctioning contexts.

Facilities and Resources

While the importance of facilities and resources for student achievement have been hotly debated (e.g. Coleman et al. 1966; Hanushek 1989; Jencks et al. 1972), they seem to play a less ambiguous role in the working conditions of teachers. Teachers desire to work in well-equipped and resourced schools. Unfortunately, most research indicates that a majority of schools in the United States are in need of updating and repair. The U.S. General Accounting Office found that about one-third of schools need some type of extensive repair. Inadequate plumbing, roofing, or electrical systems plague almost two-thirds of schools. Hazardous environmental conditions can be found

in 58 percent of schools (Howell et al. 1997). More recent assessment of these conditions indicates relatively little change in the overall number of schools with substandard facilities (National Center for Education Statistics 2000). Not only are school buildings in need of repair, but teachers have insufficient access to educational materials and supplies (Berry et al. 2008). Some research indicates that having adequate and appropriate instructional materials and supplies can increase student academic performance on standardized tests (Grissmer and Flanagan 2001), improve self and collective efficacy of teachers (Ware and Kitsantas 2007), and reduce teacher job dissatisfaction and attrition (Buckley, Schneider and Shang 2004; Stockard and Lehman 2004). Educational research argues that both the condition of the school facilities, as well as the availability of instructional materials and supplies, are related to teachers' assessments of their job satisfaction and student educational outcomes (Berry et al. 2008).

After the passage of *NCLB*, teachers expressed an increasing need for resources to purchase curriculum and materials supporting state standards (Sunderman, Kim, and Orfield 2005). The impact of *NCLB* on facilities and resources becomes more complex when one considers the supplemental services component of the policy. According to *NCLB*, districts must set aside 20 percent of their Title I funds for supplemental services and choice-related transportation. These funds, however, cannot be distributed until student needs are identified and services planned (Sunderman, Kim, and Orfield 2005). This results in a large segment of Title I funds sitting unused for a portion of the year. In addition, the services target resources, both financial and human, towards specific subgroups or subjects in the schools. For these reasons, the material resources and physical workspace do appear to play a role in teachers' assessments of their working

conditions. Based on the findings in the literature, I expect that school composition, as well as sanctioning level, will produce differential interpretations of facilities and resources by the teachers I anticipate considerable variation in the importance of facilities and resources to teachers across the three schools. In addition, I expect to find the types of facilities and resources emphasized will vary across school context.

Empowerment

Teachers are relatively autonomous in their classrooms; however, they have very little control over the larger institutional decisions affecting their work (Ingersoll 2003; The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality 2004). Ingersoll's (2003) pivotal work on teacher control demonstrates that in schools where teachers feel empowered to make key workplace decisions there is reduced turnover and more teacher engagement (see also Firestone and Pennell 1993; Kirkman and Rosen 1999). With the debates about the professional status of teachers proliferating, teachers desire to feel appreciated, valued, and important for the operation of the school system. Empowerment is not just about making decisions, but more generally about feeling trusted and having trust in the school leadership (Bryk and Schneider 2002). Teachers' understanding of their working conditions appears to be shaped by the extent to which they feel important to the operation of the school and the education of their students.

In a study by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 1997), a connection was found between four aspects of teacher professionalism and career commitment. These four aspects of professionalism included: teacher classroom

autonomy, faculty policymaking influence, assistance for new teachers, and maximum end-of-career salaries. These findings further support the notion that teachers derive satisfaction from feeling empowered in their classroom and having an influence in larger school issues. Unfortunately, *NCLB* policy reshapes many of these aspects that lead to higher teacher commitment. Specifically, teachers express that maintaining a modicum of flexibility in the classroom is crucial to their sense of professional empowerment (Buckley et al. 2004; Darling-Hammond 1997). This is not an indication of resistance to testing or standards-based reform, but rather a desire to believe they are influential actors in the instructional process beyond what scripted curriculum could provide (Firestone and Pennell 1993; Johnson et al. 2004; Reichardt et al. 2008).

With the increased federal and state control over school processes mandated by *NCLB*, the nature of teacher empowerment may be a particularly relevant aspect of working conditions to investigate. I expect that *NCLB* accountability may reduce the perception of teacher empowerment in the classroom, especially in sanctioned schools, and actually increase the amount of external control over school policymaking via outside "experts" and district/state mandates. Given the importance of empowerment to so many aspects of teachers' work, I predict empowerment will play a key role in the interpretation and response of many intraorganizational processes.

Leadership

Related to empowerment is the nature of school leadership. A national study of teacher turnover found that among teachers leaving the occupation due to job

dissatisfaction, the lack of administrative support and low teacher salaries were the two top reasons listed for their departure (Ingersoll 2001). Research examining school leadership focuses primarily on participation, communication, trust, and overall support (Berry, Smylie, and Fuller 2008). The current trend in research on administration participation focuses on distributed leadership activities. This collective approach to governing schools asserts that teachers exercise control in key decisions and thus relies heavily on an empowered teacher workforce and reciprocal accountability (Berry, Smylie, and Fuller 2008, Copeland 2003). In a context of growing external accountability, the distributed leadership approach may or may not function to promote more effective leadership within the school. Similarly, teachers believe that open communication is a requirement for effective leadership. In contexts marked by poor communication, teachers express higher rates of job dissatisfaction and attrition (Chance and Chance 2002; Thompson et al. 1997).

Trust and support are key issues when considering the influence of accountability policy on teachers' work conditions. In a context where there is increased external scrutiny and public evaluation of school and teacher success, teachers in Needs Improvement school contexts are likely to draw heavily on the sense of trust and support engendered within the school. Leaders that demonstrate trustworthiness have been shown to promote greater employee satisfaction and motivation (Porter et al. 2007). Likewise, when teachers feel supported by their leadership they tend to be happier and more committed to their jobs (Porter et al. 2007) and more likely to remain in teaching (Johnson et al. 2004). According to Berry et al. (2008), "leadership support has tended to mean administrators who back teachers up when it comes to student discipline, buffer

teachers from outside-the-classroom forces, and minimize non-teaching obligations and duties." All of these factors are crucial for the work of teachers and especially so in a Needs Improvement school where "outside-the-classroom forces" and "non-teaching obligations and duties" are greater. For these reasons, I expect Needs Improvement schools will emphasize the protective ability of school leaders. However, given the growing emphasis on accountability throughout the organization, the ability of leaders in sanctioned schools to effectively buffer may be hampered.

Professional Development

Lastly, professional development for teachers emerges as an important feature of the working conditions in school. Professional development infers that teachers are indeed professionals with an occupation specific body of knowledge and skills. Teachers may regard professional development as recognition of their professional status, symbolic though it may be, as well as assistance in developing new and more effective teaching techniques. While the advancement of skills is important, professional development that exceeds skills and empowers teachers to analyze curriculum, critique practices, and participate in the development of new procedures seem to be even more significant (The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality 2004). Specifically, work by Birman et al. (2000) identifies six critical factors for effective professional development: deep content knowledge, active learning, coherence in professional development programs, longer duration, collective participation, and newer forms of professional development. In a high-stakes accountability context, the ability of professional development to provide

teachers with effective teaching strategies that enable them to promote student and school improvement is vital. However, the extent to which teachers evaluate these professional development programs as effective is not fully understood across policy contexts. Likewise, the interrelated nature of professional development with leadership, empowerment, and time also makes this an interesting area for further query. I expect teachers' interpretations of the importance and role of professional development in the school will vary across sanctioning levels. Since professional development is a primary channel for improving the "quality" of teachers and training teachers in failing schools, I anticipate that teachers working in Needs Improvement schools will receive more professional development and provide stronger assessments of its usefulness.

The unique structure of schools and workplace culture make the five working conditions outlined above particularly salient for teachers. For this reason, this research investigates if and how *NCLB* initiatives have reshaped the importance or usage of the working conditions in schools.

Quantitative Analysis

In this study, I begin the examination of policy and teachers' assessments of working conditions by exploring their relationship in secondary survey data. My multilevel theoretical framework and conceptual model requires both individual and organizational level data. I employ two sources of quantitative data in this project. The analysis of this data serves three primary functions. First, it helps me establish that there is a relationship between sanctioning and working conditions in schools. Second, it provides a body of findings that exceeds the single county where I conducted my

qualitative research. Lastly, this assessment focuses my qualitative study by identifying specific factors that I can examine in more detail through the interviews.

In January 2005, the Georgia BellSouth Quality Learning and Teaching Environments Initiative (QLTE) conducted a pilot survey of working conditions in ten public school districts throughout Georgia. This project was modeled after a similar initiative in North Carolina that began in 2002. The initiative in Georgia aims to provide detailed data from teachers on the nature of working conditions in their schools and what they need to better serve students. This study operates under the assumption that working conditions are vital to teacher effectiveness and student achievement. The surveys, which include predominantly closed-ended with a few open-ended questions, assess five domains of school working conditions – time, facilities and resources, leadership, empowerment, and professional learning.

Participating districts were selected according to their geographic and demographic diversity as well as school district and community leadership. Lowe County, the district later chosen for qualitative data collection, participated in the QLTE. [18] A total of 157 schools participated in the pilot study. While the districts included are not a representative sample, they do span Georgia geographically as well as representing urban, rural, small, and large districts. With over 7,000 educators responding to the survey, the overall response rate exceeded 83 percent.

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[18] All school district, school, and personal names have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

The Measurement of the Dependent Variables

The QLTE survey is designed to measure the extent to which educators agree or disagree with specific elements of the five domains of working conditions. For each domain, a series of statements assess various components of the working condition and records the educator's level of agreement through their response on a Likert scale [range 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree"]. Within each domain, these statements can be combined to form a single measure gauging the importance of that working condition for the respondent. Prior to constructing the measure for each domain, factor analysis was used to identify items within the domain that accurately measure the working condition under examination. Items that did not adequately load were not included in the measure of that working condition.[19] These measures served as dependent variables in my quantitative analysis. In addition, there are questions that gather supporting details in each domain. For example, in the section on time, a series of questions requests educators to quantify the number of hours spent in various tasks. Other items on the survey ask educators to identify specific areas in which they require additional support, particular individuals that assist them, certain types of professional development they may have received, and respond to core questions which measure overall perceptions of longevity and commitment. Each educator also provided demographic information (gender, race/ethnicity, education, certification and teaching experience). The demographic information served as individual-level control variables.

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[19] For more information about the factor analysis and the particular items included in each working condition measure, please see Chapter 3: Research Design. A complete list of the factor analysis results and all items included in each working condition measure can be found in Table 2.

The variables included from this survey are listed in Table 3. A complete copy of the survey instrument is included as Appendix A.

Given the success of the survey and the diversity of school policy experiences in Lowe County, I selected Lowe for the qualitative portion of this study. This multi-method approach in a single district offers a unique opportunity to triangulate the findings on working conditions for Lowe County teachers. The QLTE collected 1,232 responses from Lowe County Schools. Out of the total responses, 80.9 percent were teachers, 4.6 percent were administrators, 4.2 percent% were counselors/media specialists, and 10.2 percent were paraprofessionals. The University System of Georgia P-16 Department gave me access to the QLTE data.[20] After submitting a written request and data use form, ensuring respondent confidentially and the proper use of data, I was granted access to the data.

The Measurement of Independent Variables

To incorporate measures of *NCLB* policy and the implementation of sanctions in the sampled schools, I linked the QLTE data with school district reports to the Georgia Department of Education. The School District Report Cards contained information on school sanctioning levels, duration of Needs Improvement, as well as a variety of organizational context variables used as controls in the regression analysis. Combining these data with the QLTE enabled me to test for relationships between sanctioning and

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[20] I would like to thank The University System of Georgia and the Office of P-16 Initiatives for granting me access to the Quality Learning and Teaching Environments Data collected as part of The Teacher Quality Project. For more information see www.qlte.org

working conditions in schools while controlling for school context. Final OLS regression models controlled for organizational and individual factors to test the relationship between sanctions and working conditions. A complete list of variables and data sources can be found in Table 3.

Control Variables

Prior to examining the relationship between policy and teachers' working conditions, a review of the control variables is in order. This study focuses on the interplay between one specific set of contextual variables, the policy status of the school, and teachers' assessments of their school working conditions. However, teachers' working conditions are a function of both the larger organizational context (composition of the school, rates of poverty, size, etc.) as well as their individual attributes (race, gender, experience, grade level, etc.). Thus, to properly specify the model, I include measures which captured many of these possible explanatory factors.

I include a set of nine control variables in my quantitative analysis. Out of these nine variables, four measure individual attributes, including: total years teaching experience, teacher race, teacher gender, and current grade level taught. Each of these individual attributes has been shown to be an important indicator of teachers' evaluations of work conditions (Berry et al. 2008). The remaining five variables capture contextual elements important for teasing out the influence of policy. These organizational variables include: Title I status, percent of students with disabilities, percent of students with limited English proficiency, percent minority enrollment, and the number of full-time teachers working at the school. While several of these variables uncover fascinating

patterns, a thorough explanation of these relationships is beyond the scope of the project. Thus, a quick review of the patterns is sufficient to lay the ground work for the policy findings examined below. Complete OLS regression results are presented in Table 4.

Teaching Experience – Across all five domains, teachers with more years of experience report more favorable assessments of their work conditions. Thus, as a teacher gains years of experience they tend to evaluate their time (b=.203, p<.001), empowerment (b=.453, p<.001), facilities (b=.274, p<.001), professional development (b=.335, p<.001), and leadership (b=.349, p<.001) more positively.[21]

Race – Despite persistent patterns of racial discrimination at work in the United States, African American teachers in this sample report more adequate assessments of their working conditions than white teachers. This means, that when compared with all other teachers, African American teachers tend to report more favorable evaluations of their time (b=1.024, p<.001), empowerment (b=1.930, p<.001), facilities (b=1.743, p<.001), professional development (b=1.525, p<.001), and leadership (b=1.570, p<.001).[22]

Gender - Likewise, gender presents us with somewhat counterintuitive findings. Despite the fact that teaching remains a female-dominated occupation, males in the survey

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[21] This finding fits well with the literature on new teachers. New teachers tend to concentrate on classroom management and curriculum instruction than the broader contextual issues (Rosenholtz and Simpson 1990).

[22] This finding is consistent with the relative status expectations argument (Gordon 2006). According to this theory, whites in the population are typically found working in positions where they have higher levels of control than non-whites. This pattern of increased control due to socially valued status characteristics produces the expectation of control. Thus, the relative lack of control expressed in their evaluations of empowerment, time, facilities, professional development, and leadership when compared to non-whites is particularly salient to their work experience and yields a perception of lesser control.

indicate a statistically significant higher evaluation of their working conditions in three out of the five domains. Specifically, males indicate more favorable evaluations of their time (b=.795, p<.001), facilities and resources (b=1.218, p<.001), and leadership (b=.818, p<.05) when compared to women.[23] Interestingly, the associations between gender, empowerment, and professional development are not statistically significant.

Grade level - Grade level, when measured as elementary, middle, or high school, is also associated with several aspects of work conditions. Data was not collected from the survey respondents on the specific grade levels they taught. However, since teachers can be identified by school, grade level is measured using the grades offered in the school: elementary, middle, or high school. Teachers working with higher-grade levels indicate a statistically significant difference when compared to those working with lower grades in three out of the five working conditions examined. Working in higher grades is associated with a less favorable evaluation of teachers' empowerment (b=-.768, p<.05), facilities (b=-.371, p<.10), and professional development (b=-.823, p<.001).[24]

Title I - Several of the organizational context variables also produce intriguing findings. First, the Title I status of the school is only a significant predictor of teachers' assessments of time (b=1.113, p<.001) and empowerment (b=-.811, p<.10). While both

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[23] This seems consistent with the research on tokenism in organizations (Kanter 1977). Specifically, men are a socially valued token in the education system and thus are given more respect and authority. In this case, being a token may be revealed in perceptions of more adequate time, facilities and resources, and leadership.

[24] This is certainly consistent with the fact that teachers working with higher grades are typically working in larger school settings with more students and faculty. This would tend to stretch the schools capacity for cooperative decision-making and learning through professional development as well as spreading the available resources over more classrooms and students.

of these associations are statistically significant, time is a positive coefficient and empowerment is negative. This means that teachers in Title I schools report more positive evaluations of their time and more negative assessments of their empowerment when compared to teachers in non-Title I schools.[25]

Disabilities - The percentage of students in school with disabilities produced much more consistent findings. For all five working condition domains, as the percentage of students with disabilities increases in the school, the teachers' evaluation of their working conditions decrease. (Time b= -.043, $p<.05$; Empowerment b= -.129, $p<.05$; Facilities b=-.066, $p<.05$; Professional Development b=-.084, $p<.001$; Leadership b=-.094, $p<.05$)[26]

Limited English Proficiency - Surprisingly, the percentage of students with limited English proficiency does not follow a similar pattern. One might expect that serving students with disabilities and students learning English might pose comparable challenges and thus affect work conditions in similar ways. This is not the case. In fact, the percentage of students with limited English proficiency in the school only significantly impacts time. In this domain, as the percentage of students with limited English

[25] One possible explanation may arise from the programs and resources given to Title I schools. This increased capacity may enable teachers to utilize their time more efficiently while simultaneously posing limits on their empowerment.

[26] Teachers working in schools with large number of students with disabilities may be required to complete additional paperwork, may have increased supervision by the state, and may work under leaders that are also experiencing considerable additional strain from the requirements of serving this student population.

proficiency increases in the school, teachers' report more favorable evaluations of their time (b= .0987, p<.05).[27]

Minority enrollment - Across the board, an increase in the percentage of minority students in the school significantly decreases teachers' evaluations of working conditions in all five domains. Thus, as the number of students of color increases, teachers report less favorable evaluations of their time (b=-.015, p<.001), empowerment (b=-.048, p<.001), facilities (b=-.017, p<.001), professional development (b=-.022, p<.001), and leadership (b=-.029, p<.001).[28]

Faculty Size - Similar to the impact of increasing minority composition, all five domains are affected negatively by increasing faculty size. Thus, as the number of full-time teachers in the school increases, teachers express more negative evaluations of their time (b=-.0115, p<.05), empowerment (b=-.041, p<.05), facilities (b=-.021, p<.05), professional development (b=-.019, p<.05), and leadership (b=-.028, p<.05).[29]

In general, the findings produced by the control variables indicate several basic patterns. First, where the findings are significant, all individual-level controls yielded

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[27] Similar to the findings for working in a Title I school, one possible explanation is that additional specialized teachers and programs may be provided to the school to assist students in learning English. This increased capacity may better structure teacher time in this school.

[28] Given the patterns of racial and economic inequality persistent in this country, it is likely that the measure of racial composition of the school is also capturing economic deprivation. This finding is consistent with prior research on student body composition and the conditions in school (Kozol 1991).

[29] This may be a function of responsibilities given to teachers working in large schools, the nature of communication in the school, or possibly the difficulty in establishing trust, collective decision-making, or collaborative work atmosphere with a large faculty.

positive assessments of working conditions. Specifically, teachers with more experience, teachers of color, and male teachers evaluate the majority of their work conditions more positively. Second, where the coefficients are significant, controls for school context tend to result in negative coefficients. Teachers working in schools offering higher grade levels, with larger percentages of students with disabilities, minority enrollments, and larger faculty sizes tend to have more negative evaluations of their work conditions. Two exceptions to this pattern exist. Title I produces mixed directionality for time and empowerment. Limited English Proficiency generates a positive coefficient for time. These two exceptions to the larger patterns may tap into similar phenomena. The increased demands on schools receiving Title I funding and instructing large numbers of language learners may generate the perception among teachers that their time is more highly structured. Particularly in the accountability context, these organizational conditions may actually produce increased structuring of teacher time. In fact, a similar pattern emerges in the qualitative data discussed later in this chapter. Overall, the findings fit well with the larger patterns established in the quantitative and qualitative investigation of the relationship between policy and work conditions. Having controlled for possible individual and organizational explanatory variables, I now move to my analysis of the impact of policy on teachers' working conditions.

The Measurement of *No Child Left Behind* Policy

There are two different ways of examining the relationship between *NCLB* requirements and teachers' assessments of school working conditions. First, one can

think of *NCLB* sanctions as having a cumulative impact on teachers. If this is the case, then one would need to measure sanctions using the number of years in Needs Improvement status.[30] The assumption underlying this approach is that *NCLB* intensifies over time and the prolonged exposure to sanctions may produce distinct interpretations by teachers of their working conditions. On the other hand, it may be the case that the immediate impact of the failure to meet AYP in the previous year is more salient for teachers' experiences. From this perspective, the long-term effect of *NCLB* sanctions would have a lesser impact than the result of the last years attempt to meet AYP. To capture the distinct effects of *NCLB* requirements, both measures of the policy are analyzed.[31]

Time: What does the survey show?

As illustrated in Table 4, the regression models indicate that the number of years in Needs Improvement produces a positive assessment of the adequacy of teacher time

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[30] Sanctions are outlined by *NCLB*; however, states retain some power in deciphering the actual services to be provided to schools. While this variation across states is significant for national assessments of *NCLB*, this study focuses on a single state. Since all data was collected within the state of Georgia, sanctions are consistent across schools in similar NI status.

[31] Needs Improvement and AYP are related to one another ($r = 0.48$). A school's Needs Improvement status is the total of all AYP results beginning after the second consecutive failure. In other words, if a school does not meet AYP for several consecutive years, then they are, by definition, further along in Needs Improvement. What is unique about these measures of *NCLB* is that they capture distinct segments of time. Number of years in Needs Improvement captures the duration of sanctions in the school. AYP just records the result of the previous year's effort. Since each measure tests a different type of relationship with the dependent variable, both measures were utilized. The models presented here include both Needs Improvement and AYP. Separate models were tested to see if each measure made a distinct contribution to working conditions when considered alone. In several models the results were unchanged, while in others some of the policy variables were no longer significant. This difference in results is the product of the moderate correlation between the variables and the direction of the coefficient. Including both variables in the same model presents a more accurate assessment of the simultaneous effect of the *NCLB* conditions. Thus, I chose to present those models.

(b=.187, p<.05). In other words, the longer a school has been in Needs Improvement, the more positively teachers in that school evaluate the adequacy of their time for meeting student needs, completing administrative duties, and collaborating with their colleagues. This finding, while consistent with the objectives of *NCLB*, may appear surprising to those who would expect the cumulative impact of Needs Improvement and the accompanying sanctions to have a negative impact on teachers' time.

When *NCLB* is measured using AYP failure in the preceding year, no significant relationship emerges between AYP status and time. Thus, the impact of accountability policy on time is captured when you look at the long-term effects of Needs Improvement rather than the year-to-year shift or short-term effects of AYP failure. Overall, there is a general improvement of teachers' perceptions of the adequacy of time as schools move forward with the Needs Improvement process. This set of findings implies that the duration of Needs Improvement status and the accompanying sanctions have a positive cumulative effect on one component of teachers' working conditions – time.

Empowerment

If the cumulative impact of *NCLB* requirements on teachers' assessment of time is positive, one might expect to find that the same pattern exists in teachers' assessments of their empowerment. In fact, this is the case. Looking at this relationship, the number of years in Needs Improvement improves a teacher's sense of empowerment (b=.342, p<.05). Surprisingly, the previous year's AYP failure also predicts a significant relationship. In this case, however, AYP failure produces a reduction in teachers' empowerment (b=-1.879, p<.001). Thus, both the duration of Needs Improvement status

and the previous year's AYP failure help to explain teachers' empowerment. What is interesting is that depending on the nature of the measurement of *NCLB*, both positive and negative effects on empowerment are evident. The multivariate analysis demonstrates a gradual improvement of empowerment as teachers continue to work under sanctions. On the other hand, these data show that teachers feel a dramatic decrease in empowerment immediately following each successive failure.

Facilities and Resources

An examination of the influence of the number of years in Needs Improvement and AYP results on facilities and resources reveals a familiar pattern. Similar to empowerment, the number of years in Needs Improvement boosts teachers' assessment of the adequacy and access to necessary school facilities and teaching resources ($b=.395$, $p<.001$). Conversely, failing AYP in the previous year causes a reduction in teachers' perception of the adequacy of the facilities and resources ($b= -1.383$, $p<.001$). Thus, both the long-term and short-term influences of policy matter for teachers' evaluations of their facilities and resources. However, the duration of Needs Improvement has a positive effect on the evaluations, while the short-term impact of AYP failure in the previous year does not.

Professional Development

Interestingly, controlling for all other variables, neither the number of years in Needs Improvement nor the result of AYP in the previous year have a statistically significant impact on teachers' evaluation of their professional development. Given the

amount of attention paid to professional development as a method for school improvement, this finding is surprising. It is possible that the requirement to have professional development in all schools regardless of Needs Improvement status diminishes its overall significance in Needs Improvement schools. Perhaps the impact of policy on professional development is more nuanced and will be revealed in the interview data.

Leadership

The teacher survey data reveal that as the number of years in Needs Improvement increases, the more positively teachers' assess the accessibility and support of their school leadership ($b=.192$, $p<.10$). However, failure to meet AYP in the previous year is negatively related to teachers' evaluations of their leadership ($b=-1.703$, $p<.001$). Similar to several other working condition domains, the impact of policy on teachers' evaluations of their leadership is a function of both the long-term positive effects and short-term negative effects of policy.

Summary of Quantitative Findings

In sum, an examination of the survey data reveals an interesting set of relationships between *NCLB* requirements, as measured by Needs Improvement, AYP status, and teachers' assessments of their working conditions. According to these findings, prolonged Needs Improvement status improves teachers' assessment of the adequacy of their time, empowerment, facilities and resources, and leadership.

Conversely, failing AYP in the preceding year has no impact on teachers' time, but does yield a reduction in perceptions of empowerment, facilities and resources, and leadership. Neither Needs Improvement nor AYP have a statistically significant relationship with professional development. In general, the longer a school is under Needs Improvement and experiencing sanctions, the more positively teachers evaluate their work conditions. Conversely, failing AYP in the preceding year tends to reduce teachers' perception of their work conditions. Table 5 summarizes these findings. These findings are intriguing; however, they do not reveal how or why these relationships emerge. To gain this level of understanding, I turn to the interview data.

Qualitative Analysis

The statistical findings presented above suggest a complex web of positive and negative outcomes for teachers' working conditions. To investigate these results further, I used in-depth interview data. I conducted 63 interviews with teachers, principals, and district administrators during the fall of 2006. These interviews were designed to collect data on educators' and administrators' work experiences under *NCLB* across three distinct school settings within a single Georgia school district.

All schools selected for participation are located in the same Georgia school district.[32] To highlight variation in *NCLB* contexts, each of these three schools are at a different level of Needs Improvement. The first school, White Plains Middle School, has

[32] All interviews were conducted in the same school district. This single-district sample allows me to control for potential district effects.

never been on the Needs Improvement list.[33] White Plains is a relatively new middle school that has continually met AYP and is considered a Distinguished school. As a result of their Distinguished status, White Plains accepts students from other area middle schools that are on the Needs Improvement list. The second school, Parkside Middle School, is a newcomer to the Needs Improvement list. At the time of data collection, they had just begun implementing school choice. Greenway Middle School, the final school chosen for the study, is in advanced Needs Improvement standing and currently undergoing school restructuring and contract monitoring. By sampling across Needs Improvement levels, I highlight variation in *NCLB* sanctioning experiences.

All teachers in each school were notified of the study and given the opportunity to participate. To maximize variation in teacher perspectives, the original sample included comparable number of respondents from all theoretically relevant categories: grade level, years of experience, and subject area taught. The interview protocol raised many related topics including the impact of high-stakes accountability policy on school working conditions, the strategies used by teachers and school administrators to respond to the policy, and the impact the policy is having on their sense of job satisfaction and career plans.

A subsample of teachers was drawn from the 63 interviews for this investigation (N=30, 10 teachers per school). Since experiences are likely to vary according to organizational position, I drew a purposive subsample of teachers across subject, grade, and teaching experience. In addition, special education teachers are often at the crux of

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[33] I use pseudonyms for all school and teacher names to protect confidentiality.

NCLB implementation so I included one special education teacher from each school. When multiple teachers fit the same criteria, respondents were selected at random. Thus, the final sample represents the diversity of teachers within each school. I conducted a systematic analysis of discussions of working conditions found in this subsample of the teacher interviews using the qualitative analysis software MaxQDA.[34] In these rich conversations with teachers in each of the school contexts, they revealed how variation in the *NCLB* Needs Improvement and sanctioning levels impacts their experiences of school working conditions.

Time: What do teachers say?

Teachers in all three schools report a change in the quality of their teaching time as a result of *NCLB* school accountability and high-stakes testing. With the increasing focus on standards, testing, and accountability codified by *NCLB*, all teachers feel that their time is at a premium. The expectation that they will be able to cover the entire mandated curriculum prior to the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT), the standardized test used to assess AYP in Georgia middle schools, leaves them feeling rushed. This time crunch not only affects their ability to get curriculum covered at an adequate pace, but also erodes their sense of classroom empowerment. Teachers experience a lack of adequate time and this generates the feeling that they are not concentrating on delivering the required curriculum or meeting their students' needs, but

[34] For more discussion on my qualitative methodology, please see Chapter 3: Research Design.

rather just "racing against the clock". Thus, time and empowerment are intertwined in their everyday work experiences regardless of the school's Needs Improvement status.

Elizabeth, a teacher working at White Plains, expressed the intersection of time and classroom empowerment in this way.

> The race to the CRCT score, do you have time for that? And that is what you end up saying to yourself. Oh, it would be nice if I could get John [to read on grade level], but I don't have time… I got to go. I've got to go. And that is dehumanizing for me.

Elizabeth feels "dehumanized" because her attention has been pulled away from her students' academic needs and refocused on keeping up with the pace of the curriculum. It is a common sentiment across schools that teachers do not have enough time to "just teach." With this shortage of time comes a loss of control, or empowerment, in their classroom.

As teachers work under *NCLB* sanctions, this sense of time pressure within their classroom intensifies. Sadie, a teacher at Parkside says,

> There is a great deal of pressure about the CRCT and even though you try not to let it bother you, I think it bothers you all year long. The pressure [is] you want to teach for learning and you don't want to teach for tests, but the reality is you have to teach a little bit for the test because, the test is the test!

The loss of empowerment here takes the form of "teaching to the test" rather than "teaching for learning." In general, the idea of gearing one's teaching towards the CRCT makes teachers uncomfortable and strips them of their ability to exercise autonomy in curriculum and lesson choices. There is a persistent concern about the CRCT and this seems to invade many aspects of the school. Mary Beth expressed it this way, "[In] January it starts a little. We get through the writing tests, we start in February… It's not

like every day, every minute but it just kind of hangs. It kind of looms." Another teacher described the experience of persistent pressure of CRCT looming over their classroom teaching as the "elephant in the room." The crunch on time resulting from CRCT not only impacts how teachers use their time but also how they feel about their empowerment in the classroom. As the consequences of student performance on the CRCT grow in importance for schools, the "elephant" grows larger in the room.

Teachers at Greenway also experience this intersection of time and empowerment. However, the pressure of working under Needs Improvement conditions for such a long time leads Greenway teachers to develop strategic responses to this shared experience. Teachers identify several strategies that they devised for dividing and using their time within the pressures that all teachers are feeling to varying degrees. Two strategies dominate teachers' experience. First, teachers divide up their classroom time in an attempt to meet the diverse needs of their students while moving at a rapid pace. This strategy has special significance for educators in Needs Improvement schools since student body diversity is directly involved with the reporting of test scores and AYP. Second, teachers eliminate all untested curriculum to focus their limited time on topics that will improve test scores. These strategies help teachers manage the pressures and demands of working in a Needs Improvement schools. It is also interesting to note that these strategies are consistent with the disorganization perspective. This may indicate that current accountability initiatives are effectively achieving their goals through increased regulation of teachers' time.

Jill, a teacher at Greenway, describes how she spends a lot of energy subdividing her time to meet the varied needs of her classroom.

> It's very hard, especially in my fifth period when I have six or seven boys that just want to talk… And with those sub-categories, I have one student that meets in three categories, and it's even harder to make sure… that while I'm trying to help him I have four or five other kids that are in that same class that are considered our bubble kids, and I'm trying to make sure that I go around and make sure those kids get it. But, [you are] just more or less dividing your time up and dividing yourself up into making sure that the others don't start falling behind.

Jill "divides herself up" to focus her limited time on students that have a larger impact on the schools AYP performance. Testing results are reported by demographic subgroups. Since AYP is determined by performance in each subgroup, teachers and schools pay special attention to the success of students who are counted in multiple categories. In addition, many schools have identified "bubble students" (Dworkin 2005). These students' test scores fall just below or above the passing grade. At Greenway, bubble students are formally identified by the administration and teachers are assigned to serve as mentors for these students. In this way, teachers in this setting orient the subdivision of their time in a way that responds directly to the school's Needs Improvement status.

The intersection of time and empowerment also includes larger school needs at Greenway. Bianchi, another experienced teacher at Greenway, puts it this way.

> Basically we're racing against a clock. And the clock is the CRCT test. We're trying to fill them, which is totally educationally inappropriate, to fill them before that test. So you want to fill them as efficiently as you can before that test and they absorb [curriculum] in different ways. In other words, you have different abilities, different learning styles, you know, if it's a language problem, then obviously verbal is not going to be the best learning style, you know?... I'm just saying that the diversity makes it more difficult because you have to spend more time planning [and] coming up with more diverse ways of approaching material. Most importantly you have to spend more time on the material… because some of them have gaps in their learning already; you're having to fill in those gaps. So it's all about time. You know, given enough time we could get them there.

Bianchi notes that teaching a diverse student body requires additional time and special teaching techniques. However, she feels the constraints on her time constrict her ability to fully develop these teaching methods. Instead, Bianchi asserts that she must subdivide her time to meet the educational needs of her diverse student body as quickly as she can. This results in trying to "fill" students before the test which she deems "educationally inappropriate." Again a lack of sufficient time is intertwined with a loss of empowerment in this strategic response exercised by teachers at Greenway.

A second strategy used by teachers working under sanctioning is to focus their limited time on the required curriculum. While all schools feel a similar time crunch and must move quickly through the curriculum, both Parkside and Greenway connect their Needs Improvement status with a greater concern over the loss of "creativity." By eliminating all non-mandated curriculum, teachers free up time to deliver the state required standards to their students. Courtney, a very experienced teacher at Parkside, summarized her feelings about the loss of curricular freedom like this, "It restricts much of the creativity that makes learning so much fun. We've got to cover this, we've got to cover this, and we've got to cover this because that CRCT is coming up." Creativity is not always defined by teachers as a special project or lesson, but any curriculum beyond the basics. Steven, a teacher at Greenway states,

> It's not only lesson plan-wise because you have to be sure all your lesson plans not only are correlating directly with the standards, but you actually… lose some of your enrichment that you can't do. I don't mean that in a totally negative way because what happens is you have to review so much for standards that your time frame doesn't allow you to do all the extra projects and the extra things that might have taken a little bit longer that really could have made the kid feel like a scientist….Like run an experiment all the way through. Maybe you just don't have the time for that. You have to go back to the basics and…get everybody through.

Eliminating non-mandated lessons and curriculum does further structure and regulate the available classroom time. This strategy focuses the use of classroom time on the material deemed most important by the state. However, it also compromises teachers' sense of control in their classrooms. The additional curriculum often allows teachers to draw on their own content expertise and flex their professional creativity in the classroom. This strategy to focus their classroom time contributes to a loss of personal empowerment. Camille, a new teacher at Parkside, expresses this experience.

> You've got 72 minutes in the day after you've done all the attendance and all that silly business and fire drills and all that kind of business…I mean, what can you do when you shave that down and you divide that up among that many kids, you know? I don't know a teacher in this school who wants a child left behind… Not only do you not want to leave them behind, you want them to soar. You are going in many directions at once and it's just very frustrating. I don't think it's frustration that you're not doing what is expected of you. The frustration is not being able to do what you want to do with the kids.

As she works within the confines of the school day, she has to make tough choices about what curriculum gets taught and what gets omitted. While making these difficult choices, Camille feels frustrated by the loss of her ability to do what she would like to do with the students. This is a loss of empowerment.

The initiative shown by teachers in sanctioned schools to devise ways of responding to the time crunch illuminates one of the interesting statistical findings. The regression results showed that the longer the duration of Needs Improvement the more positively teachers' assess their time. The interview data reveal that in an attempt to respond productively to the pressures of *NCLB* requirements, teachers developed strategies to more highly regulate and structure their time. While time is short and the intensity of this time crunch is arguably greater at Greenway and Parkside, their response

resulted in a greater structuring of the limited time available. It is this agency born out of necessity that helps us explain the positive association between years in Needs Improvement and time in the survey data. From this perspective, the process of responding to *NCLB* requirements appears to have effectively embedded itself in classroom processes and focused the use of time on mandated curriculum. Teachers' efforts to structure their time in this context are accompanied by a tradeoff between accountability requirements and teacher empowerment. This issue will be further explored by examining teachers' descriptions of empowerment below.

Teachers' assessments of time also illustrate the three schools' classification as Established, Shifting, and Shifted. White Plains feels the time crunch, but as a Distinguished school has not yet come to the point where they must develop a strategic response. Teachers here are able to continue their day-to-day work largely separate from policy concerns. Parkside and Greenway, however, do not have this luxury. As "failing" schools, Parkside and Greenway teachers must develop strategies to respond to the increased demands placed on the school. Greenway teachers, as we will see more clearly in later analysis, have come further along this process and settled into a Shifted reality marked by habitual strategic responses and acceptance. Parkside teachers, while also developing strategies to deal with their Needs Improvement status, are still negotiating their place in the realm of "failing" schools.

Empowerment

The survey data uncovers that longer durations of Needs Improvement status produce more positive assessments of empowerment by teachers. Conversely, the

regression analyses demonstrate that teachers experience a loss of empowerment immediately following a failure to meet AYP in the previous year. To help explain these complex findings, we turn again to the interview data. A close inspection reveals the importance of two key aspects of empowerment that help to explain these findings: collaboration and involvement in the school improvement process. Similar to the consistent impact of time on classrooms, the interviews uncover that *NCLB* requirements have stimulated collaboration across all three schools. Teachers have turned to one another in an effort to understand the state curriculum standards, plan lessons aligned with these standards, and design classroom assessments to test student comprehension. While the quality and result of this collaboration varies across schools, all forms seem to bolster teachers' empowerment by creating a "family" or "collective" mentality. At White Plains, the Distinguished school not currently experiencing sanctions, teachers describe collaborative experiences as friendly and productive. Teachers report that there is a "family atmosphere" and that collaboration with colleagues is "helpful."

In schools under sanctions, this collaboration takes on new meaning. Mary Beth, an experienced teacher at Parkside, has this to say about the nature of collaboration in her school.

> I feel like schools with more of an all-white population, the teachers there are more autonomous. They do their own thing. They're more individuals that just operate. But at Parkside, we have to work together like that or we simply won't make it.

For Mary Beth, collaboration is not about making the working experience more pleasant but is a method of survival. Teachers in this setting experience autonomy restrictions resulting from the additional effort required to meet the needs of their diverse student

population and the expectations codified by *NCLB*. In these contexts collaborative work with colleagues becomes a survival strategy.

Likewise, collaboration at Greenway is strategic. When sanctions have increased to the level of state contract monitoring and school restructuring, the school improvement plan and school improvement team come to play a more significant role in teachers' daily experiences.[35] The importance of this team and plan are illustrative of the Shifted school classification. This element of being a Needs Improvement school becomes a vital part of teachers' collaborative experience. Just a surface level examination of the number of times teachers mentioned school improvement teams or plans indicates the primacy of this relationship. Out of ten teachers interviewed at each school, only one spoke of the school improvement plan at White Plains whereas this came up in conversation with five teachers at Parkside, the school implementing school choice, and eight at Greenway, the school under contract monitoring. When you delve deeper into teachers' descriptions of these experiences, their familiarity and participation in the process confirms that collaborative efforts at school improvement are a vital component of working at these Needs Improvement schools. In this way, being a Needs Improvement school generates greater collective response through collaboration in the school improvement process.

Jill explains that teachers compose the majority of the school improvement team at Greenway. "We actually developed a school improvement team. It's a committee of about sixteen teachers including administrators that helped develop the school

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[35] School improvement is the phrase used to describe the process of responding to the Needs Improvement label. In Georgia, schools in Needs Improvement must formulate a school improvement plan. Typically the school improvement plan is generated by a school improvement team.

improvement plan." Stephanie, a new teacher at Greenway, states that all teachers are involved in giving input on the school improvement plan.

> I actually got a copy of the school improvement plan today… A lot of it they're focused on this is what we're doing to improve, these are some of the things we're kind of thinking about doing, getting our reaction so it is a school-wide plan and not just a few people coming up with some ideas to improve. It's everybody, so I have heard a good bit about it.

Just like Stephanie, many of the teachers at Greenway are heavily invested in the collaborative efforts to improve test scores and respond to the demands of *NCLB*. This involvement in actively working towards getting off the Needs Improvement list yields a sense of pride in many cases. Jane describes how her participation on the school improvement team has been a source of great excitement for her.

> It's [participation on the school improvement team] been pretty good. In fact, it's [the school improvement plan] all been approved! You know, we do not have to redo anything on it, so we're kind of excited about that. And then it goes before the State school board. I think they said next week or the week after. But, it went rather smooth… We've been meeting like every Wednesday after school. But it's been good. It's a good group of teachers, a really good group, and it just went great so far!

The engagement of teachers in collaborative efforts to improve school performance seems to produce a sense of collective purpose that teachers enjoy. Even under intense conditions, this strategic collective response contributes to a sense of control over the school environment. Teachers are actively involved in the school improvement process and this is important to them.

This collective response sheds some light on our intriguing statistical findings concerning empowerment. First, the increasing sense of empowerment over time revealed in the survey data echoes the increasing collaborative efforts evident in schools

responding to sanctions. Second, we make the surprising discovery that the investment in school improvement actually makes the failure of AYP more meaningful. When teachers' investment in school improvement does not improve AYP outcomes, teachers feel a dramatic reduction in empowerment in these "failing" schools.[36] For example, Chanda, a teacher at Parkside, explains that she feels a loss of empowerment following each successive AYP failure. Chanda states,

> I think what bothers me a little bit when we fail AYP is the angle of what you have to focus on shifts. Last year [when] the CRCT scores came in we didn't pass it because of language arts or reading. So last year the curriculum had to be focused reading, reading, reading. Well last year's spring CRCT it was math, so now we have to work math into the curriculum, well what about the reading? … So that's the one thing about AYP that bothers me a little bit is that whatever we failed that's what we have to work on in all the classes… I think the focus depending on what we failed that year kind of bothers me… It's not the way I teach, but it's more like what I have to focus on.

Chanda identifies this change in empowerment as partially the result of how the whole school must shift their academic focus. This shows that the need to respond collectively to the policy can produce positive outcomes by bringing teachers together, but it can also result in the loss of personal empowerment in the classroom. When teachers shift the focus of their teaching in response to the collective need to respond to AYP, they lose some of their autonomy and sense of professional expertise in the classroom. In this passage, Chanda expresses her discontent with the rapid change in the focus of her teaching based on the areas of weakness captured on the CRCT. The statistical findings

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[36] While policy and state reports do not use the phrase "failing school" to describe schools that did not meet AYP, the popular media, teachers, and community members do use this language. Given the potency of this language, I feel this phrase is important to use here in the discussion of teacher empowerment.

may also be capturing this loss of empowerment as a result of year-by-year changes in teachers' focus.

Similarly, Jill, a teacher at Greenway, feels a dramatic loss of empowerment when after a huge investment of time and energy into school improvement her school still fails AYP. She remembers her feelings at the first faculty meeting where her principal explained the previous year's testing results,

> It was very overwhelming. It was very overwhelming because I'm thinking, you know, we work as hard as we possibly can. I was thinking, you know, last year was extremely stressful. This year has been even more stressful since this is our actually our seventh year, and it sometimes makes you feel very down looking at those students [scores] and thinking, you know, 'Three more [students]. Only three more.' And I know that seems like that isn't many but, at the same time, it is. At the end of the meeting, he [the principal] actually called out the students that did not make it last year…and each teacher had to stand if they taught one or more of those students. By the time we finished, almost every teacher had stood. But yet those are the kids that did not make it. And that makes you feel like, you know, each one of us had seen that student, but at the same time, 'What am I doing wrong? Why is that child not making it?' And that's where it's kind of depressing.

This vivid collective experience encapsulates the power of being labeled a "failing" school. Even after a significant effort by many teachers at this school to improve the academic performance of their students, this does not result in passing AYP. This unsuccessful collaborative effort at improving test scores produces a striking loss of empowerment.[37] Thus, the positive effect of Needs Improvement on empowerment in the survey resembles the empowering collective response to Needs Improvement status and school improvement efforts described by teachers. However, the negative statistical

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[37] My qualitative interviews do not allow me to assess the impact of AYP success. It is probable that perceptions of empowerment following collective effort met by AYP success would improve. Future research needs to investigate the extent to which empowerment can be improved by success at AYP.

relationship between AYP and empowerment may be capturing the dramatic loss of empowerment following AYP failure expressed in the interviews.

Professional Development

The survey data reveals that neither the number of years in Needs Improvement nor the AYP result from the previous year has a statistically significant relationship with teachers' evaluations of professional development. This, however, is not what the teachers report in the interview data. The qualitative data reveals distinct differences in teachers' experience and assessment of professional development across the three schools. Specifically, as schools advance in the Needs Improvement process, the perception of control over professional development wanes. With this shift in control, teachers' thoughts about the nature and usefulness of the professional learning curriculum changes in unique and insightful ways.

Professional development is designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of teachers in an effort to promote student learning and performance. Accountability policy, such as *NCLB*, utilizes professional learning as a tool to assist Needs Improvement schools. For teachers, however, professional development is another item competing for their limited work time. Teachers' perception of their professional development is largely a function of the tradeoff between time lost in the classroom and the overall benefit of the professional program. In Needs Improvement contexts, where time is limited and the desire for specific tools to enable school improvement is strong, teachers reveal that professional development is inextricably linked to empowerment. In a Distinguished school like White Plains, where the status of the school is not challenged,

teachers maintain the perception of internal control over their professional learning. Alternatively, the teachers at Parkside and Greenway believe that external assumptions about their skills and knowledge led to externally controlled professional learning which they evaluate as less beneficial in their school improvement efforts.

At White Plains, teachers largely view their professional development as disconnected from *NCLB* and accountability policy. Fitting with the categorization of White Plains as an Established school, teachers were largely unable to see a connection between the effort of *NCLB* and the professional development they received. Beyond not experiencing a connection between *NCLB* and the professional learning curriculum, some teachers actually felt that they were required to attend fewer professional development meetings and that this was due to the "enlightenment" of school and county administrators. At White Plains, teachers primarily described their professional learning as beneficial, particularly when it is a collaborative effort. Jessica, a teacher at White Plains, when asked to describe her experiences with professional development, never mentioned policy. She does, however, describe how the collaborative sharing of ideas and tools across the school makes the program beneficial for her.

> For the most part, they've all been very beneficial and I've learned a lot. Tuesdays we do professional learning things. Every other Tuesday is reserved for professional learning if there's something comes up that they [the administration] wants to talk with us about or do something like that. I remember it was last year or the year before we started with the rubrics and we had teachers who were currently doing rubrics in the school kind of come to each grade level and discuss what they were doing and I thought that was beneficial too.

This type of professional development is focused internally, on the collaborative sharing of ideas and tools amongst teachers. In addition, the school administration

appears to have control over the scheduling and content of the meetings. As a Distinguished school, the administration is not under sanctions that dictate the content of professional learning, thus enabling them to maintain control over the professional development curriculum. This provides additional evidence supporting White Plains' classification as an Established reality.

Teachers at Parkside and Greenway both believe that the professional development program at their school is in part a function of their Needs Improvement status. Alicia, an experienced teacher at Parkside, when asked what her school was doing to get off the Needs Improvement list, started to explain the types of professional development they are receiving. Her response illustrates the clear connection between Needs Improvement status and professional development.

> Well, we've done the quality work professional development where we share with each other and, it was like a whole yearlong thing last year. And then we had small groups that we work in, like deeper reading and get the kids to understand what the words mean, especially the CRCT language.

The connection between professional development and Needs Improvement is even more explicit at Greenway. As a function of their advance Needs Improvement standing, the state, in collaboration with the Regional Education Support Agency (RESA), offers professional development in the school in an effort to improve academic performance. Teachers are more than aware that the decision to offer this professional development is a product of their school status. Bob explains the connection between being in advanced Needs Improvement and the professional development curriculum offered at the school.

> Because we are Needs Improvement, they have us doing things that they feel will make us not [a] Needs Improvement school. For example, we're doing this building background knowledge with vocabulary and we've had to spend three entire half-days in the library doing these meetings, which I don't really feel I've

> gotten anything out of… most of it just reading from a book that they already gave us… I have the book, I read the book, and I go to these things where you pretty much just regurgitate the information in the book. Why am I here when I could be developing a lab, or developing another hands-on activity, or grading their papers and giving them back to them faster so that they have time to go over them, you know?

Both Parkside and Greenway teachers note that their professional development is impacted by policy and their school status. Yet, the expressed goals of professional development vary at these two schools in interesting ways. First, at Parkside there is a strong sentiment that professional development is an effective tool to teach new skills and improve the school's chance of getting out of Needs Improvement. Here, the professional development is frequently characterized as a research-based, effective tool for teachers. Mary Beth explains this further,

> I think some of our professional learning time is being spent on research-based strategies. It's not something that the teacher feels like, 'Oh, I think this will work.' Amelia [the principal] has started to look at other schools where they are learning how to cope with this. She is bringing those best practices to us and saying, 'Here's what I would like you to try.' Our instructional lead teacher gives us a handout periodically of some strategies that they found are working in our population. So, both of those people are working on equipping teachers.

This is consistent with the general approach of a Shifting school. They are in the process of making sense of the requirements and trying to develop new strategies and ways of working. One way in which they do this is through their understanding of professional development as an effective tool for change.

This sentiment is not found at Greenway. At Greenway, most teachers describe the professional development currently being provided by RESA as an imposition. In an effort to improve Greenway's performance, teachers note that they are being bombarded with professional learning that is ineffective. Despite the fact that the content of the

programs may be similar to those offered in other schools, teachers understand that they are receiving this training due to the Needs Improvement status. This changes their perception of the program. Samantha explains,

> Then there are people that they've had in the past few years with No Child Left Behind… so many programs kind of shoved down their throat. 'Well, we're going to do this program now. Well, what if we try this?' And there's so much that they're like, you sit through training and then you blow it off and you do what you've always done because there is no follow-up, there is no accountability, there is no reason to try it, doing something else.

Samantha describes the desperate attempt by people outside the school to assist Greenway in their school improvement efforts. These programs are ineffective largely because teachers understand them as fleeting attempts to find a quick fix. Without consistent programs of long-term training, teachers here understand that time invested in this training is time wasted. Beyond the effectiveness of the program, the status of the school is connected with the content and instruction received in the professional development programs. Reggie explains how he and his fellow teachers became acutely aware of the relationship between the school's status and the type of professional development curriculum they received.

> Some of the things that the State has done have really talked down to us as a faculty. I think it was this summer, we had to do a group project, five, or six, seven people in a group and come up and put sentences on the board based on what the presentation was. And the presenter was blown away at the quality of every product that was presented by each of the groups. She had literally been talking down to us because we were a Needs Improvement school. [She was] thinking that the teachers knew diddly squat and that the reason these kids are failing was because the teaching was so bad.

The teachers at Greenway suggest that there are two competing sets of assumptions about the goals of professional development. In the Needs Improvement

context, the external assumption, as understood and experienced by teachers, is that since the school is failing the teachers must not know what they are doing. Thus, in response, external actors assume control over the goals, content, and instruction of professional development to make up for teacher deficiencies. This illustrates one of the largest overarching patterns in the professional development interview data – the issue of control over the choice and delivery of professional development.

While control over professional development is explicitly related to school Needs Improvement status, with the state outlining additional professional development being provided by external Regional Education Support Agencies to schools in Needs Improvement, the perception of control for teachers is key in understanding their overall stance on professional development. The teachers at White Plains do not experience a relationship between the policy and the nature of professional development largely because their Distinguished status allows them to internally control and monitor these programs. This is another example of how an Established position along the policy spectrum allows for greater buffering from external requirements.

At Parkside, the Shifting school, this move between internal and external control is just beginning to occur, but the principal is able to salvage the appearance of control thus managing the negative reactions of teachers. At this point, Parkside teachers are able to make sense of their professional development experience in much the same way as they were prior to becoming a Needs Improvement school. The level of external control over professional development is minimal and teachers still tend to view the content and instruction as helpful. Katie illustrates,

> We meet on Monday afternoons for about a half an hour to forty-five minutes sometimes it goes into an hour and a half depending...but it's all teacher driven. These are the needs that we see that we need to be working on. Then on Thursdays we meet again by curriculum and talk about our assessments or what we're doing with a particular objective that seems to be fun that we can share with the others that helped our students achieve. We use it as a sharing time. Those are two meetings there. On Tuesdays we meet with our team just to talk about our particular kids and what conferences we might need and so forth. But those are the only meetings we have. Maybe once a month or so we'll get together as a grade level. They try to keep the meetings down to a minimum.

Similarly, Samantha, a teacher at Parkside, discussed the collaborative nature of professional development in much the same way as the White Plains teachers. Here, the administrator is leading the session where teachers are sharing tools and ideas.

> We meet and we discuss and say what works in your classroom. We did this last week or the week before. We all met and Ms. Smith [the principal] wrote on board 'put down your three best classroom strategies.' We talked about using humor, we talked about connecting with kids, making the work more personable, making their work authentic, having the opportunity to talk with your peers makes you a better teacher. Anyone who thinks it doesn't is just dead wrong because there is not one of us who is right.

A school in advanced Needs Improvement standing, like Greenway, has largely lost internal control over the bulk of their professional development. At this point in the school improvement process, most professional development programs are being provided by RESA. As part of state's efforts to support schools in Needs Improvement, these schools have access to the services and programs of the local RESA. This additional resource is intended to help teachers and equip them with additional knowledge and skills. For teachers, however, the assumption that the school needs external assistance shapes their understanding of the professional development offered. Regardless of the actual content of the curriculum, the simple fact that an external agency was brought in to provide the professional development generates a negative reaction to

the programs. Teachers' negative evaluations of their professional development are largely a function of the lack of control over the program. In fact, the quality of the professional development seems irrelevant, it is the fact that it is externally controlled, and that the principal cannot salvage the appearance of control, that makes it likely to be rejected by the teachers. Julie represents most teachers' feelings on the professional development being offered at Greenway and how this external imposition insults the intelligence and capability of the teachers.

> The lady that comes in and does our professional development is completely useless. I mean, you look at everybody's face in that meeting that we had today and it's just, you know, it's like everybody wants to just say, 'Duh.' This is what we learned freshman year in Education 101. If they're going to gives us professional development, gives us something to implement like a writing system or something. Don't give us background knowledge on background knowledge. I mean, come on now, they must think we're morons. Honestly, I feel like they must think that we are morons and we don't know what background knowledge is. Teachers don't have time to learn theory. We learned that in college. We need tools. They're gonna give us professional development, give us professional development that we can turn around and use the next day in class. That's what I think.

Professional development is just one component of teachers work conditions. Nevertheless, it offers a clear illustration of how teachers' understanding of the school's reputation and identity can shape their perceptions of their work experiences. Rather than serving as a tool to improve instruction at Greenway, professional development further damages an already tenuous sense of empowerment and constrains limited time resources. Ironically, the collective empowerment engendered in Needs Improvement schools is contrasted by this loss of control over one aspect of school decision making – professional development. In this case, the active resistance to professional development may be an illustration of the conflict inherent in being a member of this school.

Teachers' roles have changed in this context. As the context demands necessary participation in school improvement efforts and as teachers increasingly view collaboration as a required survival technique, this strengthens teachers' identification with the school and their colleagues while enhancing the division between those within the school and those outside. Ironically, while the day-to-day shifts in the requirements of their work change, as seen in the time data, teachers become more active agents in many respects. They are required to develop active strategies to cover the curriculum in a timely manner and expand the nature of their collaborative work within the school in an effort to survive the growing demands on their labor. In an ironic twist, as control over school processes coming from the outside increases, teachers actually are more active agents within the school. Teachers at Greenway feel a collective need to get off the Needs Improvement list and work collaboratively in many other aspects of school improvement. Professional development, which is specifically tailored to assist them in this pursuit, lies largely outside of their control and is not offering them the "tools" they feel they need to improve. Teachers' resentment of this "imposition" grows as the pressure to improve increases.

The quantitative analysis revealed that there was not a significant statistical relationship between years in Needs Improvement, AYP status, and teacher professional development. This is not reflective of the lived experience presented in the qualitative data. In fact, the interviews show that the nature of professional development changes drastically across the three contexts. In addition, as the content and control of professional development shifts, teachers' perceptions of this professional learning also change. The qualitative data suggests that the survey measures of professional

development are not adequate to capture the nuances of teachers' experiences. The measures for professional development found in the survey may miss these relationships by assuming that professional development opportunities remain stable across different contexts. Likewise, these measures do not sufficiently allow for the possibility that this type of instruction may be destructive rather than constructive for teachers. Teachers' descriptions reveal that professional development can be quite destructive for teachers' experience of their work in advanced Needs Improvement schools. The qualitative data indicate that to fully capture these relationships the measures should be refined.

Leadership

The survey results reveal that as the number of years under Needs Improvement increases, teachers evaluate their leadership more favorably; however, AYP failure in the preceding year produces a non-significant result. A careful examination of the interview data uncovers that the school policy context has a significant impact on how teachers describe their leadership and their ability to effectively guide them through the accountability process. As the pressures and requirements associated with *NCLB* increase, teachers' observe that accountability effectively constrains the principal's ability to buffer teachers from the effects of policy. Simultaneously, as the ability to buffer from these external requirements diminishes, the collective mentality and bonds within the school seem to strengthen. While the principal is less able to protect teachers from the external demands of policy, the increased collective mentality and internal identification helps explain the positive assessment of leadership with longer durations in Needs Improvement.

One common sentiment is expressed in all three cases. Teachers consistently praise and appreciate their principal's attempts to buffer them from "external" forces. The extent to which principals are effective at this buffering, and the particular external forces they are buffering teachers from, varies across contexts. Teachers at White Plains, the Distinguished school, highly value their principal for his ability to protect them from the pressures of *NCLB*. By serving as a "filter" between external pressures from policy and parents, he provides teachers with the necessary time to "do what you need to do." In this particular context, this job is easier to accomplish since policy intrudes very little on the day-to-day operations of the school further illustrating the nature of an Established school. The White Plains principal is largely able to buffer the teachers from having any direct concerns about accountability requirements beyond the actual learning and test performance of their students.

> What a good administrator does, and luckily ours has been pretty good, is they know how to take some of the pressure off... They have to deal with what they have to deal with, but they know that they don't have to put it all down on the teachers. They can filter it out. I think our administrators are good at emphasizing what's really important and downplaying all the BS that's involved that's not that important. (Tony, White Plains)

Teachers at White Plains feel the effects of this protection as increased autonomy in the classroom. Taylor, a teacher at White Plains, explains how her leaders trust her abilities and do not feel the need to intrude.

> They treat us like adults and like we're the professionals that we are. They don't hover over us, and you know there's no reason for them to doubt that we're doing what we need to do in order for our kids to be successful.

While the key to success expressed here is in part a function of teacher autonomy, the principal still maintains control over the school. Tony clearly states, "We're all a team

and our administrators are coaches." This suggests that while they view their success as a group effort, it is clear that the principal maintains control, is competent, and provides them with necessary guidance and protection. Membership in a Distinguished school context thereby influences their vision of the functions of their school leadership. It is the school policy context that enables the principal to effectively perform these duties for teachers. Free from external control required by accountability initiatives, the principal is able to remain in control and provide the autonomy the teachers' desire. The increased autonomy in this school context provided by leadership mirrors the lessened reliance on collaboration seen in the empowerment findings. White Plains, a school relatively free from the burdens of *NCLB*, reinforces individual autonomy rather than strengthening the inward identification of group members seen at Parkside and Greenway.

As the intensity of the accountability requirements grow, and group members must respond to these new external demands, teachers' descriptions of their leadership shift. Just like at White Plains, one of the assumed roles of the principal from the teachers' perspective is buffering them from external demands. However, in this context, the ability of the principal to effectively buffer is somewhat diminished. Not only is their ability to buffer lessened, but instead of being able to buffer teachers from the influence of the policy all together, they are buffering teachers from particular elements of their Needs Improvement experience. For example, at Parkside the leadership expends considerable energy responding to the school choice option now available to their students. Katie explains,

> I know that Amelia, the Principal, has really sheltered us from having to deal with a lot of that. If they [the parents] wanted to transfer she more or less tried to show them the school before school ever got started... Some of the parents didn't even

> want to see this school. They didn't even want to meet with the teachers. That's got to be frustrating for her but she shielded us from a lot of that.

In this case, the principal is buffering teachers from dealing with the public relations work that goes into maintaining a good base of test takers at the school. As more economically advantaged parents chose to transfer their students, the ability of the school to pass the test diminishes. Simultaneously, the role of the principal changes for teachers. In this sanctioned context, the principal must now serve in a public relations role to buffer teachers from the impact of school choice. In addition, Parkside teachers recognize that their principal also deals with internal loss of morale and other negative emotions resulting from their Needs Improvement status. Thus, the principal also acts as a school "cheerleader." Teachers at Parkside see the principal performing her "cheerleader" role in two ways. First, she reinforces the schools' focus on children not just the test. By reinforcing the focus on students, teachers recognize that she is really supporting their teaching efforts, not just responding to policy. This focus is not challenged at White Plains and the principal is not required to clarify where their focus actually lies. Claire, a Parkside teacher, explains

> I have probably one of the greatest principals on the planet, and I say that because her focus is children. She understands that it is important for us not to be NI to the point of Greenway Middle where they're NI7 and they're in restructuring and they're just kind of being torn apart over there. She understands the importance of that, but she also understands that these are children.

Second, the principal expresses a strong emotional connection to the school and teachers. Teachers appreciate this strong dedication to the school and students and draw inspiration from her example. Camille expresses this emotional connection,

> She's kind of like the heartbeat of the school. She does not like to think of herself as an authority figure. She likes to think of herself as more of a mentor or a helpmate. So rather than [see her] like a badge in the center, I'll put her as the heart of the school because that's pretty much what she is.

The Needs Improvement status serves to reinforce a collective mentality and strengthen the inward group identification. While the teachers in this Shifting school are beginning to understand the limits to Amelia's ability to protect them from external demands, they draw motivation from her personal investment in the identity of the school and make this evident in their own work patterns. This increased investment reflects the patterns found in the empowerment findings. Katie, an experienced math teacher at Parkside, explains

> We have strong leaders here. We have very tired leaders because of the things that they are accountable for. It's just like all of us, if I see my leader or people in leadership put in a 12 hour day, they're not getting a bigger percentage on the top of their income for doing the hours. If that's what it takes to do the job to the best of our ability, if I see my leadership really going for it and they're tired, then I can go that mile too. If I didn't see my leadership, if I saw them always quitting out early, not really caring about whether or not we achieve the goals we're supposed to get, then I may slack off on my goals. But the leadership here wants to do everything they can to get us where we need to be and because I really want to see them achieve their goals, I'm going to work that much harder.

Greenway, under advanced Needs Improvement conditions, is long past the point where the principal is able to buffer teachers from external pressures. This school has Shifted. Teachers here understand that their principal is still trying to protect them from the worst of the requirements, but it is clear to them that this is only partially effective.

> I think Stephen [the principal] is below me because he gets in trouble before I do. (laughter) He's not above me. He gets in trouble before me. He gets stepped on first. Poor Stephen, he didn't know what he got himself into when he took this job. He can get stepped on first. I believe that's what No Child Left Behind [does]… I think the principal goes before the teacher does. (Samantha, Greenway)

In this context, teachers acknowledge that the principal cannot offer complete protection from external requirements. In fact, here more than any other school, teachers are aware of their pivotal role in the school improvement process. While there is not always a lot of confidence in their ability to get out of Needs Improvement, teachers are very aware that it must be a group effort. The severity of the policy context means that the principal can no longer perform these tasks alone. Since the principal cannot effectively protect teachers from external pressures and requirements, there is little left to do except involve the teachers in the school improvement process. This reliance on teachers as active agents in the school improvement process stimulates collaboration, as seen in the empowerment findings, and reshapes the role of the principal. Similar to Parkside, the collective experience of being a Needs Improvement school seems to draw principal and teachers together in many ways. However, the severity of the sanctioning at Greenway leaves the principal with the more difficult task of motivating disheartened teachers. Steven and Chris, both teachers at Greenway, offer examples of how their school leadership struggles to play the role of motivator.

> I just know that the principals and assistant principals, they are working extremely hard here. This is a challenge for them. And it's a challenge not only because of the students, but they've also got the challenge of keeping us motivated (Steven, Greenway)

> Basically the Principal… came in [to the faculty meeting] and, and went over every detail of where we're at… But it was just to let everybody know that even though we tried our best, we still didn't make it [AYP]. I think everybody was just kind of let down from that. He tried to lift everybody's spirits by saying that from what he's heard from other people in the county that there are a lot of good things going on here, and that we had a real good faculty, and that we shouldn't, you know, get down and out about this label. So he tried to build us back up. (Chris, Greenway)

This cooperative approach to school improvement, and the attempt to redeem a damaged school identity, generates the feeling that the entire school and it's leadership is one big family. In this context, the principal attempts to protect teachers by being the one to bear the brunt of the ramifications of Needs Improvement status. In other words, he is the one to "get stepped on" first. In his effort to protect the school as much as is possible, and by relying on collaborative efforts to pull the school out of Needs Improvement, the strong collegial relationships within the school are a product of the policy context. In other words, the growing policy relevance increases in-group identification. Stephanie states,

> It's wonderful. I've never been in a school where it is like a family with the staff and with the teachers and then with the students. Everybody knows everybody, but it's just a family atmosphere and a caring atmosphere and not like a school I've ever been in.

In sum, the Needs Improvement context of the school shapes teachers' impressions of their leadership in two ways. First, the level at which policy is embedded in the day-to-day work of the school shapes the extent teachers experience the principal buffering them from external demands. At White Plains, leaders are able to bestow autonomy on teachers because they are largely free from excessive demands of accountability, they are an Established school. Parkside and Greenway, under Needs Improvement conditions, are not able to provide the same degree of autonomy to teachers. In fact, beyond shaping the extent to which the principal can buffer teachers, the policy conditions shape the necessity to involve teachers in the school improvement process. This leads to the second point. When buffering is not an option, leaders must reach out to teachers and deliberately involve them in the work of school improvement.

In this way, the Needs Improvement context intensifies identification with the school and strengthens the "us against them mentality." Again we see that as the role of external actors involved in school operations intensifies, the teachers' identification with the school and its leaders, and resistance to external actors, strengthens. It is this pattern of behavior that helps explain the positive evaluation of leadership as Needs Improvement duration increases in the survey data.

Facilities and Resources

The survey results indicate that as the numbers of years in Needs Improvement increase teachers report a more favorable impression of the adequacy and access to necessary facilities and resources at their school. However, failure to meet AYP in the preceding year produces a negative evaluation of the school's facilities and resources. Thus, we find the same pattern seen with empowerment and leadership. We turn to the interview data to shed light on these results.

Teachers comment on two primary areas of facilities and resources as key components of their work experience under *NCLB*. First, teachers highlight distinct ways in which their particular Needs Improvement status affects the availability and use of the physical and financial resources within the school. Second, teachers extend resources beyond the typical definition and include human resources available to them in the form of leadership and community. Teachers' understandings of the role and purpose of these human resources is also a function of the school conditions.

Teachers in all three schools feel that the current accountability policy has placed a strain on the physical resources in the school. At White Plains, teachers primarily focus

on the additional resources that are needed to help them accommodate the influx of students due to school choice options. As a Distinguished school, students attending "failing" schools may choose to transfer to White Plains. The additional students attending White Plains has placed a strain on the availability of classroom space and material resources in the school according to teachers.

> The school just got trailers this summer and yes, we are overpopulated. I guess this totally ties in with No Child Left Behind because we've met AYP every year and so we have 54 transfer kids this year. I work bus duty after school and we send three buses of kids back to their district, an effort to not 'leave them behind'. But it's making it nasty here. I mean, not nasty because of them, but just 54 more people. We put ten trailers outside and we shouldn't have to. (Bailey, White Plains)

The limited availability of resources has also affected teachers' evaluations of the discretionary funds used to make the White Plains learning experience unique. Teachers observe that the demands placed on their school by transfer students limits their ability to get other school amenities. Harlie, a new teacher at White Plains, explains, "I mean we don't have all the technology in every classroom, we're lucky to get it because we're so overloaded and funds are going to space versus technology and resources." At White Plains, the additional amenities the teachers desire are largely field trips and specialized technology in the classroom. Edward, an experienced teacher at White Plains, states,

> I'd like to see us have a few more kids enjoy the technology. They love going into the computer lab. Right now I'm in the middle of a huge research project and we don't have enough computer time. And it's strapping us and strapping everyone else because we need to be in there. We require all our projects to be typed. Ah, everybody has computers at their house though too. So, as we're in the computer age with all the availability that kids have at their house; it's not as critical as it was several years ago. But I still like to see what they're doing here.

A few teachers in the White Plains sample did comment on the need for discretionary funds for consumable classroom materials.

> [I would like] free access to resources like notebooks, paper, pencils, anything like that. Being a Distinguished school and accepting other students, we don't have the resources to get these extra things. I mean we're not limited on the copy paper, but pencils, markers, crayons, anything like that we can't fund. We have to fund ourselves and then I think that's a punishment as a teacher in our school. (Harlie, White Plains)

While teachers at White Plains do comment on the lack of discretionary funds for consumable classroom materials, considerably fewer teachers note a sense of obligation to supplement these classroom needs with their own money. Teachers at both Parkside and Greenway are at a severe loss for discretionary funds. These funds are not for field trips and technology, but rather for consumable classroom items. Teachers at Parkside and Greenway frequently comment on how they must use their own money to supplement necessary classroom materials. Despite the influx of resources used to purchase books, teachers observe considerable shortfalls in other areas of school resources. Katie, an experienced teacher at Parkside, explains how she has spent $1,200 purchasing items for her classroom.

> They [the school] cannot purchase things that are consumable. I pay a lot of money for pencils for these kids or regular old notebook paper. [I buy] organizational things, bins to keep things in to organize, containers to put the Cuisenaire rods in, things like that. It's frustrating. We have to have these things so the teachers end up purchasing them. And a lot of books that we can use to motivate the kids, to teach us a different way to do the same multiplication problem, we purchase that out of our pockets. The bags on the side of the desk, those are all purchased out of my money. The containers that go into these bags, color pencils, a ruler, protractors, compasses, glue sticks, scissors, measuring tape, things that we have to have in math everyday teachers purchase and put it in here. The protractors and compasses and rulers the school purchases but other than that teachers purchase. This year I've spend around twelve hundred dollars

> since school started in August. That's what it takes; I'm going to do what it takes for these kids to learn.

Elsewhere, Katie makes the observation that, "No other job or occupation do I know of, does a nurse has to go and buy their own meds for their patients? I've never heard of that, but yet this occupation, yes you do." Interestingly, teachers at Parkside and Greenway make sense of this use of their personal money by explaining that it is necessary to motivate the kids to learn. It is not just a missing component of classroom instruction, but also a necessary tool to motivate the children to participate in the learning process. Teachers at White Plains did not mention the use of materials and resources in this way. Instead, they tended to talk about using technology and field trips to heighten the educational experience, but not necessary elements to encourage learning.

Teachers clearly connect the poverty level of their students to the increased demand for financial resources in the classroom, particularly when it comes to motivating the students to learn. In an effort to offset home disparities, teachers at both Parkside and Greenway report spending significant amounts of their own money to develop innovative ways of reaching the students. This strategy to overcome diminished educational background associated with poverty comes at a price for these teachers. Camille, a new teacher at Parkside, notes that it is difficult to motivate the kids in her classroom. She has developed a strategy where she uses her own resources to buy prizes to encourage children to read.

> See all these prizes up here? I give my children what are called reading log bucks… at the end of every nine weeks, the person with the most reading log bucks gets to choose which one of these things they want. Then we go on down the line… The last nine weeks the person who had the most had 117 reading log bucks. Even if they have one reading log buck, they're gonna get something.

> Might not be the bear up there but it's gonna be colorful post-it notes or mechanical pencils. I had one little kid; he had like 75 reading log bucks. You know what he wanted? He wanted mechanical pencils because he never had one.

Katie also uses her own resources to try and increase motivation in her classroom.

> I took about a fourth of my paycheck this month and strictly put it into motivational gifts to get them to know that school's not over, it is not the time to go visit with grandma in Mexico or Puerto Rico or whatever, this is not the time to be absent. And then you have a lot of students who didn't feel like coming to school and they just hang out so I'm trying to do everything I can to get the motivational level [up] at the end…I've given away a $6 leather binder with all the contents, and a calculator, and then it goes up from there. This week I'll be giving away a loaded backpack that's got all kinds of school things in it. Then the week after that I'm giving away a rolling cart that looks similar to one of these but it will be loaded with activities for them. They can roll it by their kitchen table at home or they can roll it to their bedroom, wherever they do their homework. The last thing I'm giving away, the last week of school, is a digital camera and a printer to go with it.

In teachers' discussions of school financial resources, they reveal that it is not just the availability of resources within the school that influences their work experiences, but also the financial condition of the student body and surrounding community. Their descriptions of resources exceeded that of the financial state of the school. Camille explains this connection.

> You know what, the kids in this particular community are just simply disadvantaged…Their first priority is to survive. I had a little boy say to me the other day, we went to the book fair and he wanted a book... He said, 'oh I wish my mother could let me have this book.' He said, 'I see everybody reading these Harry Potter books and I would love to try to read one of these Harry Potter books but she's got to buy new shoes for me and my brother because we have bad feet. And these shoes the doctor said we have to wear are so expensive.' And he said, 'My mother was so unhappy when she heard we had to have these shoes because they've been trying so hard to save money so me and my brother can have a bed.' So what is mom focusing on? Is she gonna get out the encyclopedia? Is she gonna go online and say, 'Oh look dear, let's see everything we can find out about the American Revolution. Have we done your bug project yet? Have we done your insect collection yet?' I mean the poor woman's trying to keep them warm in the dead of winter, you know. This school has that kind of population. These

> kids are not going to be able to compete on the CRCT unless they are given, Now I know Title I schools are given money. You know what we're doing with our money, most of our money; we've spent $24,000.00 on copy machine, toner, and paper. You know, I want a laptop for every kid in here with wireless Internet. I want them to get out of their cloistered environments and see what the world is like. Have the same opportunities as everybody else. To know what the heck a mouse is. It's not fair. And they're tested as though they have every opportunity in the world. You know they're lucky if they got a ride to the grocery store. They gotta call a taxi for that. And they gotta pull out the food stamps; you know what I'm saying. It's just not a level playing field.

The connection between poverty at home and the need for additional educational resources at school is also expressed at Greenway. Bob explains how poverty is connected with school achievement and in several ways overrides the need for resources at school.

> I don't have to wish the school money or me money, just the students who go here money… I would rather have the school with money than a school without. Or, more importantly, like I said, a student base with money than a student base without because it is true that poverty and financial level is related to academic achievement. If this school and every child in this school's family was a millionaire -- well, they probably wouldn't live here anymore, but assuming they did still live here -- I mean their background knowledge would increase for the money, the school's budget would increase through property sales and taxes, we'd be out of the Needs Improvement situation completely and we'd be where we could just not freakin' worry about the six percent at the bottom, you know, that's what would happen to this school. And it would all of a sudden be [out of] Needs Improvement and everyone would be all, 'Oh, wow, what a wonderful school Greenway Middle School is.'

Beyond financial status, teachers also indicate that people serve as important resources within the school. Teachers specifically focus on the impact of their leadership and the community. At White Plains, leaders are a source of empowerment for teachers. As an Established school that finds itself free from the constraints of sanctions, the leadership is able to empower teachers to act autonomously. This is not the collective empowerment we see developing at Parkside and Greenway, but a personal

empowerment stemming from the ability of the leadership to also act independently. Just as we saw in the leadership findings, the school's Distinguished status enables the leadership to effectively buffer out the demands of policy thereby creating a context where teachers can be autonomous. Emily states,

> I felt that he [the principal] empowered teachers. I feel that teachers at this school are empowered. What we think and our ideas are important. I wasn't afraid to try something or to do something, because I felt like our principal had opened that door for us and I think that that helps.

At Parkside, the teachers describe their leaders as a resource. Amelia, the principal, is seen as a source of competence. In this context, where their teaching ability is beginning to be questioned, reinforcing the competence of their leadership provides teachers with the confidence that they will be able to improve the school's performance and get off the Needs Improvement list. Amelia, the Parkside principal, continuously demonstrates her competence to the faculty by continuing her roles as a public relations representative to the community and cheerleader to the faculty. When asked if she felt like this school had any special resources that have helped in responding to *NCLB*, Samantha, an experienced teacher at Parkside, stated,

> Amelia Smith. (laughter) You know what a resourceful lady; I mean she is just awesome. There are times when she is just frustrating, there are times when I just want to grab her and hug her. I mean she is studious; she is a teacher at heart. She is our principal, she is our boss, but she is a teacher at heart and that is her main concern. When I talk to my peers who work at other schools, there is no one like Amelia.

The focus on competence extends beyond the leadership at Parkside to include the entire faculty. Here Mary Beth comments on the faculty as a resource in a way that mirrors the view of their leadership as a source of competence.

> This is my fourth school and I have never seen as competent a faculty as I have here…This is the most competent faculty and competent administration that I've ever worked with. All those years of teaching private school, public school, home school, I've never seen a group that does this well, ever.

Parkside teachers and leadership are not free from sanctions and are worried about the status of the school; however, they have not been in Needs Improvement long enough to feel a total loss of control over the situation. In fact, teachers here in this Shifting school are renewed in their vigor to get off the Needs Improvement list. They derive this motivation from the perception that their leader is competent and capable of improving school conditions.

Teachers at Greenway also find themselves in a situation where their teaching ability is in question, but the extended duration of Needs Improvement has led to a different description of their leaders as a resource in the school. Unlike Parkside, where the leaders' competence acts as a motivation to teachers, at Greenway teachers are motivated by a sense of shared plight and the perception that the leadership is dedicated to the school. Chris explains,

> The Principal is doing what he's supposed to be doing. He seems like he's somebody who wants to be here and wants to stay. We haven't had in a long time any stability whatsoever. I'd like to see him stay here because he seems like he's dedicated to the students.

Not only is the principal dedicated to the school, but the teachers are as well. Many of the teachers from Greenway indicated that they attended Greenway when they were younger. This long-term membership in the community engenders a deep sense of belonging and dedication to the school. When Chris was asked if there are any special resources in the school that have helped Greenway respond to *NCLB*, he replied,

> Well, I think we have a lot of dedicated teachers. A lot of us are former students that came through this system. I came through the feeder elementary to the high school… across the hall Miss Turner, is a former student here, if you go down the hall, Miss Gordon is a former student. We have a lot of teachers that were actually from this area.

A tight connection between school and community is expressed in all three contexts; however, teachers' descriptions of the community reflect the school's Needs Improvement status. The community is viewed as a safety net at White Plains. Here, the resources available in the majority of homes are seen as a major contributing factor in the White Plains success story. Teachers explain that the financial and material resources available in the homes of most of their students support school efforts and provide them with a sort of safety net against school failure. Jane T, an award winning teacher at White Plains, expresses this very clearly, "I think this school just happens to be placed in the right part of the county demographically. There is a lot of money in this part of the county and I think that is our biggest asset." She goes on to explain one way in which the community acts as a safety net to the school in terms of *NCLB*,

> The parents here are more involved and I think that is the reason why we're not on the bad list yet. We have… a lot of really involved parents. I think it makes a huge, huge difference having the parental involvement… I actually have parents who care. Not that the parents over there didn't care, but I just feel like with it being a Title I [school] and the different [demographic] brackets, we're completely different. Most parents over there have to work two or three jobs, broken home, or two parents having to work constantly. They just didn't get as involved in their kid's lives. A lot them were moving from other states or other countries to here and so there was a huge language barrier. To me, this school and the demographics of this area right now, are what is keeping this school on the good list.

Jane explains that the financial status of the majority of their student body enables increased parental involvement, access to technology, and ease in communication

between teachers and families. These resources found in the community help keep White Plains of the "bad list."

Not entirely unlike White Plains, Parkside teachers also describe their community as a source of support for the school. They go beyond this explanation to illustrate how the community is a vital tool in the school's efforts to get off the Needs Improvement list. The utility of the community can be seen in two ways. First, teachers' explain that the community is important in their efforts to retain high performing students for testing purposes. Second, they desire to change the public perception of Parkside in an effort to rebuild the school's identity as a high performing school. Claire eloquently explains,

> In every school there is that base of good test takers and you have to keep that if you have any hope of getting out of Needs Improvement. You've got to keep that, children of professionals and blue-collar who push their kids, the kids who are motivated, who have that support. You've got to keep them…And, because of our poverty group, because of our other ethnic demographics, that base of children who tend to do well on standardized tests are moving out of our district because of No Child Left Behind's transfer policies. She's [the principal] trying to get us to show parents that we have a rigorous curriculum, that we are not letting kids hang from the rafters. That's part of our reputation out in town is that we're gang-ridden and the kids don't behave and there are these different ethnic groups that have brought in this that and the other, certain negative things.… She's [the principal] pretty savvy. She's political enough to know that we've got to keep those parents happy and knowing that we're giving a quality education, that their child is safe here, that we're not letting kids run amuck because that's what our reputation has become, partially because of our No Child Left Behind status. You know, it's printed in the papers all the time how Parkside fails all the time, how Greenway fails all the time.

There is a clear connection here between using the community as a tool to get out of Needs Improvement and teachers' understandings of Amelia's role as a public relations representative. It is Amelia's job to use her competence as a principal to deal with the negative perceptions of the school and work with the community to maintain a solid

group of test takers. This is their understanding of how they will get out of Needs Improvement.

Greenway teachers extend their understanding of the school as a dedicated family to include the community. Teachers here are quick to explain that the inability to get off the Needs Improvement list is a function of the rates of poverty and language ability of their student population. As a result, they see their decision to work with this community as an intentional choice to remain in a lower performing school. They do desire to get out from under the sanctions imposed by *NCLB*, but they have a clear understanding that they have chosen to work with a challenging group of students. Despite a general dissatisfaction with parent involvement at Greenway, teachers desire to include the community in their vision of the school family. Like Parkside teachers, Greenway teachers feel that if they were able to adequately involve their community they might be able to change the school's status. However, they identify the demographics of their community as a barrier to increased involvement. Teachers expand the "us against them" mentality to include the community despite their understanding of the causal relationship between community and the school's failure to meet AYP. Steven explains,

> Well, I'm born and raised in this area so I know a lot about the socioeconomics, also the jobs and different structures from this side of the county, and this is more agricultural and rural side of the county… So, I knew that we'd have lower reading ability; I knew that we'd have a lot of change in parental responsibilities, actually who's in charge of the child. Are they with mom and dad? Are mom and dad together? I also knew that we'd have a lot of relations as far as kids being here that were cousins and brothers and sisters. We're still a community here in this area.

Samantha explains this connection even further,

> I don't see the parental support here…When I was here before, although these kids were poor and a lot of single-family home kind of situations, the parents were here… I think teachers always complain about the parent turnout, but the parent turnout was much higher than what it is now. I don't know if it's because of the activities that were out there, [or] if parent involvement and what we do in the community has taken a backseat to test scores, because so much is focused on these test scores.

In sum, the Needs Improvement context of a school shapes teachers' impressions of the facilities and resources in three ways. First, financial and physical facilities are strained for all schools. Distinguished schools bear the responsibility of providing for transfer students while Needs Improvement schools take additional responsibility for compensating for home financial disparities. Second, the conditions in the school shape teachers view of their leaders as resources in the school. The extent to which the school's ability to perform academically is challenged by policy and community is reflected in teachers' descriptions of the leaders as resources. Lastly, community takes on distinct meaning for each school. Teachers come to understand the community as a primary determining factor in the academic performance that resulted in their Needs Improvement status. Thus, teachers' understanding of the role of community shapes how they view it as a resource to the school. If the community offers additional support to the school in their academic efforts, they are a safety net. If the community is one potential avenue for getting off Needs Improvement, they can be a tool for teachers' use. And if the community is intimately connected to school failure and unable to offer additional options to get out of Needs Improvement, they are part of the same struggling family.

These findings shed light on the survey results. The qualitative data show that as schools progress along sanctioning levels it becomes evident that the facilities and resources considered as most important to teachers change. The survey measures

emphasize material resources in schools such as office space and technology, while consumable resources are inadequately assessed. These types of resources are those considered most important and lacking by the White Plains teachers. Alternatively, the consumable and human resources seem to be more intricately connected with policy for teachers at Parkside and Greenway. Thus, the positive coefficient may in fact be a function of the types of resources deemed important and measured by the survey. The findings presented here suggest an expansion of the definition of facilities and resources is needed.

Summary of Qualitative Findings

Membership in a particular school context changes the way teachers are able to think about and manage their work. As policy conditions change, teachers experience some basic changes in their day-to-day work. These basic changes are best captured by looking at teachers' discussions of the use and availability of time. These alterations in their work prompt teachers to strategize and adapt their teaching to meet these new requirements and needs. This is evident in their strategies for time management. However, the adaptation process is intertwined with their sense of empowerment. Teachers describe a loss of control over their classroom practices and the inability to exercise autonomy and freedom in response to the varied needs of their students. At the school level, one response to changes in daily work operations is collaboration. As requirements, expectations, and pressure grow, teachers turn to one another for assistance. This collective form of empowerment seems to intensify as the sanctions

grow in severity. Ironically, the intense involvement by teachers in Needs Improvement contexts has powerful implications for their sense of personal empowerment in that it makes the sting of AYP failure even greater.

Just as teachers experienced a loss of personal empowerment within their classrooms under Needs Improvement, they also experience a loss of control or input into decisions over professional development. As sanctions intensify, the schools receive additional support from external actors, much of which comes in the form of professional development. Many teachers in this context identify the external support as an imposition and insult. A process designed to draw school and district together actually prompts a division. In fact, the content and quality of the professional development is almost irrelevant since it is the issue of control that makes the training likely to be rejected. As sanctions increase the influence of external actors grows. This process strengthens the internal bonds in the school and generates an "us against them" mentality.

While not the goal of the policy, the "us against them" mentality is a logical outcome of the accountability approach. By definition, being held accountable for student achievement inherently requires that teachers are responsible to an external party. The structure of schools and intent of accountability policy, makes this insider protective mechanism a likely outcome. Teachers operating within the policy structure, and especially those experiencing the consequences of nonsuccess in this structure, delineate clearly between insiders, or group members, and outsiders. Thus, with shifting policy conditions comes a transformation in what it means to be a member of the school. Teachers' descriptions of professional development begin to indicate the extent to which this division is a reality in the actual work lives of teachers. As programs, such as those

outlined by professional development, are increasingly imposed on schools in Needs Improvement, they will by their very identification with outsiders likely be rejected by teachers.

Teachers' shifting notions of membership, as seen in the agency and collaboration required in Needs Improvement schools, is intimately connected with their view of school leaders. The structure of accountability stimulates a collective mentality that seems to be culled and engendered by the leaders themselves in an effort to deal with some of the negative consequences of being a failing school, such as loss of morale and negative community perceptions. The less embedded policy is in the day-to-day work lives of teachers, the more they describe their leaders as free acting agents capable of buffering them from the effects of policy. Not surprisingly, as Needs Improvement pressure increases, the internal conditions shift and the ability of teachers to view their leaders as effective buffers diminishes. Teachers' exposure to the requirements and expectations of *NCLB* is directly reflected in their descriptions of their leadership.

Likewise, shifting school contexts and modulating definitions of membership are visible in teachers' descriptions of their facilities and resources. Across the schools there are significantly different levels of resources and discretionary funds. Interestingly, it is the difference in human resources that emerges as the most important. Human capacity and resources, whether it is through leaders or community, stands out to teachers as a crucial component of their success under *NCLB.* Just as accountability shapes the role of the leaders in the school, teachers are acutely aware of the relationship between community and school status. Not surprisingly, teachers often refer to the economic or

ethnic composition of the community when explaining their current *NCLB* sanctioning status. All of the qualitative findings are summarized in Table 8.

Summary and Conclusions

The findings presented here illustrate that accountability policy spurs active change within schools, just as it was designed to do. As teachers develop strategies and adapt to new requirements and expectations, not all of their effort produces positive outcomes. The overarching pattern demonstrated in the survey data suggests that as the years of Needs Improvement increase, teachers' evaluation of their working conditions tend to improve. Conversely, after failing to meet AYP, teachers' assessment of their work conditions in several important domains decline. These trends reflect the dominant themes found in the interview data. Examined broadly, teachers in Needs Improvement schools must change the ways they think about and manage their work. In their attempts to respond, they develop specific work-related strategies and new understandings of their role in the school and the roles of others. The Needs Improvement schools investigated here tend to turn inward in a collective attempt to improve student performance and meet AYP expectations. Interestingly, it is this collaborative and personal reaction that may produce the most significant negative outcome – the loss of empowerment and control. As the interviews illustrate, meeting the demands of *NCLB* often results in a loss of personal empowerment and casts a shadow on teachers' perceptions of their school identity. All of these findings are summarized in Table 8.

This shift in work routines and teachers' understandings appears to be a gradual process. Each school examined here represents one point along the path of change

spurred by *NCLB*. The teachers in this study describe how the gradual move from Established to Shifted is a process marked by the development of new work strategies and ways of relating to one's work. An understanding of this process reveals how and why working under *NCLB* sanctions may produce positive assessments of work conditions while the immediate sting of failure can result in marked decline.

It is not just working conditions that are affected by this process. Teachers' feelings of job satisfaction and future career plans are also impacted. Membership in an Established, Shifting, or Shifted school context also shapes assessments of these two important issues. This is the topic explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Job Satisfaction and Career Plans

There is a considerable literature within sociology on job satisfaction and career trajectories (e.g. Hodson 1991; Kalleberg 1977, 2008; March and Simon 1958; Mobley 1977). Within this broad literature we see several primary findings. First, the body of literature on job satisfaction suggests that satisfaction is largely a function of autonomy, control, income, and interpersonal friendships (Kalleberg 1977; Locke 1976). Second, classic studies of career decision-making focus on work conditions, satisfaction, job search prospects, and job search effort (Mobley 1977; Staw 1984). In this literature, extrinsic factors, those that lie outside of the actor, dominate individual assessments of their satisfaction and career decision making. Instead of intrinsic factors controlling attitudes about work, in this case it is those things which lie outside that shape perceptions.

Following this literature, one might predict that similar extrinsic factors dominate teachers' job satisfaction and career planning. However, there is reason to believe that quite the opposite might occur. Teaching is an occupation unlike many others. As outlined in the theory chapter, the dual structure of schooling supports the development of a unique workplace culture. The structural space characteristic of a loosely coupled system allows teachers to generate a culture that fully embraces the view from below. According to accounts of the workplace culture of teachers, it is an altruistic ethic that motivates many to enter this occupational "calling" and keeps them in the profession (Bellah et al. 1985; Farkas, Johnson, and Foleno 2000; Ingersoll 2003; Lortie 1975;

Mowday et al 1982; National Education Association 1996; Shaw 1996). Unlike many other occupations, as teachers describe their job satisfaction and career planning, different explanations may rise to the fore. In fact, teachers acting in alignment with their workplace culture, and the view from below, may draw on the intrinsic factors dominating their work to explain the relationships between accountability policy, job satisfaction, and career planning. Alternatively, accountability efforts to draw the work of teachers into alignment with administrative structures may make it increasingly difficult to derive satisfaction and develop career plans based on intrinsic factors.

It is particularly important to investigate how the current accountability movement shapes teacher job satisfaction and career planning given the ongoing concern about school staffing. A recent National Center for Education Statistics Report projects that between 2006 and 2018 the number of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools will increase by 17 percent. This growth means that public schools across the United States will need to hire an additional half-million teachers (National Center for Education Statistics 2009).

Prior research has suggested that these "shortages" are a function of insufficient supply. Ingersoll argues differently. His research indicates that these deficiencies are not a product of insufficient supply, but rather the result of a "revolving door" out of the occupation. He demonstrates that teacher movement into other occupations and job dissatisfaction are primary factors explaining this "shortage" (Ingersoll 2001). By investigating how the current accountability climate shapes the ways in which teachers understand their job satisfaction and career planning, we can investigate how policy may, or may not, be contributing to the "revolving door" in teaching.

This analysis also has implications for the research on school effectiveness. Prior research indicates that a strong sense of community and cohesion among teachers, families, and students is a key indicator of successful and effective schools (e.g. Durkheim 1961; Grant 1988; Ingersoll 2001; Parsons 1959; Rosenholtz 1989; Waller 1932). To the extent that the current accountability context disrupts satisfaction prompting teachers to leave the occupation, this study has the potential to uncover important implications for school effectiveness and student learning.

In discussions of school effectiveness, it is important to remember that teachers' reactions to policy originate from the "view from below." From this position in the dual structure of schooling, attempts to increase accountability are going to be understood as disempowering and an intrusion into the teaching process, factors both connected with dissatisfaction. However, this view should not dominate our understanding of these findings. *NCLB*, a policy designed from the disorganization perspective, seeks to improve poor academic performance and address educational inequalities. In fact, accountability and testing policies began in the United States precisely because of abysmal academic achievement when compared to other nations and the dramatic number of students "left behind" as a result of systematic inequality in the education system (e.g. Chase 1971; Coleman et al. 1966; National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983). These same trends largely continue today (e.g. Gamoran and Long 2006; Ginsberg et al. 2005; Rampey et al. 2009) One's position in the dual structure of schooling fundamentally alters how they make sense of policy. While teachers' view from below plays a major role in how they construct their job satisfaction and career plans, this is not the only perspective.

The working conditions data indicates that teachers' attempts to make sense of and adapt to changing organizational context under NCLB has considerable influence on their experience of their work. Understandably these same factors are likely to influence their feelings of job satisfaction and future career plans. In this study, teacher respondents were asked to reflect on their sense of job satisfaction and thoughts about their future career plans in relation to current accountability policy and requirements. These two concepts are conceptually distinct and yet arguably affected similarly by organizational conditions. Including both concepts provides a window into what can be conceived as short- and long-term effects of *NCLB*. As teachers consider their current job satisfaction, they are describing the ways policy influences their work in the present moment. However, by reflecting on future career plans, they are considering the long-term potential ramifications of accountability on their relationship to the occupation. These types of reflections delve beyond the day-to-day work of teachers into their perceptions of the relationship between themselves and the occupation as a whole under various accountability conditions.

Job Satisfaction and Career Planning Across the Three Schools

White Plains – An Established School

White Plains teachers largely did not feel that *NCLB* or accountability policy affected their sense of job satisfaction or future career plans. Of the ten respondents at White Plains, seven stated that *NCLB* does not directly affect their personal sense of job satisfaction. Likewise, seven out of the ten respondents at White Plains felt that *NCLB* did not impact their career plans.

Similar to many of the previous findings, when asked about their job satisfaction and career planning, teachers here did not even bring up the issue of *NCLB* or accountability requirements. White Plains, as a Distinguished school, is buffered in many ways from the current policy environment. Due to the academic success they have experienced, teachers here are not required to consider the policy environment as they reflect upon and strategize about their career. Instead, the White Plains interview data indicates that teachers largely ground their assessments of job satisfaction and plans for the future in their intrinsic concern for the children they teach and personal preferences. Emily, in response to a direct question about the relationship between *NCLB* and job satisfaction, states,

> No, no it really doesn't [impact my job satisfaction]. Like I said, I'm not here to make sure that all my T's are crossed and my I's are dotted for No Child Left Behind. I'm here to serve my students. That's the way I feel. I don't care what kind of legislation it is or whatever. I hope I always want to do what I can for the students because that's the bottom line.

Jane T. echoes this sentiment. She explains that her primary source of satisfaction is her students. She equates *NCLB* with testing and is able to clearly differentiate how little satisfaction she derives from test scores versus how much satisfaction she feels in interaction with the students.

> That test score is so not that important to me as far as how I feel about my day to day job. My job satisfaction is me coming to work and feeling like I'm helping the kids or at least helping them understand something and provide them with a safe learning environment so they can feel like they can ask questions, get answers without being made to feel inferior…That is more my job satisfaction than anything. I would say that out of the very most, out of 100 percent of my school year, 20 percent would be the CRCT scores.

Edward, another White Plains teacher, goes even further to state that *NCLB* "hardly ever comes up". He says,

> You know the legislation doesn't amount to a hill of beans for me and for a lot of my colleagues because we're always talking about how we can help the kids. No Child Left Behind hardly ever comes up.

Many White Plains teachers are able to "not care" or dismiss *NCLB* in their consideration of job satisfaction due to their school's position along the *NCLB* spectrum. As a result of their Distinguished status, teachers here are largely able to overlook aspects of the policy that shape satisfaction in other contexts. This does not mean that it does not play a role at all. Interestingly, while *NCLB* barely influenced their personal sense of job satisfaction, they did comment on the ways in which accountability policy influences the satisfaction of their colleagues in poorly performing schools. This is consistent with the literature on job satisfaction outside of teaching. In fact, one of the findings to emerge from this literature is that many workers will state that they are satisfied in their work. However, when asked to reflect on the satisfaction of their colleagues, they will state that they are unhappy. The teachers included in this study, seem to base their assessment of the satisfaction of others on the labels that accompany AYP failure. Thus, despite the Needs Improvement status of the school, teachers at White Plains report a loss of satisfaction amongst the profession at large as a result of *NCLB* sanctioning and labels. The Parkside and Greenway data offers additional insight into this particularly fascinating finding.

A similar pattern emerges in teachers responses to questions about their career plans. Since they work in a Distinguished school, many of the teachers do not feel compelled to strategize about their careers in relation to policy. Instead, most teachers develop their career plans based on their own personal preferences. A perfect illustration of this relationship is expressed by Jane T.

> I love to teach and I love that no matter what. That is what is driving my career choices, not just something the government has passed for now and it will change again when a different person is in office or, you know, that kind of thing. It's really not my career ga*u*ge, I should say.

As teachers here consider *NCLB* they take a passive approach to dealing with the policy. *NCLB* does not have a tremendous impact on their daily work, thus they are able to "ride it out" instead of actively strategizing in relation to the policy. Likewise, as the literature on the teaching profession predicts, these teachers are able to formulate their attitudes based on the intrinsic rewards associated with their work. Virginia summarizes this approach as she describes future career plans and any possible impact of *NCLB*.

> I love what I do and you know, No Child Left Behind will come and go, and CRCT tests will come and go, and administrators will come and go, and superintendents will come and go. I feel like you just have to ride that out… I just focus on the students, give them what they need and the rest is just fluff, you know?

The policy can be "fluff" for White Plains teachers, but it is more solid at Parkside and Greenway.

Parkside

As a Shifting school, *NCLB* has begun to play a dominant role in teachers' job satisfaction and career planning. Teachers at Parkside are the in the process of trying to develop new ways of constructing their work under these recent changes in structural conditions. Since they are just beginning this process, they do not have established strategies of coping with the situation. Instead it is an active and intense struggle. Teachers at Parkside are struggling because they cannot construct their work the way

they did prior to joining the Needs Improvement list. When asked about her job satisfaction, Courtney relayed the intense emotion that accompanies this transition into Needs Improvement status.

> I think it has really been a hindrance or aggravation. You can see how I am sitting right now with my arms tightly crossed. (Laughter) There are so many rules and regulations. The first time that we did not make AYP, I sat down and cried because as I told you I have a lot of ties to this school. It is my school and my community. And all of the students here feel that way… It hurts the kids also because it labels them and how do I know it wasn't you or the group that you are in that caused that school to fail. It is an insult to me. It is an insult to us as teachers.

Alisha also finds the current position of the school extremely difficult.

> I'm so stressed. I guess the stress and the pressure outweighs the good things, you know what I'm saying? ... I do have those moments, you know, feelings of accomplishment or whatever. But at the same time, like right now just talking about it, my stomach's in knots. I mean it just, it sickens me… You know, it's just too much pressure. It's just too much stress.

Particularly with regards to labeling schools, and thereby the labeling of students and teachers, teachers' job satisfaction is directly impacted by the requirements of the policy. Just because labeling schools has an impact on teachers' feelings of job satisfaction does not mean that they do not reframe this emotion into something positive. Samantha, when asked if *NCLB* impacts her job satisfaction, responded,

> Yes right now. Because [I am] frustrated. There's nothing that hurts me more than someone saying, 'Oh where do you teach? Parkside. Oh, I'm sorry.' That's sort of the reaction you get. But at the same time it really makes me always root for the underdog. That's just how I am and at the same time it motivates me to work harder too and do what I need to do in my classroom… It's a motivator as well.

Samantha is already working on adapting to this new pressure. Instead of stopping at feeling insulted, she uses this additional pressure to try and change her approach to her

work. This is illustrative of the process of adaptation characteristic of a Shifting school. As the threat to their school's reputation or identity becomes more prominent, teachers at Parkside begin to construct new ways of understanding their relationship to their work. Specifically, teachers begin to segment out their personal work from "the work of teaching under *NCLB*." By reconstructing their work in this way they enable themselves to salvage some sense of satisfaction from the work they perceive as unrelated to *NCLB* pressure and accountability requirements. This segmentation allows teachers to draw satisfaction from those components of their work that they are closest to and that provide the most intrinsic reward. Samantha does this by separating out the public perception of her school from her work within the classroom. This strategy of coping with the increased pressure and requirements accompanying *NCLB* becomes exceedingly apparent in Greenway where sufficient time has passed to firmly establish this approach.

Parkside teachers are just in the initial phases of strategizing in relation to policy when it comes to career plans. The sanctions are new at Parkside and thus the context has just begun to force them to consider how the shift in work environment influences their relationship to their work. In this quote from Sadie, we see this growing awareness of policy in relation to career planning.

> But the pressure you feel, real or imagined, but you hear about it all the time, on test scores and things, I don't know. I think that you know, if I could work in a situation where I didn't have that pressure, I would prefer it… If I could be a teacher in a situation where the test wasn't so paramount, I would love teaching, probably. That's how it's impacted me.

Teachers at Parkside do consider *NCLB* in discussions of their career plans. This does not necessarily mean that they plan to leave education. It simply means that as they

discuss their career plans, there is evidence that they have considered the role of *NCLB* in their future work lives. For example, even after responding that *NCLB* does not play a role in her career plans, one of Sadie's colleagues, Mary Beth, states that her decision to stay at Parkside might change if they continue to fail AYP.

Parkside teachers illustrate the complexity of being a Shifting school in their discussions of career plans. While they are increasingly developing career plans in relation to accountability policy, they are also trying to continue the passive strategy that is dominant at White Plains. In fact, it seems that the intensity of the emotion in their responses is generated by some resistance to the fact they must change their understanding at all. They are hopeful that they will pass AYP and all the additional requirements of *NCLB* will just disappear. In other words, they long for the old days of being an Established school and dismiss the policy in an attempt to use their old passive approach; however, the reality of their situation forces them to begin developing a new understanding of their careers in relation to policy. What is unique here is that the newly formulated approach is still a static one. Teachers at Parkside are taking into consideration the affects of policy on their career plans; however, they are not to the point of actively creating new job plans. Alisha explains that she has plans to remain in education, but she is also busy reassuring herself that the policy will go away and leave her with a more "workable" school environment.

> No, I really keep hoping that with the pendulum swinging back and forth like it always does and all the things that they put in place, and, you know, we'll get new governors, we'll get new presidents, you know, and somebody one day is going to say, 'Huh. This is probably not the best way to handle this.' You know? And, you know, I'm hoping that it too will pass. I don't know if it's still on my little computer, but I used to have a note on there that says, "This too shall pass." … I know that somebody someday is going to say, 'Wait a minute. This is crazy.

> You know, these people have 75% free and reduced lunch. They've got enough kids in this sub-group to count whereas this school is not even counting these kids. And these kids are Hispanic-speaking kids who don't even understand English yet, but we're making them take the CRCT in English.' And just, you know, somebody is going to figure out that there are several things about this that are so, so wrong. So, I mean, I plan to say in education… I do plan to stay in education.

Katie gives us another glimpse into this struggle,

> I'm going to stay in the education as long as I can… No Child Left Behind is not going to affect it one way or the other. As long as I know I'm doing my very best and all of my leaders, the Principals and Assistant Principals, as long as I can get a good report card on what I'm doing, I feel like I'm where I need to be. Now with a different President, some of this may change and the next idea they have for education may be off the wall totally, but whatever it is we're going to follow it because we elected them.

Katie is dismissing the policy as something that will quickly change with the next election while rooting her decision to stay in education in a segmented view of "her work." By grounding her choice to remain in education in the "report card" she gets from her school leadership, she is dividing her understanding of work from the broader experience of teachers' work under *NCLB*. It is important to note that educators in all three contexts discussed the coming and going of politicians and education reform; however, what distinguishes the three contexts is the ability to rely on this passive understanding of the relationship between policy and teachers work. In the two schools under sanctions, statements asserting the temporary nature of policy were accompanied by some semblance of a strategy used to reconstruct their work during the interim. White Plains teachers did not need to establish these strategies since they feel relatively free from the policy requirements.

Greenway

NCLB plays a dominant role in most aspects of teachers' work lives at Greenway. While accountability policy and the accompanying requirements are ever present for Greenway teachers, they have had sufficient time to develop active strategies for making sense of their work in this tumultuous context. Greenway has already Shifted to a place where teachers have fully embedded *NCLB* into their feelings of job satisfaction and plans for their future career. Ironically, this process results in some dismissal of the impact of *NCLB* on job satisfaction just like White Plains teachers reported. What is important to note here is that despite this similarity in outcome, the underlying process going on in these two schools is quite different. White Plains teachers haven't struggled with *NCLB* requirements and engaged in the process of Shifting. Greenway teachers engaged in this process and used this experience to develop new routines and reconstruct the meaning of their work in relation to the policy. Bob, a teacher at Greenway, explains how he does not believe *NCLB* has a significant impact on his job satisfaction. However, his description reveals that his source of satisfaction, the way he does his work, has already been fundamentally changed by *NCLB*.

> It's not something I really… I mean, if I do, it's, 'Yay!', you know, for about a week until the next kids come in and then you're starting all over again. I mean, if our school got off Needs Improvement, I'm sure there would be a big party that day, but, I mean, nothing would change, not as far as the school goes, not as far as what we teach, how we teach it, or what we do to improve our school because we're already doing everything we can and sometimes more.

Similarly, Reggie explains how he has created new ways of feeling successful under *NCLB*.

> I think that it is the climate because the Needs Improvement-6, the Needs Improvement-5, the Needs Improvement-7 now, it's making it harder and harder to feel like you've done a good job. You have to make your own benchmarks and then, if you achieve that benchmark for yourself, that has to be the level of success. As an example, I thought that I would have 20 kids in my eighth grade class that would not meet AYP out of -- what do we have? -- 97, I think. I thought 20 would not make AYP, and I was wrong. It was only sixteen. I think it was either sixteen or thirteen, I forget which. So, I was pleasantly surprised. So, do I feel successful? Yes. Because based on who I was able to reach I was pretty sure that 20 of them would not [pass]... I had some people that surprised me that I didn't think that they had learned enough to make it, but they actually did. So, it's hard when that almost artificial mark has to be what defines your level of success.

Reggie's process of adapting to the policy context includes setting his own standards for success and satisfaction. Reggie does this because the structure of the policy, and the ways in which it has changed the climate in the school, have made it hard for him to find satisfaction in the ways he used to. Greenway teachers have actively Shifted their response to policy. Several specific strategies for undergoing this process are revealed in teachers' explanations of job satisfaction and career plans.

Like Parkside, the dominant strategy employed by teachers at Greenway is to segment their work. There are two ways teachers do this. First, teachers describe a temporal relationship to their work based on the testing schedule. Teachers differentiate their feelings of job satisfaction during testing time versus non-testing time and explain that they are less able to derive satisfaction from their work during the testing period. The anxiety and efforts at test preparation during these times draw teachers away from the elements of their job that at other times give them satisfaction. When discussing the impact of *NCLB* on job satisfaction, Stephanie explained,

> Right now, it doesn't but I guess when it gets closer to testing time and a lot of the focus is put on the CRCT, I think it will, you know, there for those few weeks leading up to the test and maybe even a few weeks after the test, it will change a little bit, my overall satisfaction. And not necessarily with the school or with the

> teaching, just with everything, because there will be so much more pressure put on it [the test] and put on me and put on the kids.

Just like Parkside, the second way Greenway teachers segment their work is a broad separation of "my work" from "the work of all teachers teaching under *NCLB*." This way of crafting one's work pulls out the personal from the broader impacts of *NCLB* on job satisfaction of the profession as a whole. This is reminiscent of the literature on satisfaction in the teaching profession. Teachers at Greenway find satisfaction from the intrinsic rewards found in the work that is closest to them. However, when they think more broadly about the alternative segment of their work, "the work of all teachers under *NCLB,*" they reveal extrinsic elements of the policy that negatively influence teacher job satisfaction. Thus, in an effort to feel satisfied with their work, teachers segment these two pieces of the work experience. Chris offers a nuanced explanation of this segmentation of personal from professional impact. When asked how accountability impacts his work, he explains,

> It really doesn't. I don't, it doesn't bother me as far as, I mean, it's just a label. I mean the only thing I can do is come in here and do the best I can do. I can't do any more than that.

Again, it is clear that Chris has considered his satisfaction in relation to *NCLB* when he quickly notes that "it's just a label" and decided it has minimal impact on his own personal work experience. However, he goes on to explain that teachers at large have a different evaluation of the requirements and the "help" that comes along with *NCLB* in a failing school.

> It does seem like you're always under the microscope. They're always looking and saying, 'what are they doing over there' you know, trying to figure out, 'what are they doing wrong?'… So, I mean, there's more scrutiny, more people coming

> in seeing, you know, trying to help us. There's more stress in the workplace because of that. I think you probably see more teachers that are, you know, they lose morale because of that.

It is clear that he believes that there is increased supervision within the school, but he separates the impact of this from his own sense of work satisfaction. This "scrutiny" leads *other* teachers to "lose morale." Likewise, Samantha engages in a similar type of segmentation. Samantha constructs her job satisfaction and career plans in direct relation to *NCLB* and the challenges of working in a failing school.

> I love what I do. I love the challenge of it…I like seeing the kids that people think can't learn accomplish something…I mean, we're what, seven, eight years on the Needs Improvement list? And so, to me, it's a big challenge. Like I said, I don't know if I can do it until I'm 60, but I'll hang in there as long as I can.

Despite the fact that Samantha says she derives satisfaction from the challenge of working in a Needs Improvement school, when asked later in the conversation about the impact of *NCLB,* Samantha explained that this experience is difficult for her colleagues.

> The faculty at this school is by far the hardest working faculty that I've ever worked with. I'm not sure all their energy is productive, like it's producing results, but it's not that they're not trying.… They're working their butts off and I think that they get, with that label of a Needs Improvement school, it makes people wonder, 'Well, is it a good place to go? Would I want my child to be at that school?' I think that label is difficult because it's not broken down for the community and for the people to know what does go on.

Beyond the label and public perception, she relays how the additional requirements placed on teachers in Needs Improvement schools can undermine teachers' sense of satisfaction and their future in the profession.

> That's where I think they're gonna end up losing good teachers. The bad ones that aren't doing [well] will hang around until they get fired, which they won't. Nobody ever gets fired from teaching. I mean, it's rare. But good teachers I think

> will leave because of, it's not so much accountability. It's almost busy work, and there's so much extra busy work in it.

The feeling that *NCLB* diminishes the job satisfaction of teachers at large is a shared across all three school contexts. Teachers across these schools note that the requirements and sanctions associated with this policy, particularly the labels given to schools that do not meet academic standards, have a negative impact on satisfaction throughout the profession. Tony, an experienced teacher at White Plains, explains how he, like many other teachers at his school, is able to get satisfaction out of his students' success. However, he sympathizes with the loss of satisfaction by other teachers in "failing" schools.

> I try to make it [the impact of NCLB on my satisfaction] minimal. Again when I see White Plains' name in the paper and everybody says, 'I want to teach at White Plains. That's a good school.' I can't help but get some satisfaction from that. But, I can never get much satisfaction out of it without starting to feel bad…. The teachers at Greenway, I know what they're going through. And again I don't think my satisfaction out of seeing a good test score is worth what they have to go through when the test scores come out and they have to feel bad about it… I think No Child Left Behind has just put a magnifying glass on that and made it much more public and they made the labels. Failing school... And when they labeled Parkside a failing school what little bit if any respect they [Parkside teachers] had for No Child Left Behind kind of started going because that's a horrendous label. It'd be like the same as standing up in front of the student body in the gym and saying this is a failing student. I mean nobody would do that but you're saying this about that school to the whole county.

While most of the teachers at White Plains can formulate their sense of job satisfaction without consideration of the policy, they do formulate some sense of satisfaction with the occupation in relation to the impact *NCLB* has on poor performing schools. Working at a Distinguished school may shape the satisfaction of teachers at that school. The reputation of a "failing" school, however, is presumed to directly impact the

satisfaction of teachers in that school and indirectly impact the sense of satisfaction across all members of the profession.

When it comes to career trajectories, Greenway teachers clearly consider *NCLB* in their plans. Unlike White Plains where consideration of policy is optional, or Parkside where the process of strategizing career plans in relation to policy has just begun, working at Greenway forces teachers to contemplate policy's influence on their relationship to their work and future plans. This does not necessarily mean that all teachers have developed similar plans or had the same response to *NCLB* in relation to their career plans. What teachers indicate is that they actively consider the policy while planning their career moves. Jill, when asked about her career plans stated,

> I'm at the point where I'm not sure. I think I've kind of wavered back and forth with that thought. I love where I work; I love it here. But I don't know what the government is going to do, and until they make a decision or make, you know, take an action on it, then I'm not sure.

While it is unclear what specific parts of accountability influence her career planning, it is clear that she is actively considering policy in the process of planning her next career move. Sally also actively considers policy as she constructs her career plans. She clearly desires to stay in education, but there is some doubt generated from the requirement that all students must reach 100 percent proficiency in 2014. She notes that her career plans may change as the policy deadline approaches.

> I'm trying not to think about 2014. [I] may have to get back to you on that. You have [to be at] 100 percent, but I think it's something that I'm just going to take it year by year and see. Who's to say what they are going to do in the year 2014… Right now, this is where I want to be for the rest of my 30 years, so I'm looking at I'm going to do this until I retire, unless something happens to me in that year.

Likewise, Chris clearly relates his career plans with the impact of *NCLB*.

> It definitely makes you think knowing that they could come in and say, 'well, you're not doing what you're supposed to do, we don't want you here anymore.' You know, in the back of your mind you're thinking, I'll probably have to find another career. Or if they, you know, were to bring people in observing you all the time, that puts more stress on you… teachers may decide, hey, I don't need this stress. I'll just, you know, I'll do something else.

As Chris continues he actually lists several specific career options that he might pursue to "get him out of the classroom." Reggie is actively considering a career change as a result of his belief that *NCLB* is driving less prepared students up the grade ladder.

> Oh boy, I'm just going to tell you, (laughter) Yes, yes. I am seriously considering moving to high school because it's getting more and more cumbersome. Coupled with the change that I see the most is that I see the kids coming up less and less prepared. Ah, if the kids were coming up more prepared or if I knew that the changes were going to get here, then there would be light at the end of the tunnel. But I've seen the, the preparation of the students in this school continuing to spiral in a downward sense. And so there's more work each year to be able to get kids to the same level… I don't know how I'm going to feel about it because this is where I've been for so long. I don't know if that's a fault of No Child Left Behind or not, but I think that it is, it is in the climate because the Needs Improvement-6, the Needs Improvement-5, the Needs Improvement-7, it's making it harder and harder to feel like you've done a good job.

At Greenway there is an external force driving teachers' relationship to their career, not just personal preference. Teachers at Greenway are actively crafting their career in relation to policy. This dynamic process has been underway for a while. This does not mean that all teachers want to leave; in fact, many teachers explain their choice to stay in terms of the policy. The teachers' actual career plans are not what matters so much here, but rather that these plans were formed using a similar process. Teachers at Greenway, despite their specific plans, actively consider policy as they develop their plan. For example, Stephanie, a new teacher at Greenway, explains that she feels *NCLB*

will not change her career plans; however, she still formulates her plans in relation to *NCLB*.

> I don't think it really has a lot to do with it. Unless in the next, you know, five or six years it just gets unbearable with the data and the paperwork and, you know, all of the pressure. I don't see it changing.

Greenway has existed under Needs Improvement sanctions for quite some time. Unlike teachers at Parkside that have just begun to deal with these changes, Greenway teachers have Shifted their daily routines and are engaged in the process of crafting their careers in response to the policy. This is particularly evident in the segmenting strategies exercised by teachers and in their active consideration of policy as they explain their career plans. While there is some similarity in teacher responses across schools, the ways in which teachers arrived at these responses are distinct. It is this process of adjusting to different structural conditions and school context that appears to influence teachers' job satisfaction and career planning.

Conclusions

Teachers' responses across the three schools reveal how the structural conditions established by the Georgia implementation of *NCLB* affect the short-term job satisfaction and the long-term career projections of teachers. As teachers assess their current levels of job satisfaction, they reflect on the present situation. However, as they ponder their future plans, they consider the ways in which policy may have long-term ramifications for their work experiences. The data presented in this chapter demonstrates that policy context has significant influence on both types of assessments. These data highlight the

ways in which teachers are crafting their work under three distinct sets of structural conditions. The overarching patterns suggest that the job-crafting process, and the depth at which policy is incorporated in this process, is dependent on the intensity of sanctions and the potential threat posed to organizational and personal identity.

The conditions present in Distinguished schools like White Plains allow teachers to formulate their sense of job satisfaction and plans for future career moves based primarily on their intrinsic love of children and personal preferences. The lack of urgency with regards to policy provides the necessary space for teachers to ground their experiences in these more personal elements of their work. This allows teachers here to continue utilizing the already Established construction of their work.

However, the structural conditions present in schools change as they come under sanctions. In response to these changes, teachers must create new ways of understanding their relationship to their work. This process of meaning making is revealed in the day-to-day work conditions, but it is also evident in teachers' job satisfaction and career planning. As a new Needs Improvement school, Parkside teachers are just beginning to engage in this process. They are in the midst of confronting these changes and beginning to craft new routines and responses. Parkside teachers struggle with this process. There is a tug-of-war going on between the previous Established routines and the necessary Shifting required to adjust to sanctions. Parkside teachers are engaged in the process of Shifting.

Greenway teachers, having existed under *NCLB* sanctions for quite some time, have fully embedded policy requirements in their work experience and even developed strategies for dealing with these structural conditions. Teachers at Greenway have

Shifted their ways of working to account for policy and integrate it into both their short- and long-term evaluations of their work. It is evident from the data that working under sanctions leads teachers to two strategic segmentations of their work. First, teachers segment their job temporally separating testing time from the rest of the school year. Second, teachers segment their personal work from the work of all teachers under *NCLB*. Specifically, teachers at Greenway explain how they derive job satisfaction by choosing to focus on specific elements of their personal work. This strategy allows teachers to continue to draw satisfaction from intrinsic elements traditionally driving satisfaction in the teaching profession. While this segmentation is not necessary at White Plains, the personal versus professional distinction illuminates some very interesting findings across schools. The data reveal that there is a pattern of perceived loss of professional satisfaction across all three school contexts. In other words, despite the status of the school, many teachers believe that policy has negatively impacted the job satisfaction of teachers at large.

These findings have important implications for the education of youth in this country and the long-term organizational effectiveness of schools. As outlined at the beginning of the chapter, job satisfaction and plans to remain in the profession are important determinants for student educational outcomes and organizational effectiveness. The information uncovered here demonstrates that accountability policy, primarily the sanctions and negative labels, is linked to satisfaction and career planning. As schools come under sanctions, teachers must negotiate the changes that come along with being a Needs Improvement school. In the midst of this process, we see that Shifting routines and constructing new work meanings can be a struggle for teachers.

Likewise, teachers in schools further along in this transition explain that the new strategies and established routines do not always produce positive attitudes towards work or the plans to remain in the profession. This examination reveals another way in which the structural conditions created by *NCLB*, and the requirements of accountability policy, have penetrated into the personal work lives of teachers. The unintended effects of decreased professional satisfaction and strategic career planning in relation to policy could have serious consequences for the long-term health of the profession and education of America's children.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

As I write this conclusion, the dust is still settling from the recent firings of ninety-three educators and staff in Rhode Island. This school, having experienced poor academic success for many consecutive years, encountered the ultimate sanction. The educators here were deemed ineffective and fired from their jobs.[38] At a meeting of the America's Promise Alliance shortly after the decision in Rhode Island, President Barack Obama stated,

> If a school is struggling, we have to work with the principal and the teachers to find a solution. We've got to give them a chance to make meaningful improvements. But if a school continues to fail its students year after year after year, if it doesn't show signs of improvement, then there's got to be a sense of accountability. And that's what happened in Rhode Island last week at a chronically troubled school, when just 7 percent of 11th graders passed state math tests -- 7 percent. When a school board wasn't able to deliver change by other means, they voted to lay off the faculty and the staff. As my Education Secretary, Arne Duncan, says, our kids get only one chance at an education, and we need to get it right. (The White House Press Release March 1, 2010)

With this quote, President Obama clearly states that the trend begun in 1965 to grow the federal role in education has continued. *No Child Left Behind* marked a major turning point in this trajectory. Since 2002, when *No Child Left Behind* was signed into law, federal involvement and accountability have grown.

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[38] As I prepared this dissertation for submission, the teacher union representing the Rhode Island teachers reentered negotiations with the school district. The state of these negotiations indicates that more than likely teachers will strike a deal to avoid being fired from their jobs. This further illustrates the ongoing tension between the views from above and below discussed in the dissertation.

In 2006, I undertook this research because of a gap in our understanding of how *NCLB* was impacting schools as workplaces. Previous research had illustrated that *NCLB* was intensifying the work of teachers (Costigan and Crocco 2004). Additionally, we knew that the United States was struggling to adequately staff public schools (Ingersoll 2001), particularly those schools labeled as Needs Improvement by *NCLB* (Costigan and Crocco 2004; Jimerson 2005; Kohn 2001; McNeil 2000). What remained unclear was *how NCLB* was affecting the work experience of teachers. Using a mixed method research design, this dissertation sought to fill that gap. Specifically, I asked:

1) Do *No Child Left Behind* accountability policies impact the working conditions in schools? If so, how?
2) How do *No Child Left Behind* accountability policies affect teachers' job satisfaction and career plans?
3) How do educators and schools interpret and manage the experience of working under *No Child Left Behind*?

I chose a mixed methods approach to investigate the research questions. Each method, survey analysis and in-depth interview, enabled a different type of inference. By combining analytic approaches, I was able to contextualize the specific patterns of behavior and meaning making uncovered in the interview study sites, in broader trends in the state of Georgia. Combining these methods allowed me to generate insight by exploring relationships in existing data and making unobserved facts visible (King 1994).

To guide me in this analysis, I adopted a multi-level theoretical framework. I drew on three dominant theoretical frames to connect macro level policy with micro-level teacher processes (Binder 2007; Hallet 2010). First, I explored the unique structure of

schools (Bidwell 1965; Elmore 2000; Ingersoll 2001; Meyer and Rowan 1978, 1983; Scott 2003). This structure, characterized by loose coupling and dual perspectives, presents contrasting messages about how *NCLB* should be understood. Incorporating both of these viewpoints, the disorganization and disempowerment perspectives, allowed me to grasp the assumptions surrounding the creation of *NCLB* as well as those involved in school-level implementation (Ingersoll 2001). Second, I investigated the workplace culture of teachers (Farkas, Johnson, and Foleno 2000; Ingersoll 2003; Lortie 1975; National Education Association 1996). This literature underscores how the dual perspectives on educational structure support the development of a culture of work that embraces altruism and a service ethic despite teachers' structural isolation. Third, I integrated theory on the meaning of work and sensemaking in organizations (Barker Caza 2007; Feldman 1989; Fine 1996; Weick 1995; Wrzesniewski, Dutton, and Debebe 2003). Born out of unique structural and cultural conditions comes teachers' actual understanding of and responses to policy. How teachers make sense of their work in distinct school sanctioning contexts illuminates the process of meaning making under shifting policy conditions.

In this final chapter, I start by summarizing the primary findings of this research on *NCLB* and teachers work experiences. Second, I outline the important contributions and implications of this work for the empirical and theoretical literature. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the limitations of the study and directions for future research.

Summary of Main Findings

This study explores how *NCLB* affects teachers' experience of their work. I investigate three specific areas of impact: working conditions, job satisfaction, and career plans. These findings led to the development of a conceptual framework used to describe the meaning making process occurring across these three school contexts. This framework describes the schools as Established, Shifting, or Shifted. In this section, I will briefly review the primary findings on working conditions, job satisfaction, and career plans and outline how this evidence supports the conceptual framework.

In Chapter 5, I use a mixed method approach to explore the relationship between *NCLB* and teachers' working conditions. The quantitative analysis indicated two broad trends. First, as years in Needs Improvement increase, teachers tend to evaluate their working conditions more positively. Conversely, a failure to meet Adequate Yearly Progress negatively affects teachers' assessments of their working conditions. In other words, longer duration of Needs Improvement seems to improve the working conditions in schools; however, the immediate sting of failure to meet Adequate Yearly Progress can result in marked decline. The interview data helps us understand this puzzle.

Examined broadly, the interview data presented in Chapter 5 reveal that teachers in Needs Improvement schools must change the ways they think about and manage their work. As teachers respond, they develop specific work-related strategies and new understandings of their role in the school and the roles of others. Educators in Needs Improvement schools tend to turn inward in a collective attempt to improve student performance and meet Adequate Yearly Progress expectations. This collaborative

approach in many ways does improve the conditions of their work as indicated by the positive relationship between Needs Improvement duration and working conditions. Interestingly, it is this collaborative and personal reaction that seems to magnify the loss of empowerment and control in this context. The interviews illustrate that meeting the demands of *NCLB* often results in a loss of personal empowerment and casts a shadow on teachers' perceptions of their school identity. Thus, after considerable collective effort to improve, a failed attempt to meet Adequate Yearly Progress does negatively impact teachers' assessments of their work.

Chapter 6 draws on the interview data to investigate how *NCLB* affects teachers' job satisfaction and career plans. Similar to working conditions, teachers indicate that job satisfaction and career plans are indeed shaped by the intensity of the sanctions and the potential threat to organizational and personal identity posed by *NCLB* labels. When a school is not under sanctions, this opens up the structural space for teachers to make sense of their work separate from the influence of policy requirements and expectations. Thus, these teachers are able to derive satisfaction from the traditional intrinsic elements of their work, such as their love of children, and shape their career according to their personal preferences. However, teachers working under sanctions must first judge their work in relation to policy conditions, and then make sense of their satisfaction and career plans. In these contexts, teachers must create new ways of understanding their job satisfaction and career plans, just as they did their working conditions. When sanctions are initially imposed it is a struggle to develop new ways to construct your work. Teachers in this context seem to be caught between drawing on the previously effective routines and understandings and developing new meanings. However, in a school that is

in advanced Needs Improvement, policy is fully embedded in teachers understanding of their work. Here they have developed strategies and new routines to make sense of their satisfaction and career inside this context. Specifically, teachers use segmentation strategies to carve out a portion of their work where they are better able to derive satisfaction and build career plans based on intrinsic factors.

One of the most interesting findings discussed in Chapter 6 is that teachers in all three school contexts seem to be affected in some way by the damaged identity of Needs Improvement schools. There appears to be a shared loss of professional satisfaction amongst educators in all three schools. In other words, despite the status of the school, many teachers agree that policy has negatively impacted the job satisfaction of teachers at large.

The findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6 provide the evidence for the development of a conceptual framework for understanding the gradual process of adaptation and meaning making occurring within schools under our current accountability context. Chapter 4 outlines the details of this framework. The three schools included in this analysis were selected because they correspond to vital stages along the policy sanction spectrum: Distinguished, first year Needs Improvement, and advanced Needs Improvement. As I examined the differences in working conditions, job satisfaction, and career plans across these three cases, a broader set of patterns emerged. Specifically, these findings illuminated a dynamic process of how teachers make sense of and adapt to *No Child Left Behind* at key points along the policy life course.

This process of meaning making and adaptation is rich and multidimensional. As schools are brought under increasingly more intrusive sanctions, the members of that

school are forced to change their everyday work lives and perspectives of their work. Thus, looking across three schools one can examine parts of this process of adaptation and hear directly from the teachers what this process looks and feels like in their everyday work lives. In thinking about how they cope with the requirements and demands of policy within the context of each school, teachers identify and describe three versions of the modern public middle school reality: Established, Shifting and Shifted.

White Plains, a Distinguished school that has never experienced any *NCLB* sanctions, represents an Established reality. Life at White Plains is largely unaffected by *NCLB* and the work lives of teachers continues much as it always has. Data in each of the three primary areas of investigation – working conditions, job satisfaction, and career plans – yielded little evidence of active incorporation of policy by teachers.

Parkside, a new Needs Improvement school just implementing school choice, has been recently bombarded with the demands of policy and is entrenched in creating new ways of working under these conditions. This school represents a Shifting reality. Parkside struggles to negotiate this new territory. The data indicate that as they work to establish new strategies and understandings they are compelled to incorporate *NCLB* into their work lives.

Lastly, Greenway, an advanced Needs Improvement school undergoing state contract monitoring and school restructuring, has spent considerable time developing new ways of dealing with the demands of policy. While these adaptive strategies may or may not be effective, Greenway teachers have come to terms with the reality of the school status. This does not mean that they do not desire a change in the status or that their experience is not one of instability, but the data reveal that they have already created new

ways of working and *NCLB* has become a regular fixture in their perceptions of their work – a Shifted reality. These findings, when taken together, illustrate the many ways in which *No Child Left Behind* has penetrated the boundaries of schools and classrooms and stimulated a contextually specific, dynamic process of change in the work of teachers. Having summarized the main findings of this research, I now turn to outlining the significant contributions and implications of this work.

Contributions and Implications

I began this study by structuring the analysis around two theoretical frames. I will take each in turn illustrating its primary contributions and implications.

1) The structure of schooling produces tension between two dynamically opposed viewpoints.

I began this study by asserting that schools are open systems (Scott 2003). As a product of, and participant in, the organizational environment, schools must respond to uncertainty in the environment. Within this open system, dual perspectives on the "correct" structure of schools emerge. From an administrative view point, meeting the needs of efficiently educating large numbers of students requires a tightly regulated, rationalized bureaucracy (Bidwell 1965; Ingersoll 2001; Weber 1946). This "view from above," otherwise called the disorganization perspective, attempts to resolve the problems of education by asserting control over the internal operations of schools (Ingersoll 2005). Alternatively, from an educator's view point, the work of schooling requires fluidity and autonomy. Rather than viewing schools as disorganized, educators

perceive schools to be overly regulated and hierarchical. This "view from below," also called the disempowerment perspective, advocates for increased decentralization and autonomy (Ingersoll 2003, 2005; Rowan 1990).

These dual perspectives coexist as organizing tensions in the world of schools. One can see the impact of these perspectives as they review the constant negotiation occurring around schooling in the United States. For example, when new policies are enacted often teachers unions resist. When new curriculum is proposed, teachers restructure it to suit their classrooms. The disorganization and disempowerment viewpoints are the organizing principles in the dynamic process occurring within and around schooling in this country. My findings reveal one way in which these tensions manifest in schools.

First, one can witness this tension by examining the varying conditions across schools resulting from sanctions as described in my conceptual framework. As sanctions intensify in schools, the tension between the two viewpoints becomes increasingly visible. For example, Edward, a teacher at White Plains, does not recognize *NCLB* as an important factor in his work – the pressure "from above" did not manifest in his work. He illustrates this well when he states, "You know the legislation doesn't amount to a hill of beans for me." The tension between viewpoints is not as visible here because typical ways of resolving the tension work well in contexts where policy sanctions are not in place.

At White Plains, where there are no sanctions in place, the tensions between the view from above and below are currently resolved using buffering strategies. The tensions certainly still exist, but the typical ways of resolving the tension are effective in

this context. One experienced teacher at White Plains demonstrates this point when talking about his principal, "I found myself almost like being in the buffer zone at times." Without the pressure of sanctions, White Plains boundaries remain relatively firm and *NCLB* exerts little influence over internal processes.

Parkside and Greenway are undergoing sanctions and, to varying degrees, are unable to resolve these tensions with previously used strategies. Thus, teachers within these schools feel the tension between the disorganization and disempowerment perspectives to a greater degree. In fact, in contexts where structure is more tightly coupled, prior work strategies grow ineffective and new ways of working must be developed. Two examples of these new strategies are segmentation and collaboration. Both responses are attempts by teachers to recreate domains of control. These strategies illustrate that structural tensions are clearly organizing meaning and action within schools. Where old strategies of buffering were effective, teachers maintained a sense of control within the classroom boundaries. However, the increasing penetration of the view from above through sanctions, renders buffering less effective than it was in the past. Now teachers, struggling to rectify the disempowerment view, craft innovative response strategies to create new domains of control.

This negotiation of the dual perspectives reveals that the structural relationship between schools and administrative entities is not static but dynamic. According to *NCLB*, schools can move in and out of sanctions. As this occurs, the structural relationship also changes. Movement deeper into sanctions promotes a tighter coupling, while it is also possible for movement out of sanctions to reinforce loose coupling. For teachers, this dynamic process produces turmoil because it confronts the established and

taken for granted nature of school structure. Yet, despite changes in the structural arrangement, the dual viewpoints persist. Teachers are so entrenched in the view from below that they actively resist the alignment of perspectives. This resistance is derived from the disempowerment perspective which leads them to perceive the alignment as an intrusion. Alignment calls into question some of the foundational understandings of teachers work culture, thereby disrupting their relationship to their work. Specifically, it can challenge professional and personal identity, the purpose and meaning of the work, and the content of actual work activities.

This discovery about the dynamic process occurring in American schools has important implications for our understanding of the structure of schools. First, these findings assert that coupling is not static and thus should be analyzed as a dynamic factor in school organization. A long tradition of literature asserts that schools are ideal typical, loosely coupled systems (e.g. Dreeben 1973; Elmore 2000; Meyer and Rowan 1977, 1978; Weick 1976). This study shows that the core work of teachers is directly affected by external policy when sanctions are present. Future research in this area should return to the theoretical notion that coupling is not a static relationship but rather a dynamic process. Instead of assuming that schools are loosely coupled systems, we should ask, to what extent are the core and structure coupled in this context? Opening up this structural space in our empirical work and theoretical development allows us to more adequately study the variation in this social reality.

In addition, uncovering this dynamic process, where shifts in school structure are connected to changes in teachers' experiences, responds to the enduring sociological endeavor to understand how structure and agency are linked. Sociologists are constantly

in search of answers to questions of structure and agency – it is one foundation of our field. This study adds to that quest and offers a clear demonstration of this connection in public schools.

In this study, I illustrate how in some policy contexts, *NCLB* instigates change in school structural conditions and generates a flurry of internal activity. For example, external attempts to control the content of professional development brought about by advanced Needs Improvement status at Greenway, initiated an active response by teachers. Teachers, as a function of their structural position, perceive this effort to offer professional development as an intrusion and affront to their professional identity. As Julie a teacher at Greenway put it, "they must think we are morons." This then becomes another way in which teachers make meaning of their structural context. They understand the boundaries to be completely penetrable and the content of their work in the hands of "others." However, teachers, as agentic crafters of their work, use these meanings to craft a response (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001). This leads us to the second theoretical frame.

2) School structure supports the development of a unique workplace culture which has traditionally been protected by loose coupling and buffering. This workplace culture serves as a toolkit teachers draw on as they construct work meaning.

One of the basic principles of sociology is that humans are meaning making creatures and they make meaning within cultural systems. As teachers work, they also make meaning of that work within the cultural system present in schools. Swidler (1986)

suggests that culture should be understood as a repertoire, or "toolkit," from which people can draw to develop "strategies of action." Thus, culture is an enacted part of the lived experience. In Chapter 2, I outline the dominant features of this cultural toolkit for teachers. Two of the cultural components that teachers draw on to make meaning of their work include a strong sense of altruism and autonomy. The development and persistence of these cultural elements are supported by the structure of schools. In a loosely coupled system, where the core is protected from environmental uncertainty, teachers are left alone to generate the cultural content that supports their work. Specifically, they must serve children (altruism) and they must do it alone in their classrooms (autonomy).

But, as I just noted, *NCLB* has introduced variation into the school structural organization. Schools under sanctions have been drawn into a tighter relationship with administrative structure. Tighter coupling in these schools alters the way teachers make meaning of their work by rendering previous "tools" ineffective. However, this process is also dynamic because we see teachers crafting their work, and in turn adding to the collection of cultural tools. For example, teachers in sanctioned schools are unable to accommodate all the policy expectations alone (autonomy) so they turn to one another for help (collaboration). This active crafting of work strategies adds collaboration as a cultural component of work in schools under sanctions. In this way, the policy environment becomes a vital factor in the development of teachers' cultural repertoire. In response to change brought about by *NCLB,* teachers draw from this toolkit and actively construct the activities of their work as well as the meaning of their work. For example, reflecting on her job satisfaction, Sadie a teacher at Parkside said, "I like teaching. I

can't say I love teaching, but I like teaching… If I could be a teacher in a situation where the test wasn't so paramount, I would love teaching."

The importance of these findings is twofold. First, for those who study schools, it is vital to understand the behaviors and experiences of teachers are not isolated micro-level events. These behaviors and experiences are part of a dynamic cultural and structural exchange. Thus, to ground studies of micro-level processes in schools, one should also reflect on the cultural and structural context in which they are embedded.

This dissertation illustrates the macro-micro link in one context. It shows *how* shifting structure actually comes to shift meaning and behavior. Recursively, behavior and meaning also come to shift structure. For example, in this study we see how structural position influences how teachers' make meaning of policy. Likewise, the meanings and behaviors constructed by teachers under sanctions support the success of structural coupling efforts. As teachers make real, actionable change to the way they do their work they are participating in the effort of aligning core with structure. In this way, this research underscores the importance of investigating the macro-micro link and illustrates one way in which this type of research can further our understanding at both levels of analysis.

Second, this research has implications for our understanding of the culture of schooling in the United States. Many of the enduring aspects of teachers' work culture are being challenged by the shifting policy environment. Thus, research on schools should not assume these longstanding cultural frames are dominant across policy contexts. Instead, the cultural content of schools should continue to be investigated as a vital component in the complex web between macro structure and micro processes.

Policy makers, administrators, and teachers can build upon these findings. Specifically, the dynamic process revealed in this study confirms that all schools are not incorporating policy expectations uniformly. Instead, school responses appear to be contingent on the intensity of sanctions. This suggests that sanctions do speed response within the school as they were designed to do. However, we should bear in mind that the specific findings on response strategies uncover that this change comes along with both positive and negative outcomes. As new policy is developed, organizational decisions are made, and teachers work with students in their classrooms, they can build upon the specific knowledge of *how NCLB* was experienced and managed by educators in these cases. This information gives them a foundation as they seek to maximize the positive and minimize negative outcomes for teachers.

Limitations and Future Directions

Having outlined the key findings and implications of this study, I now turn to exploring the limitations of the research and directions for future work. First, one limitation of this study is the non-generalizability of these findings. I chose to interview these teachers not to generalize to the entire population, but to understand *how* NLCB affects teachers work and the underlying *processes* occurring within schools. The strength of combining these data with survey analysis is that I was able to contextualize the qualitative findings with broader patterns in several school districts throughout Georgia. This triangulation of data does strengthen the validity of my findings in a larger sample. Thus, while not generalizable, these data fit the goals of my research.

This study is also limited by the sample. The survey data, while not random, was representative of the population of teachers in Georgia across several domains. Participating schools reflected geographic, urbanicity, size, and demographic variation.[39] The qualitative portion drew on interviews of teachers in three schools within a single school district in Georgia. While the school compositions reflected significant ethnic and class diversity, the respondents were quite similar in many regards. Teacher respondents were predominantly white (96%) and female (76%). Considering the overwhelming feminization of the occupation (Williams 1995), I feel comfortable that the overrepresentation of women in my sample is truly reflective of the population. However, I have a few concerns about the lack of racial and ethnic diversity. First, issues of race and language proficiency came up frequently in teacher interviews as contributing factors to the school poor academic performance. Certainly *NCLB* reporting methods heighten the focus on student population subgroups; however, I wonder if a more diverse teacher sample might produce a different set of explanations. In future research, I would like to draw from schools where there is racial and ethnic diversity among the teachers so I can explore issues of race, student academic performance, and school identity in more depth.

Additionally, the focus on teachers is a limitation of this research. Incorporating administrator interviews and survey responses would contribute additional depth to the analysis and add a layer to our dynamic process of meaning creation under *NCLB*. For

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[39] Participating counties ranged geographically from far northwest Georgia to far southeast. Student enrollments ranged from 348 students to 32,933. Demographically, the percent of students of color ranged from 13 percent to 87 percent. Poverty ranged from 39 percent to 70 percent. All together, participating counties more than adequately represented the complete range of variation found in Georgia.

example, one could explore how administrators view their shifting role as a buffer or how they perceive the dual tensions in school structure. Future research should investigate the processes and meanings of work identified by this dissertation in other school contexts and with different educator samples. Testing the claims of this research in other contexts and with different educator populations would lend credence to the findings presented here and extend the theoretical and empirical implications.

Another limitation of this study is its cross-sectional approach. I explore the relationship between *NCLB* and teacher work experiences at one point in respondents lives. This gives us a glimpse into the process of meaning making across distinct contexts, but it is not a thorough test of the process over time. Additionally, my cross-sectional approach necessitated teachers draw on some material retrospectively. By asking teachers to share their work experiences under *NCLB*, in many cases teachers were thinking back to past occurrences. Thus, it would be useful in future research to adopt a longitudinal approach. This method would allow for the exploration of these meanings and processes as school identities change under *NCLB* over time. Additionally, the approach to survey analysis could also be longitudinal. The QLTE did conduct a second wave of data collection in the year following my investigation. These additional cross-sectional data could contribute to fine tuning the analysis, but actual longitudinal design would reveal more about changes under *NCLB* over time.

Lastly, I structured this study using a multi-level theoretical framework. While this allowed for the integration of distinct perspectives and theoretical development across the macro-micro divide, it did sacrifice deeper exploration of some of the micro-level processes. Specifically, identity, both of school, individual, and the profession,

became a central focus in teachers' descriptions of meaning making. These questions about the role of identity in teachers' experience of work deserve further exploration in future research.

It is an exciting time to complete a dissertation on this topic. Accountability efforts are growing creating a natural experiment for the testing of these ideas. In addition, there is an emerging interest among academics in the fertile ground these policy changes pose for the development of theory on schools (Hallet 2010, Ravitch 2010). With the completion of this dissertation, I am poised to join this community of scholars and make my contribution to understanding the meaningful dynamics of work in public education.

Table 1: Summary of Study Design

Research Questions

1) Do No Child Left Behind accountability policies impact the working conditions in schools? If so, how?

2) How do No Child Left Behind accountability policies affect teachers' feelings about their job satisfaction and career plans?

3) How are educators and school interpreting and managing the experience of working under No Child Left Behind?

Area of Interest	Data	Sampling	Analysis
Statistical Relationship between Policy and Working Conditions	Quantitative Secondary Data: • Quality Learning and Teaching Environment Survey	•157 schools •10 school districts in Georgia •N > 7,000 educators •Response Rate = 83%	Descriptive Statistics OLS Regression Analysis
	• Georgia Department of Education • U.S. Department of Education	Data collected corresponds to the sample above.	
Meaning of Working Conditions under Policy	Qualitative Interviews, Surveys	• 1 School District • 3 Schools - 1 school Distinguished - 1 school Needs Improvement Level 1 - 1 school Needs Improvement Level 7 • 30 teachers (10 per school)	Open Coding Thematic coding Inductive analysis Matrices Descriptive statistics
Understandings of Job Satisfaction and Career Plans	Qualitative Interviews, Surveys		
Schools and Teachers Interpretation and Management of Policy	Qualitative Interviews, Surveys		

Table 2: Factor Analysis

Domain	Items in Domain (QLTE)	Loadings	Cronbach Alpha
Time	The school leadership works to reduce routine administrative duties and paperwork so teachers can focus on educating students.	.5632	.7748
	Teachers have time during the school day to collaborate productively with their colleagues.	.5646	
	Teachers have class sizes which afford them time to meet the educational needs of all students.	.8134	
	Teachers have student loads which afford them time to meet the educational needs of all students.	.8248	
Empowerment	School administrators involve teachers in developing and implementing the school improvement plan.	.6088	.9298
	Teachers are recognized as educational experts and trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction and student progress.	.7369	
	Teachers and staff at my school feel empowered to try new instructional approaches.	.7306	
	There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect at my school.	.8107	
	I feel comfortable raising issues and concerns which are important to me.	.7988	
	Teachers and staff work together to improve teaching and learning	.6938	
	Teachers help establish and implement policies for student discipline.	.6258	
	Teachers play a role in the development of the school professional learning plan.	.5804	
	A sustained effort is made in my school to empower teachers and parents and other members of the school community.	.6607	
Facilities and Resources	Teachers have adequate professional space to work productively.	.5542	.7836
	Teachers have sufficient access to office equipment such as copy machines.	.7049	
	Teachers have convenient access to phones and email.	.6942	
	Teachers have enough supplies to support student learning in the classroom.	.5915	
	Computers and other current instructional technology to support student learning are sufficiently available.	.6054	

	Teachers and staff work in a school environment that is clean and well maintained.	.7474	
Professional Development	There is a clear connection between professional learning activities at my school and what students are expected to know and be able to do.	.7380	.9024
	Professional learning activities at my school are based on identified school needs.	.7562	
	My school emphasizes focused, ongoing professional learning throughout the school year.	.8136	
	Teachers in my school are provided opportunities to learn from one another.	.6352	
	My school leadership makes a sustained effort to provide quality professional learning in my school.	.7294	
Leadership	School administrators take prompt action when problems occur.	.8004	.9103
	School administrators are accessible to discuss instructional matters.	.7951	
	Teachers and staff are comfortable talking with administrators at my school about concerns.	.8221	
	The school leadership recognizes teachers and staff for professional accomplishments.	.6236	
	School administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct.	.7265	
	Overall, my principal is an effective leader.	.7968	

Table 3: Quantitative Variables and Data Sources

Domain	**Variable**	**Source**
Policy Variables		
	Number of Years in Needs Improvement	Georgia Board of Education School Report Card
	Adequate Yearly Progress	
Working Conditions Variables		
	Time Score	QLTE survey
	Leadership Score	
	Empowerment Score	
	Facilities and Resources Score	
	Professional Development Score	
Individual Level Controls		
	Years of experience	QLTE survey
	Race/Ethnicity	
	Gender	
	Grade Level	
Organizational Level Controls		
	Title 1 Status	Georgia Department of Education
	Percent of Students with Disabilities	
	Percent Limited English Proficiency	
	Percent Minority Enrollment	
	Total number of faculty and staff	

Table 4: OLS Regression Results

	Time	Empowerment	Facilities and Resources	Professional Development	Leadership
Policy Variables					
Needs Improvement	.187** (.074)	.342** (.151)	.395*** (.097)	.056 (.083)	.192* (.116)
AYP	-.124 (.225)	-1.879*** (.494)	-1.383*** (.307)	-.298 (.265)	-1.703*** (.367)
Control Variables					
Experience	.203*** (.051)	.453*** (.103)	.274*** (.066)	.335*** (.053)	.349*** (.076)
Race (1=African American)	1.024*** (.188)	1.930*** (.375)	1.743*** (.235)	1.525*** (.191)	1.570*** (.278)
Gender (1=Male)	.795*** (.231)	.335 (.497)	1.218*** (.316)	-.203 (.259)	.818** (.356)
Grade Level	.030 (.154)	-.768** (.334)	-.371* (.211)	-.823*** (.179)	-.346 (.239)
Title 1	1.113*** (.222)	-.811* (.443)	-.375 (.284)	.299 (.226)	-.332 (.330)
Disabilities	-.043** (.022)	-.129** (.042)	-.066** (.027)	-.084*** (.022)	-.094** (.032)
Limited English Proficiency	.0987** (.036)	.080 (.061)	.041 (.042)	-.029 (.036)	.037 (.046)
Minority Enrollment	-.015*** (.004)	-.048*** (.009)	-.017*** (.005)	-.022*** (.005)	-.029*** (.006)
Faculty Size	-.0115** (.005)	-.041** (.013)	-.021** (.007)	-.019** (.007)	-.028** (.009)
Constant	10.858 (.531)	40.452 (1.040)	23.536 (.658)	22.424 (.536)	26.212 (.757)
R-Square	0.041	0.061	.05	.089	.05
N	2897	2812	2896	2883	2864

Notes:
*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.001 (two-tailed tests)
Robust standard errors reported in parentheses.

Table 5: Summary of Quantitative Findings

	Needs Improvement	AYP Status
Time	Positive & Significant	Negative, Non-significant
Empowerment	Positive, Significant	Negative, Significant
Facilities and Resources	Positive, Significant	Negative, Significant
Professional Development	Positive, Non-significant	Negative, Non-significant
Leadership	Positive, Significant	Negative, Non-Significant

Table 6: Summary of Complete Sample

Name	School	Subject	Total Years	School Years Exp.	Gender	Education
Bailey	White Plains	Math/Science	<5	<5	F	College
Taylor	White Plains	Social Studies/ Language Arts	<5	<5	F	College
Amy T.	White Plains	Math/Science	>10	5-10	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Elizabeth	White Plains	Math/Science	5-10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Zachary	White Plains	Math/Science	5-10	<5	M	Graduate/ Professional degree
Misty Banks	White Plains	Social Studies/ Language Arts	>10	<5	F	College
Harlie	White Plains	Social Studies/ Language Arts	<5	<5	F	College
Ashlyn	White Plains	Social Studies/ Language Arts	<5	<5	F	> College
Edward	White Plains	Math/Science	>10	5-10	M	Graduate/ Professional degree
Tony	White Plains	Math/Science	>10	5-10	M	Graduate/ Professional degree
Francisca	White Plains	Math/Science	<5	<5	F	> College
Jane T.	White Plains	Math/Science	5-10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Sonny	White Plains	Social Studies/ Language Arts	<5	<5	M	College
Jason	White Plains	Social Studies/ Language Arts	<5	<5	M	College
Virginia	White Plains	Social Studies/ Language Arts	5-10	5-10	F	> College
Emily	White Plains	Social Studies/ Language Arts	>10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Bridgette	White Plains	Math/Science	5-10	5-10	F	> College
Monica	White Plains	Social Studies/ Language Arts	>10	<5	F	> College
Jessica	White Plains	Social Studies/ Language Arts	<5	<5	F	College
Alice	White Plains	Social Studies/ Language Arts	>10	5-10	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Rebecca	White	Social Studies/	<5	<5	F	College

	Plains	Language Arts				
Bianchi	Parkside	Math/Science	>10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
William	Parkside	Social Studies/ Language Arts	5-10	5-10	M	College
Amy	Parkside	Social Studies/ Language Arts	>10	5-10	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Allnumi	Parkside	Social Studies/ Language Arts	5-10	<5	F	> College
Camille	Parkside	Social Studies/ Language Arts	<5	<5	F	> College
Jolie	Parkside	Math/Science	5-10	5-10	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Katie	Parkside	Math/Science	>10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Dirk	Parkside	Math/Science	>10	5-10	M	Graduate/ Professional degree
Alisha	Parkside	Math/Science	>10	5-10	F	> College
Nelly	Parkside	Social Studies/ Language Arts	5-10	5-10	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Mary Beth	Parkside	Social Studies/ Language Arts	>10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Chanda	Parkside	Math/Science	<5	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Claire	Parkside	Social Studies/ Language Arts	5-10	5-10	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Sadie	Parkside	Math/Science	5-10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Samantha R.	Parkside	Social Studies/ Language Arts	5-10	5-10	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Eunice	Parkside	Social Studies/ Language Arts	5-10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Courtney	Parkside	Social Studies/ Language Arts	>10	>10	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Bethany	Parkside	Social Studies/ Language Arts	>10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Steven	Greenway	Math/Science	>10	<5	M	Graduate/ Professional degree
Stephanie	Greenway	Social Studies/ Language Arts	<5	<5	F	College
Sally	Greenway	Math/Science	<5	<5	F	College
Ralph	Greenway	Math/Science	>10	5-10	M	Graduate/ Professional degree
Jean	Greenway	Social Studies/ Language Arts	>10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Jill	Greenway	Math/Science	<5	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Julie	Greenway	Social Studies/	5-10	<5	F	Graduate/

		Language Arts				Professional degree
Samantha	Greenway	Social Studies/ Language Arts	>10	<5	F	College
Shell	Greenway	Math/Science	5-10	5-10	F	> College
Chris Woods	Greenway	Math/Science	5-10	5-10	M	Graduate/ Professional degree
Ron	Greenway	Math/Science	5-10	5-10	M	Graduate/ Professional degree
Reggie	Greenway	Math/Science	>10	>10	M	Graduate/ Professional degree
Bob	Greenway	Math/Science	<5	<5	M	College
Brooke	Greenway	Social Studies/ Language Arts	5-10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Jane	Greenway	Social Studies/ Language Arts	>10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree

Table 7: Summary of Teacher Subsample

Name	School	Subject	Total Years	School Years Exp.	Gender	Education
Bailey	White Plains	Math/Science	<5	<5	F	College
Taylor	White Plains	Social Studies/ Language Arts	<5	<5	F	College
Elizabeth	White Plains	Math/Science	5-10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Harlie	White Plains	Social Studies/ Language Arts	<5	<5	F	College
Edward	White Plains	Math/Science	>10	5-10	M	Graduate/ Professional degree
Tony	White Plains	Math/Science	>10	5-10	M	Graduate/ Professional degree
Jane T.	White Plains	Math/Science	5-10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Virginia	White Plains	Social Studies/ Language Arts	5-10	5-10	F	> College
Emily	White Plains	Social Studies/ Language Arts	>10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Jessica	White Plains	Social Studies/ Language Arts	<5	<5	F	College
Bianchi	Parkside	Math/Science	>10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Camille	Parkside	Social Studies/ Language Arts	<5	<5	F	> College
Katie	Parkside	Math/Science	>10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Alisha	Parkside	Math/Science	>10	5-10	F	> College
Mary Beth	Parkside	Social Studies/ Language Arts	>10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Chanda	Parkside	Math/Science	<5	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Claire	Parkside	Social Studies/ Language Arts	5-10	5-10	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Sadie	Parkside	Math/Science	5-10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Samantha R.	Parkside	Social Studies/ Language Arts	5-10	5-10	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Courtney	Parkside	Social Studies/ Language Arts	>10	>10	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Steven	Greenway	Math/Science	>10	<5	M	Graduate/ Professional degree
Stephanie	Greenway	Social Studies/ Language Arts	<5	<5	F	College

Sally	Greenway	Math/Science	<5	<5	F	College
Jill	Greenway	Math/Science	<5	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Julie	Greenway	Social Studies/ Language Arts	5-10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree
Samantha	Greenway	Social Studies/ Language Arts	>10	<5	F	College
Chris Woods	Greenway	Math/Science	5-10	5-10	M	Graduate/ Professional degree
Reggie	Greenway	Math/Science	>10	>10	M	Graduate/ Professional degree
Bob	Greenway	Math/Science	<5	<5	M	College
Jane	Greenway	Social Studies/ Language Arts	>10	<5	F	Graduate/ Professional degree

Table 8: Summary of Working Conditions Findings

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Needs Improvement</th><th>AYP Status</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Time</td><td>QLTE Survey:

Positive & Significant</td><td>QLTE Survey:

Negative, Non-significant</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Interviews:

White Plains (Distinguished School):
Limited time to cover curriculum before CRCT test
Time and Empowerment Intertwined

Parkside (Implementing School Choice):
Limited time to cover curriculum before CRCT test
Time and Empowerment Intertwined
STRATEGIES: Eliminate non-mandated curriculum

Greenway (Implementing Contract Monitoring and School Restructuring):
Limited time to cover curriculum before CRCT test
Time and Empowerment Intertwined
STRATEGIES: Eliminate non-mandated curriculum
Subdivide limited time to meet diverse student needs</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Empowerment</td><td>QLTE Survey:

Positive, Significant</td><td>QLTE Survey:

Negative, Significant</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Interviews:

White Plains (Distinguished School):
Demands placed on schools has stimulated collaboration
Quality of Collaboration: “Helpful”

Parkside (Implementing School Choice):
Demands placed on schools has stimulated collaboration
Quality of Collaboration: Necessary for “Survival”
Moderate Involvement in School Improvement

Greenway (Implementing Contract Monitoring and School Restructuring):
Demands placed on schools has stimulated collaboration
Quality of Collaboration: Explicitly integrated into School Improvement, Necessary to get off the Needs Improvement list
Intense Involvement in School Improvement</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Needs Improvement</th><th>AYP Status</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Facilities and Resources</td><td>QLTE Survey:

Positive, Significant</td><td>QLTE Survey:

Negative, Significant</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Interviews:

White Plains (Distinguished School):
Strain on physical and material resources consume discretionary resources
People as Resource: “Leaders as Empowerment” and “Community as Safety Net”

Parkside (Implementing School Choice):
Insufficient physical and material resources to offset home disparities; no discretionary resources so teachers provide for students
People as Resource: “Leaders as Competence” and “Community as Tool”

Greenway (Implementing Contract Monitoring and School Restructuring):
Insufficient physical and material resources to offset home disparities; no discretionary resources so teachers provide for students
People as Resource: “Leaders as Hope” and “Community as Family”</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Professional Development</td><td>QLTE Survey:

Positive, Non-significant</td><td>QLTE Survey:

Negative, Non-significant</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Interviews:

White Plains (Distinguished School):
Professional development not affected by policy
Internal control over professional development

Parkside (Implementing School Choice):
Professional development clearly affected by policy
Professional development – Moderate intensity – focused on improving teaching
Internal control over professional development – principal has control

Greenway (Implementing Contract Monitoring and School Restructuring):
Professional development clearly affected by policy
Professional development – High intensity – programs “shoved down their throats”
External input and involvement over professional development</td></tr>
</table>

	Needs Improvement	AYP Status
Leadership	QLTE Survey: Positive, Significant	QLTE Survey: Negative, Non-Significant
	Interviews: White Plains (Distinguished School): Principal as "Coach" Parkside (Implementing School Choice): Principal as "PR Representative and Cheerleader" Greenway (Implementing Contract Monitoring and School Restructuring): Principal as part of family	

Table 9: Qualitative Codebook

Code	Definition
Working Conditions	
• Time	
○ Passing of Time	• References to time and the use of educator's time spent in essential and non-essential duties - e.g. student instruction, professional development, collaborative work time, planning, paperwork
○ Seasonal Time	• Seasonal Time –references to time that are season specific – e.g. testing time
• Empowerment	• Ability to control their environment. Feeling trusted and having trust in others, having influence inside and outside their classrooms.
○ Cooperation/Collaboration	• Descriptions of working together, mutual investment
• Facilities and Resources ○ Physical Resources	• Any mention of school-wide physical resources – e.g. professional work space, office equipment, phones/email, supplies, computers, school is clean and well maintained, safe environment
• Professional Development	• Any mention of professional development or professional learning
• Leadership	• Any mention of formal school leaders – principal, assistant principal, instructional lead teachers, central office
Job Satisfaction	• Response to direct prompt soliciting a description of job satisfaction
Career Plans	• Response to direct prompt soliciting a description of career plans

Work Emotion • Morale • Feelings about work • Comfort/Sense of Belonging • Cloud over head • Personal Accountability	• Any reference to individual or group morale • Any mention of feelings related to work – e.g. overwhelmed, love, crying, etc. • Expressions of feeling at home, where they belong, sense of belonging or comfort with colleagues • Discussions of NCLB as an ever present element in the school • Mentions of personal responsibility
Actions of Teaching • Delivering Curriculum • Testing	• Any talk about the technical process of delivering material/instruction methods • Any mention of testing – the test, CRCT
Organizational Membership • Initial Impressions • Joining the Faculty • Demographic Composition • External Community Perceptions	• Discussions of the initial impressions of the school, faculty, and student body • Story of how they joined the faculty • Any mention of race, gender, ethnicity, class with regards to student body, community, faculty, or school • Any reference to view of school, faculty or students by community members outside of school
Policy (NCLB) • Introduction to NCLB • Knowledge of Policy • Descriptions of Impact	• Reports of first memories of NCLB • Illustrations of familiarity with NCLB – e.g. specific requirements, expectations, reporting, etc • Description of the direct impact of the policy on them, their work, their lives, their students

Appendix A: The Quality Learning and Teaching Environments Survey

Georgia BellSouth Quality Learning and Teaching Environments (QLTE) Initiative

As you know, your school system is participating in the Georgia BellSouth Quality Learning and Teaching Environments (QLTE) Survey. Eleven school systems throughout the state supported by seven community-school partnerships were chosen to administer the survey and develop and implement action plans which address survey results. We appreciate your willingness to complete this survey. Please keep the following in mind as you answer the survey questions:

- All responses are anonymous. Results will be kept totally confidential; no one in your school, district, or region will see any individual's responses.
- No individual will be identified. Anonymity will be maintained.
- The survey is short and should take about 15 - 20 minutes of your time.
- All teachers, administrators, counselors, media specialists, and paraprofessionals will be asked to complete the survey.
- Your participation is critical. Your input is needed to accurately depict your school's teaching and learning environments.
- Survey questions will revolve around: time; facilities and resources; leadership; empowerment; and professional learning.

Please complete the survey by February 2, 2005.

Thank you in advance for taking time from your important work of teaching Georgia's children to help us better understand what we need to do at both the local and state levels to provide working conditions that support teachers and enhance the learning of our students.

Which type of position do you currently hold?

- ○ Teacher
- ○ Administrator
- ○ Counselor or Media Specialist
- ○ Paraprofessional

QLTE Initiative

Time

In an average week of teaching, how many hours do you have for planning within the normal instructional day?

- ❍ None
- ❍ 1 to 3 hours
- ❍ More than 3 hours but less than or equal to 5 hours
- ❍ More than 5 hours but less than or equal to 10 hours
- ❍ More than 10 hours

In an average week of teaching, how many hours do you spend outside the regular school work day (before school, after regular work hours, and/or on the weekend) on each of the following types of activities?

	None	1 to 3 hours	More than 3 hours but less than or equal to 5 hours	More than 5 hours but less than or equal to 10 hours	More than 10 hours
School-related activities working directly with students, such as field trips, tutoring, transporting students, sponsoring clubs, coaching, etc., for which no salary supplement is paid.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
School-related activities, such as preparation, grading papers, parent conferences, attending meetings.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
School or district activities, such as serving on the school leadership team, design team, curriculum committees, textbook committees, for which no salary supplement is paid.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Time

In an average week of teaching, how many hours do you have for planning within the normal instructional day?

- ❍ None
- ❍ 1 to 3 hours
- ❍ More than 3 hours but less than or equal to 5 hours
- ❍ More than 5 hours but less than or equal to 10 hours
- ❍ More than 10 hours

In an average week of teaching, how many hours do you spend outside the regular school work day (before school, after regular work hours, and/or on the weekend) on each of the following types of activities?

	None	1 to 3 hours	More than 3 hours but less than or equal to 5 hours	More than 5 hours but less than or equal to 10 hours	More than 10 hours
School-related activities working direc[illegible]dents, such as field trips, tutoring, transporting students, spons[illegible] coaching, etc., for which no salary supplement is paid.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
School-related activities, such as pre[illegible]ading papers, parent conferences, attending meetings.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
School or district activities, such as serving on the school leadership team, design team, curriculum committees, textbook committees, for which no salary supplement is paid.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Facilities and Resources

Please rate how strongly you believe that the following statements are true about your school. When a question refers to "teachers," base your answer on your experiences and your observations for the majority of teachers in your school. If you do not feel that a question applies to you, you may skip that question.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers have adequate professional space to work productively.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers have sufficient access to office equipment such as copy machines.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers have convenient access to phones and email.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers have enough supplies to support student learning in the classroom.	○	○	○	○	○
Computers and other current instructional technology to support student learning are sufficiently available.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers and staff work in a school environment that is clean and well maintained.	○	○	○	○	○
My school provides a safe environment for teaching and learning.	○	○	○	○	○
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about school facilities and resources.	○	○	○	○	○

Leadership

Please rate how strongly you believe that the following statements are true about your school. When a question refers to "teachers," base your answer on your experiences and your observations for the majority of teachers in your school. If you do not feel that a question applies to you, you may skip that question.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
The school council operates effectively at my school.	○	○	○	○	○
School improvement plans are effectively developed and implemented.	○	○	○	○	○
The mission of this school is the driving force behind all school decisions.	○	○	○	○	○
My school is making steady progress in implementing rigorous academic standards.	○	○	○	○	○
Student learning considerations are the most important criteria used to make decisions.	○	○	○	○	○
School administrators take prompt action when problems occur.	○	○	○	○	○
School administrators are accessible to discuss instructional matters.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers and staff are comfortable talking with administrators at my school about concerns.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction.	○	○	○	○	○
The procedures for teacher performance evaluations are consistent.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers receive individual feedback that can help them improve teaching and learning.	○	○	○	○	○
The school leadership recognizes teachers and staff for professional accomplishments.	○	○	○	○	○
School administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct.	○	○	○	○	○
School policies, practices, and procedures reflect high expectations for all students.	○	○	○	○	○
Parents and community members are involved in school decisions.	○	○	○	○	○
Overall, my principal is an effective leader.	○	○	○	○	○

Empowerment

Please rate how strongly you believe that the following statements are true about your school. When a question refers to "teachers," base your answer on your experiences and your observations for the majority of teachers in your school. If you do not feel that a question applies to you, you may skip that question.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
School administrators involve teachers in developing and implementing the school improvement plan.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Teachers are recognized as educational experts and trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction and student progress.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Teachers and staff at my school feel empowered to try new instructional approaches.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect at my school.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I feel comfortable raising issues and concerns which are important to me.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Teachers and staff work together to improve teaching and learning	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Teachers help establish and implement policies for student discipline.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Teachers play a role in the development of the school professional learning plan.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Opportunities for advancement within the teaching profession (other than school level administration) are available to me.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
A sustained effort is made in my school to empower teachers and parents and other members of the school community.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Professional Learning

Please rate how strongly you believe that the following statements are true about your school. When a question refers to "teachers," base your answer on your experiences and your observations for the majority of teachers in your school. If you do not feel that a question applies to you, you may skip that question.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a clear connection between professional learning activities at my school and what students are expected to know and be able to do.	○	○	○	○	○
Professional learning activities at my school are based on identified school needs.	○	○	○	○	○
My school emphasizes focused, ongoing professional learning throughout the school year.	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers in my school are provided opportunities to learn from one another.	○	○	○	○	○
My school leadership makes a sustained effort to provide quality professional learning in my school.	○	○	○	○	○

In the past two years, have you enrolled or participated in any of the following professional learning activities? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ College or university courses
- ☐ Coaching or mentoring program
- ☐ Attendance at conferences and professional meetings
- ☐ School-sponsored professional learning activities
- ☐ District-sponsored professional learning activities
- ☐ State-sponsored professional learning activities
- ☐ RESA-sponsored professional learning activities
- ☐ No professional learning activities in the past two years

During the past two years, which types of professional learning activities have been useful for your efforts to improve student achievement? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ College or university courses
- ☐ Coaching or mentoring program
- ☐ Attendance at conferences and professional meetings
- ☐ School-sponsored professional learning activities
- ☐ District-sponsored professional learning activities
- ☐ State-sponsored professional learning activities
- ☐ RESA-sponsored professional learning activities
- ☐ No professional learning activities in the past two years

Have you participated in any professional learning activities within the past two years that focused on enhancing your leadership skills?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Overall

The five areas of teaching and learning environments covered in this survey are listed below. Which aspect of your work environment most affects your willingness to keep teaching at your school?

- ❍ Time
- ❍ Facilities and resources
- ❍ Leadership
- ❍ Empowerment
- ❍ Professional learning

Which aspect of your working environment is most important to you in promoting student learning?

- ❍ Time
- ❍ Facilities and resources
- ❍ Leadership
- ❍ Empowerment
- ❍ Professional learning

General Background Information

The following information is needed only for purposes of analysis. Keep in mind that all responses are anonymous and confidential.

How many total years have you been employed as an educator (including current year)?

- ❍ 1 - 2 years
- ❍ 3 - 5 years
- ❍ 6 - 12 years
- ❍ 13 - 18 years
- ❍ 19 - 25 years
- ❍ More than 25 years

How many total years have you been employed as an educator in the school in which you are currently working (including current year)?

- ❍ 1 - 2 years
- ❍ 3 - 5 years
- ❍ 6 - 12 years
- ❍ 13 - 18 years
- ❍ 19 - 25 years
- ❍ More than 25 years

What is your race / ethnicity?

- ❍ Asian
- ❍ Black / African American
- ❍ Hispanic
- ❍ Native American
- ❍ White
- ❍ Multiracial

What is your gender?

- ❍ Male
- ❍ Female

General Teacher Information – *(for teachers only)*

The following information is needed only for purposes of analysis. Keep in mind that all responses are anonymous and confidential.

How did you initially train to become a teacher?

- ❍ As part of a bachelor's degree program
- ❍ As part of a master's degree program
- ❍ As part of an alternative route to certification (Teach for America; post-baccalaureate certification, GaTAPP provided by one of the following: college or university, RESA, school district, other)
- ❍ Not applicable

Are you certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Do you ***currently*** serve as a mentor for beginning teachers?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Induction and Mentor Support – *(for current mentors)*

Which of the following kinds of support do new teachers in your school receive? Check all that apply.

- ❑ An induction program run by your district
- ❑ Release time to observe other teachers
- ❑ Money to buy materials
- ❑ Reduced teaching schedule
- ❑ Reduced number of preparations
- ❑ Common planning time with teachers in your subject or grade
- ❑ Seminars or classes for beginning teachers
- ❑ Peer coaching
- ❑ Extra classroom assistance (e.g. paraprofessional, teacher aides or specialists)
- ❑ Regular supportive communication with principal, other administrator, or other school leaders
- ❑ Support from a college or university

Please indicate which of the following kinds of support formally-assigned mentors receive. Check all that apply.

- ❑ Release time to observe other mentors
- ❑ Reduced teaching schedule
- ❑ Reduced number of preparations
- ❑ Common planning time with teachers you are mentoring
- ❑ Specific training to serve as a mentor (e.g., Teacher Support Specialist endorsement)
- ❑ Peer coaching
- ❑ Regular supportive communication with principal/other administration/department

Teachers are formally assigned a mentor in: (Check all that apply)

- ❑ Their first year of teaching
- ❑ Their second year of teaching
- ❑ Their third year of teaching
- ❑ Their first year of teaching in this school (regardless of years of experience)
- ❑ None of the above

Which best describes how often the majority of mentors meet with their mentee?

- ○ Almost daily
- ○ Once a week
- ○ Several times a month
- ○ Once a month
- ○ Less than once a month

Induction and Mentor Support – *(for current mentors)*

Please describe which of the following are true for you and your mentee. Check all that apply.

- ❑ Mentors and mentees are located in the same building.
- ❑ Mentors and mentees teach the same content area.
- ❑ Mentors and mentees teach the same grade level.
- ❑ Teachers receive specific training to serve as a mentor.

On average, how often do you engage in each of the following activities?

	Almost daily	Once a week	Several times a month	Once a month	Less than once a month	Never
Mentors and mentees plan during the school day.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Mentors observe mentee's teaching.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Mentors' teaching observed by mentee.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Mentors plan instruction with mentees.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Mentors have discussions with mentees about mentees' teaching.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Mentors provide substantial support for mentees' classroom instruction.

- ❍ Strongly Disagree
- ❍ Somewhat Disagree
- ❍ Neither Disagree nor Agree
- ❍ Somewhat Agree
- ❍ Strongly Agree

Induction and Mentor Support – *(for beginning teachers)*

During your *current* year of teaching, are you receiving any of the following kinds of support? Check all that apply.

- ☐ An induction program run by your district
- ☐ Release time to observe other teachers
- ☐ Money to buy materials
- ☐ Reduced teaching schedule
- ☐ Reduced number of preparations
- ☐ Common planning time with teachers in your subject or grade
- ☐ Seminars or classes for beginning teachers
- ☐ Peer coaching
- ☐ Extra classroom assistance (e.g. paraprofessional, teacher aides or specialists)
- ☐ Regular supportive communication with principal, other administrator, or other school leaders
- ☐ Support from a college or university

Please indicate whether you have been formally assigned a mentor.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know

How often do you meet with your formally assigned mentor?

- ○ Almost daily
- ○ Once a week
- ○ Several times a month
- ○ Once a month
- ○ Less than once a month

Please describe which of the following are true for you and your formally assigned mentor. Check all that apply.

- ☐ My mentor and I are located in the same building.
- ☐ My mentor and I teach the same content area.
- ☐ My mentor and I teach the same grade level.
- ☐ My mentor completed a specific training to serve as a mentor.

Induction and Mentor Support – *(for beginning teachers)*

On average, how often do you engage in each of the following activities?

	Almost daily	Once a week	Several times a month	Once a month	Less than once a month	Never
Planning during the school day with my mentor.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Being observed teaching by my mentor.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Observing my mentor's teaching.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Planning instruction with my mentor.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Having discussions with my mentor about teaching.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

My mentor has provided substantial support for my classroom instruction.

- ❍ Strongly Disagree
- ❍ Somewhat Disagree
- ❍ Neither Disagree nor Agree
- ❍ Somewhat Agree
- ❍ Strongly Agree

What surprised you most during your first year of teaching?

_____
_____
_____

General Comments – *(for all respondents)*

Please provide any additional comments about the learning and teaching environment in your school.

Appendix B: IRB and Consent Documents

EMORY
UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board

Kristin Gordon
EC: Sociology
1555 Dickey Drive
Tarbutton Hall
Atlanta, Ga 30322

RE: **NOTIFICATION OF PROTOCOL APPROVAL**
PI: Kristin Gordon
IRB ID: **683-2006**
TITLE: The Policy Behind the Problem: How Educational Reform Impacts the Teaching Environment
DATE: July 14, 2006

The research proposal referenced above was reviewed and APPROVED under the Expedited review process. This approval is valid from 6/8/2006 until 6/7/2007. Thereafter, continued approval is contingent upon the submission of a renewal form that must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to the expiration date of this study.

Any serious adverse events or issues resulting from this study should be reported immediately to the IRB and to any sponsoring agency (if any). Amendments to protocols and/or revisions to informed consent forms/process must have approval of the IRB before implemented.

All inquires and correspondence concerning this protocol must include the IRB number and the name of the Principal Investigator.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the IRB office at 404-712-0720 or at email address irb@emory.edu. Our web address is http://www.emory.edu/IRB. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Colleen Dilorio, PhD
Vice Chairman, Institutional Review Board

Cc: Richard Rubinson

*** This Notification of Protocol Approval replaces the Notification of Protocol Approval dated June 27, 2006 in order to correct the protocol approval period.**

Emory University
1256 Briarcliff Road, 3rd Floor, North Wing
Atlanta, Georgia 30306
An equal opportunity, affirmative action university

Tel 404.712.0720
Fax 404.727.1358
IRB@emory.edu

PAGE 2 of 2 - PROTOCOL APPROVAL

This approval is valid from 6/8/2006 until 6/7/2007.

IRB ID: **683-2006** DATE: July 14, 2006

The above referenced protocol was approved including the information below. Please review this information for accuracy. If there are any discrepancies, please notify the IRB office.

Informed Consents Associated with this protocol:

Version Date	Description
5 /26/2006	Teacher consent form.
5 /26/2006	Administrator Consent Form

Personnel		**Human Subjects Education Certification Information**
Rubinson, Richard	Faculty Advisor	CITI - MED 1, 2, 3, 7, 12, 14, 17 (04-Dec-2004)
Gordon, Kristin	Main Investigator	CITI - SHB 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 17 (15-Feb-2006)

Number of Approved Emory Subjects 71 **(This number indicates the number of subjects you can consent.)**

Funding Agencies

Spencer Foundation

NSF - National Science Foundation

Department of Sociology, Emory University
Consent to be a Research Participant - Teacher

Title:	"The Policy Behind the Problem: How Educational Reform Impacts The Teaching Environment"
Principal Investigator:	Kristin Gordon, Ph.D. Candidate Department of Sociology, Emory University
Advisor:	Dr. Richard Rubinson
Funding Source:	Department of Sociology, Emory University

Background and Purpose:
You are being invited to participate in a study to learn more about how the implementation of high-stakes accountability policy affects the working conditions in schools, educators' perceptions and responses. The study aims to answer questions such as: Do NCLB high stakes accountability policies impact the teaching environment? If so, how? How do organizational factors operate in schools and what impact do they have on the work and perceptions of teachers under conditions of high-stakes accountability policies? Do policies of this sort shape the way teachers feel about their job satisfaction and career plans? If so, how? You are being invited to take part in this research study because of your current employment as a public school teacher.

Procedures:
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in a one-on-one interview lasting approximately 1.5 hours. I will be conducting the interview with you. During the interview, I will collect some information about your race, age, teaching experience, and the like. In addition, I will ask you a number of questions regarding your experiences as a public school teacher under No Child Left Behind. With your permission, the interview will be taped using an audio recorder. The interview will be completed in either a private room at your workplace or in a public space of your choosing. In appreciation for your time, you will receive $25.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:
Participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer and the interview can stop at anytime that you feel uncomfortable or simply do not wish to continue.

Confidentiality:
I will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. The only people with access to your name are myself and my dissertation advisor, and we will not release this information. The Institutional Review Board will have access to these study files but not to your name. Your name will not appear on the records of your interview, only your

interview case number and the pseudonym (fake name) you select. The record linking names to interview case numbers will be stored securely, available only to the primary researcher. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear in any published reports of presentations. Upon completion of the study all audio recordings will be destroyed.

Risks:
There are no known risks related to participation in this study. However, if the discussion makes you feel uncomfortable for any reason, you can end the interview at any time. There is the very slight risk that the information that you submit may not remain confidential. However, every effort will be made to keep all records confidential.

Benefits:
There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. However, the results of this research may increase our knowledge about this important subject and contribute to future policy development.

Contact Persons:
If you have questions about this study, please contact Kristin Gordon by phone at XXX-XXXX or by email at kgordo3@emory.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Richard Rubinson at 404-727-2669 or rrubin@emory.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Dr. James W. Keller, Chair of the Emory University Institutional Review Board at 404-712-0720.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please sign below. I will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____ _____
Signature of Study Participant Date

_____
Name of Study Participant

_____ _____
Signature of Kristin Gordon Date
Principal Investigator and Interviewer

Department of Sociology, Emory University
Consent to be a Research Participant - Administrator

Title:	"The Policy Behind the Problem: How Educational Reform Impacts The Teaching Environment"
Principal Investigator:	Kristin Gordon, Ph.D. Candidate Department of Sociology, Emory University
Advisor:	Dr. Richard Rubinson
Funding Source:	Department of Sociology, Emory University

Background and Purpose:
You are being invited to participate in a study to learn more about how the implementation of high-stakes accountability policy affects the working conditions in schools, educators' perceptions and responses. The study aims to answer questions such as: Do NCLB high stakes accountability policies impact the teaching environment? If so, how? How do organizational factors operate in schools and what impact do they have on the work and perceptions of educators under conditions of high-stakes accountability policies? Do policies of this sort shape the way educators feel about their job satisfaction and career plans? If so, how? You are being invited to take part in this research study because of your current employment as a public school administrator.

Procedures:
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in a one-on-one interview lasting approximately 1.5 hours. I will be conducting the interview with you. During the interview, I will collect some information about your race, age, teaching experience, and the like. In addition, I will ask you a number of questions regarding your experiences as a public school administrator under No Child Left Behind. With your permission, the interview will be taped using an audio recorder. The interview will be completed in either a private room at your workplace or in a public space of your choosing. In appreciation for your time, you will receive $25.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:
Participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right drop out at any time. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer and the interview can stop at anytime that you feel uncomfortable or simply do not wish to continue.

Confidentiality:
I will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. The only people with access to your name are myself and my dissertation advisor, and we will not release this

information. The Institutional Review Board will have access to these study files but not to your name. Your name will not appear on the records of your interview, only your interview case number and the pseudonym (fake name) you select. The record linking names to interview case numbers will be stored securely, available only to the primary researcher. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear in any published reports of presentations. Upon completion of the study all audio recordings will be destroyed.

Risks:
There are no known physical risks or discomforts to you related to participation in this study. Talking about some of your feelings may make you uncomfortable or sad. You may refuse to participate in the study or answer any questions at any time. There is the very slight risk that the information that you submit may not remain confidential. However, every effort will be made to keep all records confidential.

Benefits:
There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. However, the results of this research may increase our knowledge about this important subject and contribute to future policy development.

Contact Persons:
If you have questions about this study, please contact Kristin Gordon by phone at XXX-XXXX or by email at kgordo3@emory.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Richard Rubinson at 404-727-2669 or rrubin@emory.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Dr. James W. Keller, Chair of the Emory University Institutional Review Board at 404-712-0720.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please sign below. I will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____ _____
Signature of Study Participant Date

_____
Name of Study Participant

_____ _____
Signature of Kristin Gordon Date
Principal Investigator and Interviewer

Appendix C: Recruitment Communication

Title:	"The Policy Behind the Problem: How Educational Reform Impacts The Teaching Environment"
Principal Investigator:	Kristin Gordon, Ph.D. Candidate Department of Sociology, Emory University
Faculty Advisor:	Dr. Richard Rubinson
Draft Date:	May 8, 2006

School Recruitment Letter

May 8, 2006

Dear Principal _____,

Thank you for speaking with me on _____. As I mentioned in our phone conversation, I am a Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology at Emory University. Currently, I am conducting research to learn more about how the implementation of high-stakes accountability policy affects the working conditions in schools, teachers' perceptions and responses. As part of my research on this topic, I am conducting one-on-one interviews with public school teachers and principals in schools currently undergoing No Child Left Behind sanctions. Lowe County School District[40] has approved my research proposal and encouraged me to contact school principals for your permission to conduct research in your school.

Your participation would be most valuable to my research. If you agree to participate, I would like to attend two of the initial faculty meetings, or another meeting that you think might be appropriate, to explain the purpose of this research and recruit teacher volunteers. In addition, I would like to interview you to learn more about your perspectives about NCLB implementation and its impact on the teaching environment. Each interview will last approximately 1.5 hours. The interviews will not interfere with any instructional time, are completely voluntary and all information will be kept confidential. In appreciation for your time and the time of your teachers, all participants selected for the study will be given $25.

I hope this letter has helped to answer any questions you might have about the study and your school's potential participation. I will be in touch with you shortly to discuss any additional questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Kristin Gordon, PhD Candidate

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[40]Pseudonyms are used throughout the dissertation to protect respondents and maintain confidentiality.

Teacher Follow-up Email

Hi _____,

Thank you so much for volunteering for the study. I am delighted that you have chosen to share your insight with me on this important topic. As I mentioned at the faculty meeting, I would like to schedule an individual interview with you that will last no longer than 1 ½ hours. I have suggested several days that I am available below. If possible, please select two potential interview dates from the list that best accommodate your schedule. While we will schedule only one interview, giving me two options will ease the scheduling process. If none of these dates work for you, please let me know which days might fit better with your schedule. In addition, please indicate your preferred interview times below (after school, early evening, lunch break, planning period, etc.).

1. Potential Interview Dates:

2. What are your preferred times?

I will be in touch very shortly to finalize our interview date and time. Again, thank you for agreeing to be a volunteer. Your participation is extremely helpful.

Take care,
Kristin Gordon

Title:	"The Policy Behind the Problem: How Educational Reform Impacts The Teaching Environment"
Principal Investigator:	Kristin Gordon, Ph.D. Candidate Department of Sociology, Emory University
Faculty Advisor:	Dr. Richard Rubinson
Draft Date:	May 8, 2006

Teacher Snowball Sample Email

May 8, 2006

Dear ____,

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at Emory University, Atlanta, G.A. I am currently conducting research to learn more about how the implementation of high-stakes accountability policy affects the working conditions in schools, teachers' perceptions and responses. As part of my research on this topic, I am conducting one-on-one interviews with public school teachers in schools currently undergoing No Child Left Behind sanctions. For this purpose, I would like to interview you on your experiences as a public school teacher under No Child Left Behind. Would you be willing to be participate in this study?

Your interview would be most valuable to my research. If you do decide to participate, the interview will last approximately 1.5 hours. We can meet in either a private room at your school or another public space of your choosing. If you do choose to participate, all of the information you share with me will be kept confidential. In appreciation for your time, you will receive $25.

If you have any questions, or would like to volunteer for the study, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at kgordo3@emory.edu.

Sincerely,

Kristin Gordon

Appendix D: Interview Materials

Interview Guide - Teachers

Beginnings…

To start, I'd like to learn about your beginnings at this school…

1) Tell me the story of how you came to work at this school.
   Probes: What first attracted you to this school?
   What were your initial impressions when you first joined?
   Have your impressions changed since then? How?

Strengths & Values…

I would like to learn more about your work here at this school.

2) Can you share with me what you feel is your biggest contribution to this school?
3) Think about teaching when you are at your best.
   a) When you are at your best, how do you feel about your work as a teacher?
   b) When you are at your best, what makes you feel the most satisfied?

Changes…

Now I'd like to ask you to think back in the past. NCLB was signed into law in 2002. Put yourself back in that timeframe as well as you can and…

4) Tell me how you first learned about the NCLB. How was NCLB explained to you?

5) Tell me a little about the how NCLB began to affect your work at this school?
   Probes: How does NCLB affect your work today?
   Can you give me an example of how NCLB affects your work?
   How have you dealt with this? How did you manage that change?
   How did you respond to that change? Resources, Personal Abilities, Other People?
   How did this make you feel?

6) From your perspective, what are the strategies your school has used, or is using, to respond to NCLB?
   Probe: How do you feel about this response by your school?
   How has the principal responded?
   Have these helped you deal with NCLB?
   Do you feel that this school has any special qualities or resources that have helped you respond to NCLB?

Can you give me an example?

7) From your perspective, what are the strategies your school district has used, or is using, to respond to NCLB?
   Probe: How do you feel about this response by your school district?
   Have these helped you deal with NCLB?

Do you feel that this school district has any special qualities or resources that have helped you respond to NCLB?

8) Thinking about what you just shared with me, specifically, how does NCLB affect your work environment? (working conditions)
   Probes: How do these things make you feel?
   How do you manage that change? How do you respond to that change?
   Time?
   Facilities and Resources?
   Empowerment / Control?
   Leadership in school and in district?
   Professional Development?

9) Tell me a story about one time you can recall NCLB really affecting you and your work?

10) Do you feel that NCLB has had any impact on your career plans? How? Why?
   Probe: How does this make you feel?
   Has it had any influence on your sense of job satisfaction?

Imagining…

11) If a genie appeared right now in front of you, and offered to grant you three wishes (without worrying how they would be fulfilled) to heighten vitality and effectiveness in this school, what would these three wishes be?
   Probe: Why would you select these wishes?
   What do you mean by that?
   If these wishes were granted, how would they impact your work?
   If these wishes were granted, how would they make you feel?
   Are there other things that might be helpful in managing change that your school is not currently providing?

Concluding Thoughts…

12) Before we finish, could you draw me a picture of your school structure and how it is situated in the school district? (By this I mean how you see yourself in relation to others at this school and how you see your school in relation to other schools in the district and the district administration.)

Is there anything we talked about that you would like to go back to? Or is there anything that we didn't talk about that you think is important?

Would you mind if I contact you again at some point, if I need to clarify anything we talked about today?

Pseudonym Choice:_____

Case Number:_____

ADDITIONAL QUESTION IF TIME PERMITS:

a) When people are in leadership positions, what two or three things can they do that will help you be the best you can be? (great for buffering, bridging stuff, capacities, leadership, structure, etc)

Demographic and Work Information - Teachers

This form will be completed together at the start of the interview.

1) Are you? Male Female

2) Which of these groups BEST represents your racial/ethnic background? (Circle all that apply)

   a. White, Caucasian
   b. Black, African American
   c. Hispanic/Latina(o)
   d. Asian/Pacific Islander
   e. Native American
   f. Other, Specify_____

3) What is your birth date?

4) What best describes your current relationship? Are you now…. (Please circle one)

   a. Legally Married
   b. Not married, but living with a partner
   c. Not living together, but in a relationship with a significant other
   d. Single
      If single, are you…
   e. Divorced
   f. Widowed
   g. Separated
   h. Never Married
   i. Other: _____

5) Do you have primary care giving responsibilities for any children?
   a. How many children?

6) Education: What is the highest level of education you have attained?
   a. Some college
   b. Four-year college degree
   c. Some graduate school
   d. Graduate or professional degree

7) Certification:
   a. Are you a fully certified teacher? Yes No

b. Did you have to take an additional exam to meet the Highly Qualified Teacher requirements in this county? Yes No

c. Are you nationally board certified? Yes No

If yes, what year did you receive your National Board Certification?

8) How many years have you been teaching?

9) How many years have you been teaching in this school?

10) What grade/subject do you currently teach (fall 2006)?

11) What grade/subject did you teach last year (2005-2006)?

12) Do you have any additional PAID responsibilities in this school?

Such as:
Coach
Mentor
Lead teacher
Teacher Trainer
Bus Duty
Lunch Duty
Committee Work
Building Maintenance
Tutoring
Other: _____

13) Do you have any additional UNPAID responsibilities in this school?

Such as:
Coach
Mentor
Lead teacher
Teacher Trainer
Bus Duty
Lunch Duty
Committee Work
Building Maintenance
Tutoring
Other: _____

Interview Guide - Principals

Beginnings…

To start, I'd like to learn about your beginnings at this school…

1) Tell me the story of how you came to be principal at this school.
   Probes: What other positions in education did you have before joining this school?
   What first attracted you to this school?
   What were your initial impressions when you first joined?
   Have your impressions changed since then? How?

Strengths and Values…

I would like to learn more about your work here at this school.

2) Can you share with me what you feel is your biggest contribution to this school?
   Probe: What is your biggest contribution to the school district?
3) Think about your job when you are at your best.
   a) When you are at your best, how do you feel about your work as a principal in this school?
   b) When you are at your best, how do you feel this impacts the people around you?
      Probes: Teachers?
      Other Principals?
      District Administrators?
   c) When you are at your best, what about your job is most important to you?
   d) When you are at your best, what makes you feel the most satisfied?

Changes…

Now I would like to ask you to think back in the past. NCLB was signed into law in 2002. Put yourself back in that timeframe as well as you can and…

5) Tell me the story of how NCLB began to affect your work at this school? (make sure you can account for those principals that have not been working at this school since 2002)
   Probes: How did this make you feel?
   How did you manage that change? How did you respond to that change?
   How did that affect the teachers in this school?
   How did that make the teachers feel?
   Details – When did that occur? Who was it that did that? etc.
6) Thinking about the story you just shared with me, specifically, how did NCLB affect the working conditions in this school?

Probes: How did these things make you feel?
How did you manage that change? or How did you respond to that change?
How have these impacted the teachers in this school?
Time?
Facilities and Resources?
Empowerment / Control?
Leadership in school and in district?
Professional Development?

7) Thinking back to your story, what changes have most positively affected you and your work at this school?
8) Do you feel that NCLB has had any impact on your career plans?
Probe: How?
How does this make you feel?

Now, I want to switch gears a little and ask you about how the school as a whole has dealt with NCLB.

9) From your perspective, what are the strategies your school has used to respond to NCLB?
Probes: How do you feel about these responses?
How have the teachers responded?
How has the school district responded?
Have these responses helped this school deal with NCLB? How?
Do you feel that this school has any special qualities or resources that have helped you respond to NCLB?
10) From your perspective, what are the strategies your school district has used to respond to NCLB?
Probes: How do you feel about these responses?
Have these responses helped this school deal with NCLB? How?
Do you feel that this school district has any special qualities or resources that have helped you respond to NCLB?
11) Tell me about a time when this school district really supported you in implementing NCLB.

Imagining…

12) Can you imagine ways that your school could work with other groups, people, and/or organizations to enhance the resilience of the school?
Probe: In what ways?
With whom?
How would these connections be helpful?
13) If you could do anything to help <u>teachers</u> manage NCLB, what would you do?
Probes: Why?
How would this help teachers?

Who else could help make this process easier for teachers?
Are there any specific resources that would make this process easier for you and the teachers in this school?

14) If a genie appeared right now in front of you, and offered to grant you three wishes (without worrying how they would be fulfilled) to heighten vitality and effectiveness in this school, what would these three wishes be?
Probes: Why would you select these three wishes?
What do you mean by that?
If these wishes were granted, how would they impact your work?
If these wishes were granted, how would they make you feel?
If these wishes were granted, how would they impact teachers in this school?

Concluding Thoughts…

15) Before we finish, could you draw me a picture of your school structure and how it is situated in the school district?

Is there anything we talked about that you would like to go back to? Or is there anything that we didn't talk about that you think is important?

Would you mind if I contact you again at some point, if I need to clarify anything we talked about today?

Pseudonym Choice:_____

Interview Guide – District Administrator

Beginnings…

To start, I'd like to learn about your beginnings in this district…

1) Tell me the story of how you came to work as an administrator in this district?
   Probes: What other positions in education did you have before joining this school district as an administrator?
   What first attracted you to this school district?
   What were your initial impressions when you first accepted this position?
   Have your impressions changed since then? How?

Strengths and Values…

I would like to learn more about your work in this school district.

2) Can you share with me what you feel is your biggest contribution to this district?
3) Think about your job when you are at your best.
   a) When you are at your best, how do you feel about your work as an administrator in this district?
   b) When you are at your best, how do you feel this impacts the people around you?
      Probes: Co-Workers?
      Principals?
      Teachers?
      The public?
4) When you are at your best, what about your job is most important to you?
5) When you are at your best, what makes you feel the most satisfied?

Changes…

Now I would like you to think back in the past. NCLB was signed into law in 2002. Put yourself back in that timeframe as well as you can and…

6) Tell me the story of how NCLB began to affect your work in this district? (make sure to account for administrators not working in this position in the district in 2002)
   Probes: How did this make you feel?
   How did you manage that change? How did you respond to that change?
   How did that affect the teachers in this district?
   How did that affect the principals in this district?
   How did that make the teachers feel?

Details – When did that occur? Who was it that did that? etc.

7) Thinking about the story you just shared with me, specifically, how did NCLB affect the way you work with others in this school district?
   Probes: Relating with teachers
   The public
   School Administration
   Public and private providers of supplemental services or school assistance
   The state
8) Thinking back to your story, what changes have most positively affected you and your work in this school district?
9) Do you feel that NCLB has had any impact on your career plans?
   Probe: How?
   How does this make you feel?
   What about the career plans of principals and teachers?

Now, I want to switch gears a little and ask you about how the school district as a whole has dealt with NCLB.

10) From your perspective, what are the strategies this school district has used to respond to NCLB?
    Probes: How do you feel about these responses?
    Have these responses helped schools and teachers deal with NCLB? How?
    How have principals responded?
    How have teachers responded?
    Do you feel that this school district has any special qualities or resources that have helped you deal with NCLB? What are they? How have they helped?
    Do you feel that some schools have any special qualities or resources that help them deal with NCLB? What are they? How have they helped?
11) Tell me about a time when this school district was particularly successful in helping a school implement NCLB?

Imagining…

12) Can you imagine ways that your school district could work with other groups, people, and/or organizations to enhance the resilience of the school district?
    Probes: In what ways?
    With whom?
    How would these connections be helpful?
13) If you could do anything to help <u>teachers</u> and <u>schools</u> in this district manage NCLB, what would you do?
    Probes: Why?

How would this be helpful?
Who else could help make this process easier for teachers and schools?
Are there any specific resources or qualities that would make this process easier for the district?

14) If a genie appeared right now in front of you, and offered to grant you three wishes (without worrying how they would be fulfilled) to heighten vitality and effectiveness in this school district, what would these three wishes be?
Probes: Why would you select these three wishes?
What do you mean by that?
If these wishes were granted, how would they impact your work?
If these wishes were granted, how would they make you feel?
If these wishes were granted, how would they impact principals in this district?
If these wishes were granted, how would they impact teachers in this district?

Concluding Thoughts…

15) Before we finish, could you draw me a picture of your school district's structure and how the schools are situated in the district?

Is there anything we talked about that you would like to go back to? Or is there anything that we didn't talk about that you think is important?

Would you mind if I contact you again at some point, if I need to clarify anything we talked about today?

Pseudonym Choice:_____

Demographic and Work Information – Principals & Administrators

1) Are you? Male Female
2) Which of these groups BEST represents your racial/ethnic background? (Circle all that apply)

1 White, Caucasian
2 Black, African American
3 Hispanic/Latina(o)
4 Asian/Pacific Islander
5 Native American
6 Other, Specify_____

3) What is your birth date?
4) What best describes your current relationship? Are you now…. (Please circle one)

1 Legally Married
2 Not married, but living with a partner
3 Not living together, but in a relationship with a significant other
4 Single
If single, are you…
5 Divorced
6 Widowed
7 Separated
8 Never Married
9 Other: _____

5) Do you have primary care giving responsibilities for any children?
   a. How many children?
6) Education: What is the highest level of education you have attained?
1 Some college
2 Four-year college degree
3 Some graduate school
4 Graduate or professional degree
8) How many years have you been in this position?
How many years in this school/school district?

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