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ABSTRACT

STORIES SHARED AND LESSONS LEARNED: USING *CURRERE* TO EXPLORE VETERAN ELEMENTARY TEACHER NARRATIVES OF TEACHING IN AN ACCOUNTABILITY ERA

by

Chloé S. Bolyard

Accountability policies (i.e., *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top*) in education over the last two decades have produced a culture of fear and anxiety, undermined teacher autonomy over curriculum and instruction, and pressured teachers to focus on raising student test scores, resulting in a narrowing of the curriculum. The purpose of this study was to seek a clearer understanding of how teachers narrate what it means to them to be a teacher in the midst of various accountability reforms. More specifically, the intent was to understand the unique narratives of five veteran elementary teachers' experiences. Situated within an interpretivist discourse of research in general and Deweyan pragmatism in particular, this qualitative study employed an adaptation of Pinar's (1976) theory and method of *currere* to make sense of teachers' narratives. Data collection involved interviews and classroom observations. While findings echoed in part the extant literature, this study elucidated a number of unique contributions related to both the perspectives of veteran elementary teachers and the use of *currere* resulting in implications for practice and research.

STORIES SHARED AND LESSONS LEARNED: USING *CURRERE* TO EXPLORE VETERAN ELEMENTARY TEACHER NARRATIVES OF TEACHING IN AN ACCOUNTABILITY ERA

A DISSERTATION

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Dedication

To my dad, Jeff Shank, my first teacher.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Regressive Moment: Elementary Teaching and Data-Driven Decision-Making

"Mrs. Bolyard [was my most inspirational teacher] because she and I was [sic] so close and she was my best friend," were the words I read from a bright yellow sheet filled out by a past student about to graduate fifth grade. Students like this one are hard to forget. He was one of the students I taught during my last year of teaching third grade prior to moving from Missouri to Ohio to begin full-time doctoral studies. When I received my class list a couple weeks before the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year, I saw his name along with academic and behavior information. His second grade teacher had given him low academic ratings and the highest behavior rating reflecting his challenging behavior in her class. In short, we had a wonderful year together, and I couldn't disagree more with both labels attached to him at the end of second grade. As I sat at my desk reading these words from the sheet prepared for his fifth grade graduation ceremony, I knew I wanted to return to watch my past students graduate. That's what a "best friend" would do.

As I stood in the school's new auditorium waiting for the beginning of the fifth grade graduation ceremony to begin, I visited with past students' parents and retired teachers. Along the north wall of the auditorium hung all of those bright yellow sheets, one for each fifth grade graduate. Each sheet revealed students' fond memories from their time in elementary school and their hopes for the future. I walked from one end of the wall to the other, perusing the names at the top of each sheet, looking for names of students who had been in third grade with me. Of course, it was fun to read students' plans and reasons for choosing their most inspirational teacher: "He made me laugh"; "She made me smile when I had a bad day"; "She encouraged me to pursue my dreams of being a writer." I also enjoyed seeing the few mentions of my name until I came across one that read, "Mrs. Bolyard [was my most inspirational teacher] because she helped me raise my lexile by 530 points." Out of humiliation and disappointment, I wanted to black out my name. Two years later, this student remembered me because of the emphasis I had placed on her reading achievement score.

I began teaching third grade in the fall of 2009, and while I had little exposure to or interest in the educational policy climate of the time, I quickly felt expectations for implementing those nebulous policies. Data-driven decision-making was all the rage in the large, urban district

where I taught. We, third through fifth grade teachers, were expected to use data from the district's triannual computerized assessments to track students' progress toward the proficiency target, a scaled score identified by an unknown-to-us external source. We were even given a color-coded Word document, wherein red, yellow, green, and blue represented the students' rating as below basic, basic, proficient, or advanced, respectively. The goal was to have all students in the last two categories, proficient or advanced, after the final assessment of the year. That goal was not met during my first year or the following in my classroom or in any classroom that I know of.

As a beginning teacher, my image of an effective educator was evolving each day as I reflected on my interactions with students, conversations with colleagues, observations of teachers' interactions with their students, and visits from my instructional coach and principal. While my confidence in my teaching identity and efficacy increased as a result of small successes and positive words from others, the growing barrage of data painted a somewhat different picture. I remained hopeful after the middle-of-year test results came in: We still had a few months of instructional time left before the end-of-year assessment. I did not realize at the time that a miracle was necessary if all my "red" students were supposed to make green by the end of the year. After all, I was a new teacher; it seemed logical that it might take me a couple of years of experience before I could have a group of students reach 100 percent proficiency on the end-of-year test.

During years three and four, our district ramped up emphasis on Continuous Classroom Improvement (CCI). Teachers were now expected to display student data on a wall in their classroom for classroom testing cycles in a subject area of their choosing, but preferably in reading or math. The data wall included a behavioral objective (e.g., "By Friday, the students will be able to answer correctly four out of five questions on a three-digit addition quiz"); the actions necessary to meet the objective (e.g., "Students will listen to the teacher, carry when necessary, focus on their work, check it over, and take their time"); the graph of students' pre- and post-test results, showing the number of students meeting the proficiency target; and an end-of-week reflection, noting actions for future improvements. The wall also included a graph of class data on the district's computerized assessment. All elementary teachers, even kindergarten, were expected to engage students in weekly conversations about each stage of the cycle. These conversations lasted 10 to 15 minutes twice a week, depending on how "engaged" students were

in the discussion. After the first few cycles, students quickly figured out the expected answers for the reflection piece: "Listen to the teacher. Do your best. Take your time. Check your work." If 100 percent of the class met the end-of-cycle target, then they could vote on a way to celebrate. Our beginning-of-cycle discussion included choosing which celebration we wanted to partake in should everyone meet the goal. This was only the first of many bribery tactics I used with my students.

Two years of data revealed that I had failed with two groups of third graders to bring all students to proficient levels in reading, language arts, and math. Thus, I was relieved when I learned of the district's switch from proficiency goals to growth goals. Under the new plan, the same computerized assessments would be used to identify students' baseline score and National Percentile Ranking (NPR) that would determine which growth quartile the student would fall in. Depending on a student's designated quartile, an expected amount of gains would be identified. Students scoring in the lowest quartile (NPR 1-25%) would be expected to grow the most, while students in the highest quartile (NPR 75%+) would be expected to grow the least. At first, this model seemed fair to both students and teachers: No students could be ignored, as had happened with the emphasis on bubble kids during the proficiency era (those students just below proficient), and teachers might have a greater chance at showing growth than bringing all "red" students to the same level of proficiency.

When we first started implementing the use of quartiles, I remained optimistic that our classroom practices would result in growth for all of the students in my class. I sometimes felt defeated when the middle-of-year results would come out and teachers would compare their students' progress. How had that teacher's class grown drastically more than mine? In-service times were allotted to the discussion of data across grade levels as well as with grade-alike teams.

Increasingly more time and resources were set aside for test preparation on the paper-pencil state standardized assessment and the district's computerized assessment. Teachers were expected to have conversations with each student after each test to discuss his/her results, have the students graph the results in a data folder, and discuss goals and behaviors necessary for reaching those goals prior to the next assessment. These individual meetings plus weekly CCI meetings surely sent the message to even the youngest students that teachers valued scores on tests more than other things that received far less time and attention. I would imagine that my

principal felt the pressure to raise scores since the central office supplied building administrators with assessment data and school rankings at the beginning of each year. Who wouldn't want their building to be highest on the list? No one wanted to look like they were failing their students.

The same was true for teachers. We saw the rankings by building and by grade level, and many teachers wanted to be on top. What would it show about our grade and our building if we had the most students in the district meet their expected gains? During my fourth and final year teaching third grade in Missouri, our building's third graders ranked number one in the district for having the highest percentage of students meeting district-determined expected gains in math on the end-of-year computerized assessment.

I will not speak for the other teachers in my grade, but one practice in particular contributed to the high percentage of students in my class who met their expected gains. My principal had attended a meeting during which she was shown a binder of worksheets that a teacher from another building had created to prepare students for the computerized assessments in each tested subject. Tabs that corresponded with different scaled score ranges separated the binder's contents. Our principal had asked a paraprofessional in our building to prepare a binder for the tested grade levels. This meant that we each had a three-inch binder with what easily amounted to several hundred worksheets. Once I understood how the teacher had created the worksheets using the district's computerized assessment study guides supplied by Scantron, I created binders for math, language arts, and reading for groups of students who fell within the same scaled score range. I incorporated the worksheets into independent practice time during all three content areas each day. I facilitated routines to monitor students' progress through their binder sheets and provide feedback on selected answers.

In December, my students reaped the rewards of their labor by showing huge gains in all subjects. For the first time in my experience, I could see a clear connection between my instructional decisions and students' testing outcomes. Together with my students, we reflected on individual and class gains and set goals for the end-of-year exam. They knew how much they needed to grow in all three subjects to meet the target. Most of my students met end-of-year gains on the mid-year test. The end should be easy, so long as students continued to show progress. For the few who actually scored lower on the mid-year test than they had on the

beginning-of-year test, I spent more time with them, trying to convince them of the test's importance.

In the spring, just before taking the end-of-year tests, more class time was devoted to completing binders. I tried to provide enough time to move students through a couple of binders between the district's assessments. We also created a poster with celebrations for meeting our goals. For each subject in which students met individual goals, they received a water balloon to throw at me. Those students who grew the most from the first test to the last test in each subject, received a Sonic slushy of their choice. If all students met expected gains in a subject area, then we would celebrate with 30 minutes of extra recess. I wrote all of this out on the poster and hung it in the middle of the front wall. There, they would constantly be reminded of the carrot I dangled in front of them, encouraging them to put forth a great deal of effort.

As the test results came in, we celebrated every success, and each student recorded his/her year-end score in his/her data notebook. We kept watching the class percentage creep closer and closer to 100 percent in math. We had already taken the reading assessment and fell short of the goal by a couple of students. But, we felt confident about math and the attention we had especially paid to binder sheets during math time. When the final student finished, everyone knew that all students prior to his completion had met the target. He must have felt the pressure from students eager for extra recess and bragging rights. But, he did not meet. Everyone knew it, and my disappointment must have been more than obvious as I whispered his score in his ear for him to graph in his notebook. Shortly thereafter, testing concluded and so did our time together in room 121. These students are now in middle school, and the young boy who felt the weight of the class's expectations on his shoulders moved away.

When I think back over the amount of emphasis I placed on testing and data, the guilt I feel is consuming. These students were eight- and nine-year-olds. They wanted to please their teacher, and they wanted to have a reason to play outside during an extra recess. It should not surprise me that one fifth grade graduate described me as her favorite teacher because of her growth on a reading assessment. I made her success a big deal, and she believed in the significance and importance of her work, too. I convinced her to buy into the rhetoric and value of a data point.

Motivation for the Study

The present study was motivated by students like the female fifth grader described above who remembered her growth on a third-grade reading assessment and the boy who felt that he had disappointed his teacher and his entire third-grade class because of his unmet math gains. These experiences have triggered much reflection. Had I not stepped back from my position as a third-grade teacher to view the aforementioned actions from outside of the classroom, I wonder when, if ever, I would have realized the deleterious impact of the exorbitant emphasis I placed on students' test scores, the way I treated them as mere means to an end – that end being a score on a test. I am further motivated as I observe teachers in Ohio react to the recently implemented test-based teacher evaluation, the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) (Ohio Department of Education [ODE], 2013). I wonder how much more I would have emphasized test prep had my students' scores been tied to my performance evaluation – an evaluation that could have high-stakes ramifications (i.e., promotion to tenure or dismissal). Moreover, the present study was motivated by questions about how such policies impact those practitioners who have been in the field for long enough to see education reform waves come and go. Finally, I questioned how the experiences with testing at increasingly younger grades bears on teachers' conception of their teaching identity as elementary teachers.

Chapter Organization

The second part of this chapter sets the context for the present study's research question and aims. First, I provide a brief review of the recent wave of reforms calling for greater accountability in education, identifying The National Commission on Excellence in Education's (1983) report, *A Nation at Risk*, as the starting point. Next, I detail the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (1965) that transpired at the beginning of George W. Bush's first term as President, *No Child Left Behind* (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2002). Third, I bring us closer to the present by summarizing the shift toward even greater accountability through President Barack Obama's grant program, *Race to the Top* (USDOE, 2009). Due to the present study's emphasis on teachers, I pay particular attention to those aspects (i.e., teacher evaluations) related to teachers when discussing each of the aforementioned events. I conclude this section with a brief discussion of the contradictions of the reform era's espoused goals and its actuated outcomes.

After setting the scene, I situate my research question within the current accountability context. My question necessitates a brief discussion of both veteran teachers and elementary teachers since veteran elementary teachers served as the focus of the present study. Finally, I conclude this chapter by noting the relevance and significance of the present study, followed by the organizational framework of the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

How Did We Get Here?: Accountability Reforms in Education.

This section will review three pivotal moments in the current accountability reform wave spilling over all aspects of education. First, however, I will clarify what I mean by the terms *accountability* and *reform*.

Discussion of terms. Taken from the world of business, the term *accountability* means to give an account for something (Wagner, 1989). Considering this definition, one might infer that being accountable simply stated means being answerable to, and the degree of accountability thus varies from explaining to justifying one's actions (Wagner, 1989). Wagner distinguished between moral and legal accountability. The latter of which is enacted when individuals fail to meet the ethical obligations found under the first. Noddings (2007) reiterated this point by differentiating accountability and responsibility, noting that accountability results when one neglects one's "widely accepted general responsibility" (p. 39). McNeil (2000) associated accountability with the exertion of control over others who are viewed as inferior. Currently in education, accountability refers to student achievement on standardized tests, over which teachers are asked to account (Martin, Overholt, & Urban, 1976; Noddings, 2007).

Noddings (2007) referred to *reforms* as attempts to make large-scale changes to American K-12 schooling that would affect classrooms as well as curriculum decisions and practices. Tyack and Cuban (1995) reiterated the change component inherent to reforms while also noting the connection between society and reform movements. They defined reforms as "planned efforts to change schools in order to correct perceived social and educational problems" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 4). For example, urbanization and an influx of immigrants resulted in larger high schools with an assimilationist aim in the early 20th century (Noddings, 2007). Similarly, the Soviet launch of Sputnik in 1957 resulted in educational reforms that promoted math and science. Tienken and Orlich (2013) contrasted two usages of reforms: 1) processes

intended to degrade public schooling without empirical evidence and 2) positive efforts to improve schooling through the promotion of participative democracy.

Educational scholars have provided numerous explanations for the accountability reform era's existence and persistence. Beadie (2004) argued that accountability reforms are based on two underlying assumptions. First, differences in outcomes between schools are a technical issue, with fault found in teachers' lack of expertise and will to improve student achievement. The second assumption is that punitive measures (i.e., sanctions) will produce positive results (i.e., increased student achievement). Emphasizing the primacy of measurement in accountability reforms, Martin et al., (1976) posited that accountability in education is based on preferences for positivism and behaviorism.

Biesta (2010) claimed that the current accountability movement in education is the result of an ideological shift. The adoption of business language in education, what Biesta (2010) referred to as a "managerial form of accountability," has resulted from a changing framework of ideologies, specifically the rise of neoliberalism and capitalism (Oakes, Blasi, & Rogers, 2004). Through the use of economic rationality, neoliberals view the public sphere as fiscally wasteful. For instance, schools are public entities where resources are ample and results are lacking (Apple, 2006). Underlying neoliberal ideology is a faith in market practices, resulting in a shift in the relationship between the state and its citizens from a political to an economic one (Biesta, 2010). Under this view, the citizen is a consumer, and education becomes a product to be consumed. As economics influence the relationship between states and their citizens, schools have become increasingly interested in quality assurance, raising standards, and outcomes (Biesta, 2010; Martin et al., 1976; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Consequently, the shifting locus of control over schools has distanced the public from school governance (McNeil, 2000).

Martin et al. (1976) and McNeil (2000) contended that accountability is a political rather than educational movement. While proponents of accountability promote an agenda of equalizing student outcomes (Sirotnik, 2004), their methods contradict their espoused aims by ignoring the root of the problem. Blaming and penalizing teachers for student performance places the responsibility for the achievement gap on schools, allowing the government to abdicate itself of the responsibility to address deeper issues contributing to educational inequities (i.e., poverty). Consequently, narrowed objectives employed under accountability policies exacerbate existing academic disparities.

Others have emphasized the economic basis of accountability. Taxpayers wish to know how their contributions to education are being used (Martin et al., 1976). Additionally, during times of economic recession, schools have been blamed for America's loss of a competitive edge in comparison with other countries (Noddings, 2007).

Still others cite society's distrust of teachers as a contributing factor perpetuating the push for accountability in education. Some have associated the beginning of measurement in American education with the distrust of teachers (Mabry, 2004). McNeil (2000), studying the Perot-era reforms in Texas schools, found that the move toward top-down policies resulted from a distrust of everyone in education. Ross Perot hired individuals from outside of education to implement and enforce his policies to control teachers. Similarly, Tyack and Cuban (1995), when noting the rise of "teacher-proof" technologies, captured the sentiments of blame and distrust by asking, "Why consult teachers, the ones who have created the mediocrity of public education in the first place?" (p. 112).

Evolving notions of accountability: From inputs to outcomes. It is important to note that accountability in education is not a recent phenomenon. Schools have always been held accountable in evolving ways (Cuban, 2004). During the 19th century with the rise of tax-supported public education, local school boards were accountable to the community for ensuring that students had the resources to meet the "community's goals for its public schools" (Cuban, 2004, p. 19). This type of accountability continued through World War II, as school leadership was accountable for providing students with safe learning conditions, adequate materials, and qualified teachers.

As the masses flooded public schools at the turn of the 20th century, an emphasis on efficiency reigned. For example, under the Gary (Indiana) Plan, platoon schools were created to get the most use out of overcrowded schools by splitting students into two platoons to use different parts of the school building at the same time (Tienken & Orlich, 2013). The Gary Plan allowed students to experience both kinds of activities while doubling the amount of students that the school could serve (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995). Additionally, to meet the demands of industrialization, students were tracked (Noddings, 2007) into certain vocational paths under the auspice of scientific management (Bracey, 2009).

Accountability efforts converged with national security interests and the resultant negative perceptions of the public toward its schools in the 1950s, signaling the crisis in

education rhetoric. The Russian launch of Sputnik in 1957, and the subsequent coverage by American media outlets (Bracey, 2009), promulgated a fear that American technology was inferior to that of the Russians, and schools were now to blame for issues of national security (Noddings, 2007; Tienken & Orlich, 2013). Tienkin and Orlich (2013) argued that Sputnik was a manufactured crisis by the scientific community in need of more backing and funding. The nation's reaction to Sputnik led to President Dwight D. Eisenhower's signing of the 1958 *National Defense Education Act* (*NDEA*), representing one of the first broadly supported federally funded initiatives to aid public education (Tienken & Orlich, 2013). *NDEA* resulted in numerous federally mandated reforms, including increased graduation requirements in math and science (Cuban, 2004).

The current accountability system started to take shape in 1965 with the signing of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (*ESEA*). Under the new law, federal funds would be dispersed or withheld based on local compliance with *ESEA*'s directives (Goldstein, 2014). President Lyndon B. Johnson set out in the "war on poverty" to provide funds for impoverished school children (Cuban, 2004). Senator Robert F. Kennedy attached a requirement to Title I of *ESEA*, requiring annual evaluations that would hold educators accountable for student achievement. The focus on inputs during previous reforms was now being usurped in the second half of the 20th century by a focus on outcomes (Cuban, 2004).

The 1970s witnessed additional efforts to promote accountability in education under President Nixon's establishment of the National Institute of Education. In an effort to lessen the cost of students' academic failure, Nixon promoted his accountability agenda:

> From these considerations we derive another new concept: accountability. School administrators and school teachers alike are responsible for their performances and it is in their interest as well as in the interests of their pupils that they be held responsible…We have, as a nation, too long avoided thinking of the productivity of the schools. (Martin et al., 1976, p. 70)

A Nation at Risk. In 1983, teachers took center stage in national reform efforts spurred by The National Commission on Excellence in Education's (NCEE) release of *A Nation at Risk* (*ANAR*). Employing the language of threat and war (Noddings, 2007; Tienken & Orlich, 2013), the NCEE's (1983) findings showed inadequacies in the educational processes of content, expectations, time, and teaching. According to the report, U.S. schools offered watered-down

content, and low expectations permeated the system. American students spent far less time in school compared to students in other industrialized countries. The teaching field was not attracting academically able students. These failures put the United States at risk in international economic competition (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Just as reformers had done after Sputnik three decades prior, reformers used fear to promote their agenda of maintaining America's competitiveness in the global economy. The underlying assumption was that schools served "as the exclusive engine for worker productivity" (Tienken & Orlich, 2013, p. 71).

The Commission (1983) offered several recommendations for four educational processes, but due to the nature of the present study, I focus on the recommendations that targeted teaching. Seven recommendations were offered by The Commission (1983) to improve teaching: raise standards for persons entering teacher preparation programs; increase teaching salaries, and tie salary, promotion, tenure, and retention "to an effective evaluation system that includes peer review so that superior teachers can be rewarded, average ones encouraged, and poor ones either improved or terminated"; adopt 11-month contracts for teachers; develop career ladders for teachers; provide supports for the shortage of math and science teachers; make incentives available to attract students to the teaching profession; and involve master teachers in designing teacher preparation programs (p. 30).

After the release of *A Nation at Risk*, Furtwengler (1995) studied state policies regarding teacher evaluations between 1983 and 1992. Her study revealed that multiple states enacted teacher evaluations or modified current evaluation practices. Specifically, Furtwengler (1995) found that, "twenty states enacted their first requirements for personnel evaluation by local school districts, and 38 states enacted 67 policy initiatives related to personnel evaluation" (p. 11).

No Child Left Behind. Almost twenty years after The Commission (1983) released *A Nation at Risk*, President George W. Bush signed the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2002 (*NCLB Act*). *NCLB*, a reauthorization of President Johnson's *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965, called for increased accountability; greater school choice for parents; more flexibility for states and local educational agencies (LEAs) with federal education funds; and placed a stronger emphasis on reading and math (USDOE, 2002). One of the other major program changes to *ESEA* was the provision in *NCLB* that states should ensure that all students have

access to highly qualified teachers. Such teachers are those with full certification, competent in the subject matter that they teach (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

As a result of *NCLB*'s demand for highly qualified teachers, state policymakers began targeting teacher evaluations (Hazi & Arredondo Rucinski, 2009). One of the most influential organizations in educational policymaking, the National Governors Association (NGA), saw evaluations as a means for improving instructional practices (Goldrick, 2002).

With *NCLB*'s demand that schools meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) or incur sanctions, policymakers and educational leaders sought ways to improve student achievement (Anderson, 2005, as cited in Berryhill, Linney, & Fromewick, 2009). Individuals saw quality teaching as integral to student learning (Piro, Wiemers, & Shutt, 2011), arguing that teachers' classroom practices are an important pathway for student progress (Milanowski, 2004). Therefore, by improving teaching, student achievement should also increase.

Race to the Top. In February of 2009, President Obama signed the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* of 2009 (*ARRA*) into law, designed to "stimulate the economy, support job creation, and invest in critical sectors, including education" (USDOE, 2009, p. 2). The *ARRA* provided $4.35 billion for the *Race to the Top* Fund, a competitive grant that rewarded states based on their innovations to improve student learning, close the achievement gap, improve graduation rates, ensure student preparation for college and career, and implement reform plans for four areas:

> Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy; Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction; Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and Turning around our lowest-achieving schools. (USDOE, 2009, p. 2)

Of the six criteria used to select the grant recipients, the reform plan criteria for Great Teachers and Leaders outlined reform goals that states, in collaboration with LEAs, should enact to ensure that LEAs meet the following criteria:

> Design and implement rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals that (a) differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take

into account data on student growth as a significant factor, and (b) are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement. (USDOE, 2009, p. 9, D2ii)

According to the *ARRA* (USDOE, 2009), these reformed teacher evaluations would inform several educational decisions regarding principals and teachers: professional development and support; compensation, promotion, and retention; tenure and/or full certification; and removal of ineffective teachers and principals.

In response to *Race to the Top* and studies such as the one conducted by the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Project (MET, 2010), several states tailored their teacher evaluation systems to include evidence of student performance. While the percentage of student performance making up a teacher's evaluation varies across states, numerous states have set fixed percentages ranging from 35 percent to 50 percent (Baker, Oluwole, & Green, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

William Pinar (2012) referred to the current climate in education as one of school *de*form in which teachers have no formal control over the curriculum due to accountability policies. Driven by mandates to help students achieve a certain score on standardized assessments, curriculum is narrowed, causing "historical amnesia, political passivity, and cultural standardization" (Pinar, 2012, p. 17). Pinar (2012) argued that not only is school deform "abusive to children and unjust to teachers," it is also "disastrous for democracy" (p. 221). When curriculum is scripted and aligned to standardized test material, academic freedom is greatly constrained. Pinar (2012) argued that outcomes-oriented policies censor what is taught, limiting the ability to discuss and debate civic ideals.

Numerous researchers have supported Pinar's (2012) critique, finding that accountability policies in general, and *No Child Left Behind* (*NCLB*) (USDOE, 2002) and *Race to the Top* (USDOE, 2009), in particular, have resulted in an amalgam of outcomes on teachers. These include unethical teacher behavior (Ravitch, 2011); narrowed curriculum and teaching to the test (Berryhill et al., 2009; Noddings, 2007; Ravitch, 2011; Tienken & Orlich, 2013); lower teacher self-efficacy (Berryhill et al., 2009; Noddings, 2007; Tienken & Orlich, 2013); fear and anxiety (Amrein-Beardsley & Collins, 2012; Ravitch, 2011); published test scores (Ravitch, 2011); depersonalization of teachers (McNeil, 2000); and litigation (Amrein-Beardsley & Collins, 2012).

The normalizing pressures of high-stakes assessments also cause a philosophical problem. According to Gunzenhauser (2012), a philosophy of education "addresses *why* we educate so that we make better choices about *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, and *how* we educate" (p. 32). Teachers forgo their philosophy of education in response to accountability pressures to comply with a default philosophy of education, which supplants teachers' professional philosophies of education and views test scores as primary.

Research Question

Starting my teaching career between two policies calling for greater accountability, *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top*, I understand how these policies de-professionalize teachers by questioning and/or dismissing altogether their specialized skills and knowledge. The purpose of the present study was to explore how veteran elementary teachers talk about their lives as teachers in the midst of an accountability reform era. The present study focused on veteran elementary teachers' experiences to address three gaps in the literature on teacher experiences in a school reform context: 1) that of *veteran* teacher narratives on teaching; 2) that of *elementary* teacher narratives on teaching; and 3) that of teachers *themselves* narrating about their experiences as a teacher in the current accountability context. The central question guiding the present study is How do veteran elementary school teachers narrate what it means to be a teacher in the current reform era?

Veteran Teachers

As detailed earlier, my coming to this research is a result of my experiences during the first four years of my career as an elementary teacher. As I reflect over my regressive moment (Pinar, 2012), I wonder how my compliance with the district's expectations to base classroom decisions on data was influenced by my lack of experience in the profession. Perhaps I saw it as just part of the job, as noted by McNeil (2000), "Teachers who have taught for fewer than ten years, and who have not come in from another state, assume outcomes testing to be a sad but 'inevitable' feature of schooling" (p. 269). Ever the rule follower, lacking much education in critical thinking, I attended new teacher orientation and trainings with an open mind to learn all that I could from the trainings to become an "effective" teacher. I believed that which was presented to me. I became, as Dewey (1895) described, "a private soldier in an army, expected

merely to obey…like a cog in a wheel, expected merely to respond to and transmit external energy" (as cited in Goldstein, 2014, vii).

Somewhere along the way during my first few months on the job, I picked up on the stigma often associated with veteran teachers: They're stuck in their ways and burnt out. As an enthusiastic new teacher, I vowed not to become the stereotypical experienced teacher, closed off to innovation. I now question this stigma to some extent. Perhaps this message was being propagated so that new teachers would associate good teaching with compliance – not with being resistant to change. Now I wonder if those more experienced teachers were on to something. For those who indeed resisted change, and they did exist, maybe they knew something that the rest of us amateurs did not: that they had seen various reform waves come and go under the auspice of "innovation," "what works," or "best practices," and the latest one was just the most recent swing of the pendulum. This point was acknowledged by Tyack and Cuban (1995): "But across the nation there are teachers who have the wisdom to reject fashionable innovations that violate their sense of what their pupils need and instead to experiment on their own terms with reforms they believe in" (p. 132). Ride the waves and wait it out.

This reflection caused me to be drawn to veteran teachers' evolving conceptions of what it has meant to them to be a teacher over the course of their career. While there seems to be quite a bit of interest around the high attrition of teachers in their first five years of teaching (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011), I was interested in those who have persisted. How has their teacher identity evolved or not since the inception of recent accountability policies (i.e., *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top*)? Since educators view experience as the primary way of improving their craft (Lortie, 1975), we should view veteran teachers as experts. Often, their expertise is called upon when asked to serve as a mentor to a new teacher or to be the cooperating supervisor for a student teacher. Surely, their narratives warrant attention since they potentially have a great deal of influence on new teacher practice and emerging identities.

Elementary Teachers

Due to my experiences as a third-grade teacher, I was specifically interested in how experienced teachers at the *elementary* level talk about their evolving teacher identities. I have had the privilege of teaching at the elementary, high school, and college levels. A Missouri K-12 certificate in French allowed me to teach high school French courses for four weeks of student

teaching, and a teaching assistantship during graduate school allowed me to teach preservice teachers at the undergraduate level. Teaching in the elementary grades (i.e., kindergarten through sixth grade, in my experience) is unique from teaching in secondary schools and universities for a number of reasons. What I missed most about elementary teaching when I taught at the secondary and college levels was the amount of time I had with third graders each day over the course of nine months to build relationships with them and their families. To me, these relationships are a prerequisite to trust, collaboration, and learning. It takes a great deal of concerted effort to become acquainted with students when one only sees them a couple times a week for maybe three hours total.

Additionally, elementary school is unique for students because it sets the tone for their schooling experience. During their first years of school, they learn the routines and norms of schooling (Jackson, 1968/1990). They are forming opinions about subjects that they like, and successes and failures influence their self-esteem as a student. At the same time, however, they still have opportunities to play outside during recess and maybe take naps and eat snacks in the earliest grades. Elementary school is a time of transition from home life to the rigors of academic life to come during later grades.

Considering the particularities of elementary teaching, I was curious about the unique perspective and narratives of veteran teachers working with young students. Wood (2004) provided some insights into the changing lives of elementary teachers and schooling by describing how *No Child Left Behind* resulted in the narrowing of the school experience. Specifically, he told of kindergarteners losing naptime at school to provide more time for test preparation in Gadsden, Alabama. Wood (2004) noted that after *NCLB*, schools began making cuts to unstructured playtime. In Galveston, Texas, schools eliminated recess time to allow for more instructional time. The number of field trips taken also declined. Similarly, elementary classroom test prep methods "involve[d] teachers snapping their fingers at children to get responses, following scripted lessons where they simply recite[d] prompts for students or [had] children read nonsense books devoid of plot or meaning" (Wood, 2004, p. 39). The present study considered how elementary teachers' experiences mirror Wood's findings.

Conclusion

The current outcomes-based reform movement holds teachers accountable for student achievement on standardized tests. The emphasis on accountability in education has snowballed over the last several decades since the second half of the 20th century. Schools, and specifically teachers, have served as scapegoats for America's social, political, and economic ills. The resultant policies and reforms have, as previously mentioned, impacted teaching and teachers in numerous ways. *No Child Left Behind*, however, ratcheted up the pressure on teachers to unprecedented levels, mandating adequate yearly progress and promising sanctions for those who failed to deliver. At present, many states have implemented teacher evaluation systems that evaluate teachers based on student performance on standardized assessments.

While researchers have explored the impacts of accountability on teaching (e.g., Amrein-Beardsley & Collins, 2012; McNeil, 2000), I am not aware of any studies that have examined the unique narratives of veteran elementary teachers about their evolving teacher identity in the midst of the current reform era. What does it mean to be a teacher in 2016, 14 years after *NCLB* and six years since *Race to the Top*? How have veteran teachers' professional identities shifted since entering the field? What does the future of the profession look like to them? These are the questions that drove the present study.

In the epilogue of her book on New York's teachers during the 1920s reforms, Rousmaniere (1997) reflected on the legacy of teachers' experience. Her words written almost twenty years ago remain relevant today:

> The recurrence of these problems should lead us to do more than shake our heads in amazement at the constancy of the ages. Teachers have been talking about why schools don't work for generations. Our obligation is to listen to what they say. (p. 133)

The insights gleaned from veteran elementary teacher narratives are informative for preservice and practicing teachers, administrators, policymakers, and researchers who study teaching. For those considering pursuing a career in education, I hope that these narratives shed light on the mundane, challenging, and rewarding aspects of the work. At the same time, may these teachers' experiences remind us of the history of the profession at a time when trendy innovations and data-driven reforms are all the rage.

I hope that this work speaks to practicing teachers who are frustrated, overwhelmed, disenfranchised, and jaded by the disconnect between their philosophy of education and the expectation to standardize their practice in order to receive a higher rating on their evaluation.

Perhaps this audience will relate to the experiences and feelings shared through these teacher narratives and find a way forward that reignites their commitment to teaching and learning.

I have also written this dissertation with administrators, policymakers, and educational researchers in mind. These narratives invite reconsidering assumptions about teachers' perspectives about accountability reform and their understanding of its impact on teachers' practice. I hope that this work encourages rethinking current forms of accountability that affect teachers' time, sense of efficacy, and professional discretion.

This study brings teacher voices to the fore, illuminating a more nuanced understanding of the impacts of reform on classroom teachers and thus on students. The insights from these narratives add to the national conversation by giving a voice to those who are often relegated to the margins amidst loud voices from politicians, outside interest groups, corporations, and the media. Sharing teachers' stories is necessary in a reform era that demoralizes and misrepresents teachers, especially by dismissing their perceptions about accountability reforms altogether.

Organization of the Dissertation

The remaining nine chapters of this dissertation consist of the literature review and theoretical framework, methodology and methods, my *currere*, one chapter for each of my five participants' *currere* narratives, and the implications of the present study. Chapter two consists of three sections. First, since my research question deals with how teachers narrate what it means to be a veteran elementary teacher, a discussion of various notions of teacher identity is necessary. Second, I detail how Pinar's (2012) *currere* was utilized as the theoretical framework that guided my research. Since I view teachers' individual narratives as situated within a broader discourse around what it means to be a teacher, I include an overview of the history of teaching in America and a discussion of the unique characteristics of teaching as a profession. Finally, I conclude chapter two with a brief review of some of the research that has examined teacher identity in accountability reforms.

Chapter three details the philosophical assumptions influencing the research, notably the influence of Deweyan pragmatism on my ontological and epistemological assumptions. I then explicate the specific methods utilized in the present study, including my use of narrative inquiry; Pinar's (1976) method of *currere*; the participants and settings; and how I collected,

analyzed, and interpreted the data. Chapter three also includes a discussion on issues of credibility, trustworthiness, ethics, and power related to the present study.

To position myself as the researcher, I include my personal *currere* narrative in chapter four. During this chapter, I reflect on the same questions that I posed to each of my veteran elementary teacher participants. Since I wrote this reflection after exiting the research sites, the reader is able to see how my participants' narratives influenced my *currere*.

Chapters five through nine detail each of my participants' *currere* narratives, consisting of two parts. First, the written narratives reflect each of the four moments (i.e., regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical) of *currere* that served as scaffolds for the four interviews I had with each participant. I then conclude each chapter with a discussion of that participant's narrative. The purpose of this discussion is to "make sense" (Creswell, 2013) of their narrative by placing their narrated experiences in context (Eisner, 1998). To this end, I draw connections between each narrative, other participants' narratives, including my own; classroom observations; and related literature.

Finally, I conclude the dissertation with a discussion of the implications of the present study. This chapter includes a summary of the research, noting specifically how my findings compare to and extend the literature reviewed in chapter two. I also draw attention to the unique contribution of the present study's findings related to veteran elementary teacher experiences. I consider the implications for practice and research, stressing the necessity of reflection in practice. Finally, I consider areas of interest for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

> Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror, and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge – and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject. (Palmer, 1998, pp. 66-67)

Introduction

In a reform era that ties teachers' evaluations to students' scores on standardized tests and provides scripted curricula that teachers are expected to implement with fidelity, what it means to be a professional educator is shifting.[1] Since, as Palmer (1998) noted, individuals teach who they are, understanding teachers' evolving identities in the context of accountability is worthy of examination. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to review the literature related to teacher identity and the theories utilized in the present study. Since my conception of teacher identity is based, in part, on the work of other scholars, a brief overview of some of the various conceptions of teacher identity is necessary.

Defining teacher identity. Research on teacher identity first emerged in the 1980s to gain insights into teaching and teacher training (Liu & Xu, 2011). Scholars found that in teaching the separation of one's self from one's job is difficult to achieve since the teacher's identity is enmeshed with his/her work. According to Nias (1989):

> The teacher as a person is held by many within the profession and outside it to be at the centre of not only the classroom but also the educational process. By implication, therefore, it matters to teachers themselves, as well as to their pupils, who and what they are. Their self-image is more important to them as practitioners than is the case in occupations where the person can easily be separated from the craft. (pp. 202-203)

[1] Hansen (1995), when distinguishing between occupation, vocation, career, work, job, and profession, associated "profession" with expertise and the social contribution that ones in an occupation make to society. Professionals bring specialized skills and knowledge to their work acquired through training. The words "profession" and "professional" used in this chapter will align with Hansen's (1995) definition unless otherwise specified.

Moreover, teachers' sense of self, throughout their career, is of vital significance for understanding their actions and commitments as teachers (Ball & Goodson, 1985).

The following conceptions of teacher identity were found when reviewing the literature on teacher identity: self-understanding and sense of self, self-authored identity, telling identities, and professional identity.

Self-understanding and sense of self. In an attempt to avoid the often static and reductionistic notion of *identity*, Kelchtermans (2005) argued for the use of "self-understanding" instead. As he conceptualized it, self-understanding consists of five components. *Self-image* is the way teachers describe themselves. *Job motivation* refers to those reasons or motives that cause one to choose teaching as a profession and to remain in or leave the profession. The *future perspective* involves teachers reflecting on their expectations for the future and their feelings and attitudes toward these expected possibilities. *Self-esteem*, the evaluative component, refers to a teacher's appreciation of his/her job performance. The final component, *task perception*, encompasses what a teacher views to be his/her responsibilities of doing a good job (Kelchtermans, 2005, pp. 1000-1001).

Similar to Kelchtermans' (2005) notion of self-understanding is identity as related to a sense of self (George, Mohammed, & Quamina-Aiyejina, 2003). George et al. (2003) considered teacher identity to refer to how teachers "understand themselves as teachers" (p. 194). They adopted a view of identity that consists of three components related to teaching: images, experiences, and expectations. Additionally, Holland and Lachicotte defined teacher identity, or their sense of themselves, in relation to "ways of inhabiting roles, positions, and cultural imaginaries that matter to them" (as cited in Liu & Xu, 2011, p. 589). Finally, Day and Hadfield noted that teachers hold three selves simultaneously within their work context: the actual, the ideal, and the transitional (as cited in Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005). The actual self refers to the way teachers' work contexts shape their practices. The ideal is related to their perceptions and feelings on what it means to be a teacher. The transitional refers to the mediation of possibilities between the actual and the ideal.

Self-authored identity. Drawing from Bakhtin's dialogical perspective of human agency and the work of Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998), Sloan (2006) conceptualized teacher identity as a form of self-authorship. This view of identity maintains that individuals tell others and themselves who they are and try to act in a way that is congruent with their authored

selves. According to Sloan's (2006) critical perspective,[2] teachers' identities are distinct from their other situative identities – as "daughter," "father," "friend," etc. – because their teacher identity is entangled in the "socially produced [and] culturally constructed context called 'school'" (p. 125).

Telling identities. Adding to the conversation on teacher identity through a narrative inquiry perspective, Liu and Xu (2011) connected Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) notion of teachers' personal practical knowledge to teacher identity. Teacher identity, according to Liu and Xu (2011), is the expression of personal practical knowledge gained through experience and practice in a specific context. They extend this discussion by noting another example of narrative theorization of identity by referring to Sfard and Prusak's (2005) work on "telling identities." Identities, in this sense, are defined as a collection of stories about individuals that are "reifying, endorsable, and significant" (Liu & Xu, 2011, p. 590). These narratives represent two types of identities: designated identities (about a state of affairs) and actual identities (about the actual state of affairs) (Liu & Xu, 2011).

Professional identity. Finally, recurrent in much of the literature on teacher identity, is the notion of professional identity. Embedded in one's professional identity as a teacher, is an ability to use one's discretionary judgment and the capacity to carry out responsibilities associated with one's job (Day et al., 2005). Similar to already discussed notions of identity, Lasky (2005) adopted a conceptualization of professional identity as that which involves how teachers define themselves to others and to themselves. This professional identity evolves through career stages and is altered by contextual factors (i.e., school, reform, and politics) (Lasky, 2005). Furthermore, Cohen (2010) noted that teacher professional identity is "grounded in theories of identity as a relational, contextualized, socially constructed process that arises from teachers' knowledge and expression of their experiences" (p. 107).

Theoretical Framework: Currere

The foregoing overview of different conceptions of teacher identity serves as the foundation from which I conceptualize teacher identity for the purpose of the present study. I

[2] "Critical" in Sloan's (2006) work was related to the work of Henry Giroux and others who have issued public critiques on the social and historical processes affecting education.

envisage teacher identity as an interactive, multidimensional construct, influenced by the history of the profession (along with one's personal history in the profession), teachers' livelihoods or daily experiences, the policy environment in which they teach, and the future of the profession. To gain understanding about how teachers self-identify, I adopted Pinar's (1976) autobiographical curriculum theory, *currere*. This section provides a brief overview of the development and tenets of this theory.

In the 1970s, Pinar noted that the field of curriculum had forgotten the individual, necessitating a reconceptualization of curriculum as autobiographical text; the resulting product Pinar termed *currere* (Pinar et al., 1995). *Currere*, the verb form of curriculum, means running the race (Pinar, 2012; Schubert, 1986). This method emphasizes the "individual's own capacity to reconceptualize his or her autobiography" (Schubert, 1986, p. 33). In theoretical terms, curriculum defined this way is based on individuals' lived experiences situated socially, politically, and discursively (Pinar et al., 1995). *Currere* has roots in phenomenology, existentialism, and psychoanalysis (Pinar et al., 1995).

Reflective of Dewey's (1938/1997) theory of experience, specifically his theory of experiential continuity, *currere* provides a "sketch of subjectivity-structured temporality" (Pinar, 2012, p. 6). In the autobiographical method of *currere*, the student of curriculum must become temporal, living simultaneously in the past, present, and future (Pinar, 2012). While *currere* does draw temporal distinctions (i.e., regressive = past, progressive = future, analytical = past and future, synthetical = return to the present), such distinctions are not reductionistic. Rather, they facilitate a "reconstruction of the present through the reactivation of the past, differentiating present-mindedness into the co-extensive simultaneity of temporal attunements, expressed individually in social context through academic knowledge" (Pinar, 2012, p. 51). Listening to the past provides insight for the future. From the past, we have a better understanding of the present and thus are more equipped to reconstruct our current situation (Pinar, 2012).

Pinar (2012) intended that *currere* be used as a "method of self-understanding through academic study" (p. 6). This strategy engages students in a process of studying the relations between life history and academic knowledge, resulting in a deepened sense of self-

understanding (Pinar, 2012).[3] In other words, *currere* reveals the contribution of academic studies to one's understanding of life. The intent, according to Schubert (1986), is to emancipate individuals from the "constraints of unwarranted convention, ideology, and psychological unidemensionality" (p. 33). In practice, curriculum conceived of this way engages students in autobiographical writing that prompts reflection on how and why they have developed as they have (Schubert, 1986). Rather than a reflective retreat isolated from the world, *currere* promotes a "heightened engagement with it" through an examination of the relations between school knowledge, life history, and intellectual development (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 415). Specifically, *currere* involves four moments: the regressive, the progressive, the analytical, and the synthetical.

Regressive. In the regressive moment, one recalls the past, to "capture it as it was" (Pinar, 1976, p. 56). During this stage, emphasis is on the past as it was experienced, not as it is reconstructed in the present (Pinar, 2012). By returning to the past, one's memory is enlarged – transformed. Pinar (1976) noted that the biographic past is usually ignored but is never absent from one's present, as one's past superimposes onto the present. The sensitization to one's past self (Schubert, Schubert, Thomas, & Carroll, 2002) allows one to enter the past without necessarily succumbing to it (Pinar, 1976). The goal of the regressive moment is to observe and record one's functioning in the past, while also recording one's present responses to these observations (Pinar, 1976).

Progressive. The future, like the past, always inhabits the present (Pinar et al., 1995; Pinar, 2012). Therefore, the progressive moment allows one to imagine possible futures (Pinar et al., 1995; Pinar, 2012) by considering aspirations and where one is moving (Schubert, 1986); exploring one's fears and fantasies (Pinar, 2012); and anticipating where one's intellectual interests are going (Pinar, 1976). During this moment, an individual looks toward "what is not yet the case, what is not yet present" (Pinar, 2012, p. 5) – the projection of the future self (Schubert et al., 2002). The future, like one's past and present, is permeated with cultural content (Pinar, 2012). The progressive moment, Pinar (2012) argued, is "an effort to sidestep the ego and its present preoccupations, to dislodge material the ego has covered up, denied, evaded

[3] While Pinar (2012) envisioned *currere* as being used with students as an autobiographical curriculum, the present study used *currere* with teachers.

or misplaced" (p. 137). Pinar (1976) argued that the future influences the present in complicated ways. Like a remembered dream, the progressive moment may seem hallucinatory – as if the future already occurred in the past (Pinar, 2012).

In the progressive stage, the individual should think of the future – the upcoming days, weeks, months, and years – and record his/her thoughts (Pinar, 1976). Reiterating the importance of free association to this process, Pinar (1976) encouraged individuals not to be distracted by conclusions that his/her predicted future is unreasonable. Rather, one should record what one thinks when imagining the future. Pinar (1976) further encouraged individuals not to force this process, since "straining distorts the data" (p. 59).

Analytical. During the third moment of *currere*, one is sensitized to the intricacies of one's present (Schubert et al., 2002) through the examination of both the past and the present (Pinar et al., 1995; Pinar, 2012). Like phenomenological bracketing, "one distances oneself from past and future to be more free of the present" (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 590). This bracketing allows one to "create a subjective-third space of freedom in the present" (Pinar, 2012, p. 46) that moves one closer to understanding one's life (Pinar et al., 1995). The paradox of *currere* is that one becomes deeply engaged with life through a detachment from it (Pinar, 2012). During this analytical moment, one should describe the present, exclusive of the past and future (Pinar, 1976). Then, one should consider how the past, present, and future are interrelated, asking: "How is the future present in the past, the past in the future, and the present in both?" (Pinar, 1976, p. 60). Due to the pervasiveness of institutional life for many, reflection on the present will likely explore this aspect of context (Pinar, 1976).

Synthetical. In the fourth and final moment of *currere*, one reenters the lived presence to make it whole (Pinar et al., 1995; Pinar, 2012). This holistic view of one's present self involves one's "intellections, emotions, [and] behavior" (Pinar, 1976). Through a "continuously evolving synthesis" of the past, present, and future, one moves toward self-actualization (Schubert et al., 2002). In this moment, one reflects on his/her new understanding of who he/she is. With a better understanding of the present, this moment allows one to "choose what of it to honor, what of it to let go" (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. ix). This reflection permits one to reconsider who s/he wants to be and what s/he wants her/his aspirations to be (Pinar & Grumet, 1976). This moment provides a sense of agency, allowing one to use the knowledge acquired from the *currere* process to guide one's mobilization (Pinar, 2012).

Currere and identity. Adopting *currere* as a theoretical lens influences my conception of teacher identity. The historical dimension of teacher identity is parallel to the regressive moment, the difference being the proximity to the participant (i.e., history of the profession versus one's personal past in the profession). Likewise, the progressive moment is related to the future of the profession. Additionally, teachers' livelihoods and the policy environment make up the analytical moment. The amalgamation of these three dimensions results in a teachers' identity, or one's synthetical moment.

Dimensions of Teacher Identity

While the present study examined more micro-level influences on teachers' personal identities based on the four moments of *currere*, an examination of the broader developments over the history of the profession, the daily experiences of teachers, and the current political environment in education provides context wherein teachers' personal identities and experiences might be situated and better understood.

Teaching in America: A historical overview. As noted previously, some scholars writing about and researching on teacher identity have referred to the contextual factors impacting teachers' self-understanding (Cohen, 2010; Lasky, 2005; Sloan, 2006). However, in my review of the literature, I found that while scholars acknowledged both the cultural and social factors contributing to one's identity formation/evolution, little attention is paid to the ways that the history of the profession impacts one's identity as a teacher. Certainly, America's teachers' sense of self has evolved since the time when teachers taught in one-room schoolhouses on colonial settlements. This section will focus on three time periods in American teaching, starting with the colonial period followed by the 19th and 20th centuries.

Colonialism: Teaching as God's work (for men). During the first centuries of colonial America, schools were isolated establishments distributed across settlements. Teachers, mostly men, were hired by local authorities based on their moral standing and content knowledge for predetermined lengths of time and duties. Many teachers received little training or special preparation prior to teaching, for teaching was not yet a "regularized" occupation (Lortie, 1975, p. 17). Male teachers, as schoolmasters, taught at "petty schools" or "grammar schools," while women, constituting the minority of teachers, taught in "dame's schools," in which young

students studied at teachers' homes. Since occupations were less specialized during this period, teachers tended to hold a number of different occupations.

With the emergence of local citizen governing boards, the state's authority over schools shifted to the local level. Experimentation with teacher pay resulted in the local taxation of property holdings, giving local citizens power over schools. Teacher salaries, comprising the largest portion of the school budget, represented one area in which the public sought to keep taxes low. As will be detailed further, male teachers' salaries surpassed that of female teachers. Compared to other occupations, teacher incomes were similar to that of artisans but below that of ministers, lawyers, and doctors (Lortie, 1975).

Due to the physical isolation of their work, teachers had considerable privacy in the daily happenings of school life (Lortie, 1975). Occasionally, communities appraised teachers' work by visiting the school and demanding student recitations. Otherwise, teachers did not associate with other teachers and spent their days isolated from adults. While this description of America's early teachers might conjure varying images related to status, colonial teachers were viewed by society as doing "God's work" (Lortie, 1975, p. 10). Their work reflected the Puritans' connection between literacy and salvation. Although their work was important in the Church's eye, it was not to be conflated with the level held by clergy. In fact, some individuals sought teaching as a stepping-stone to clergyship. Whether or not they aspired to this role, society expected teachers to adhere to moral values (Lortie, 1975).

Urbanization and the feminization of teaching. During the 19th century, urbanization resulted in the expansion of multi-classroom schools, consequently impacting teachers' work. While promoting more of a communal atmosphere, teachers now experienced less privacy and received more surveillance from those higher up the emerging hierarchy of school organization. As schooling became compulsory, teachers were, for the first time, responsible for motivating the masses of students flooding schools. Lortie (1975) referred to the "dual captivity" of students and teachers, as each was forced to deal with the other; teachers were assigned to schools and classes, and students were assigned to teachers (p. 5).

Industrialization offered appealing job options for men, while providing few alternatives for women (Lortie, 1975). With the advent of building administrative positions, men moved in to fill these new supervisory roles: "The logic being that male principals and superintendents could assist women teachers with discipline and curriculum problems and deal more effectively

with the public constituencies upon which public schools depended for support" (Lagemann, 2000, p. 7). Whereas women viewed teaching as a form of continued employment, men, to the contrary, viewed teaching as temporary (Lortie, 1975). These factors contributed to the decline of male teachers and the rise of women to fill the void.

Initially hired during the summer months when men were needed in the fields (Lagemann, 2000), women schoolteachers outnumbered men four-to-one by 1840 (Goldstein, 2014). Catharine Beecher, a member of a religious evangelical family who dedicated her life to training women teachers, and Horace Mann, the first secretary of the board of education in Massachusetts, viewed the increase of female teachers as beneficial for two reasons (Lagemann, 2000). First, women could be hired for far less money than could their male counterparts (Goldstein, 2014; Lagemann, 2000; Lortie, 1975). For example, in 1850, women schoolteachers in Massachusetts were paid, on average, 60 percent less than men (Lagemann, 2000). Additionally, Beecher and Mann, both involved in the training of teachers, viewed teaching as women's true calling, arguing that teaching would allow a woman to "take advantage of her natural, God-given talents as a nurturer" (Goldstein, 2014, p. 27).

Both the expansion of schooling and the feminization of the teaching force impacted the status of the profession. Teachers, no longer the sole educator on settlements, were now part of a category of persons (Lortie, 1975). As the profession expanded and offered more teaching positions, the individual teacher was less of a rarity, resulting in the shrinking of the job's prestige (Lortie, 1975). Since women were forced to leave the profession when they married and/or had children, the teaching force tended to be made up of mostly young female teachers. Being both young and female reduced the status of the occupation even though teaching maintained its middle-class distinction. Despite the deteriorating status of the profession, teachers were expected to meet moral expectations, as had been the norm during colonial times. Goldstein (2014) captured society's expectations of teachers by describing them as "angelic public servants motivated by Christian faith, wholly unselfish, self-abnegating, and morally pure" (p. 26). Teaching during the 19th century, Goldstein (2014) noted, was the female equivalent of the ministry, wherein prestige was based not on monetary rewards, but rather in one's satisfaction of service to others. Fittingly, Goldstein (2014) labeled 19th century educators as "missionary teachers."

The suitability of women's morality for teaching caused many to view the profession as a moral rather than intellectual enterprise (Goldstein, 2014; Lagemann, 2000). As society came to question women's intellectual capacities, teaching was viewed less as a profession and more as a "philanthropic vocation or romantic calling" (Goldstein, 2014, p. 31). Due to the perception that female teachers were undereducated, American education was viewed as a form of anti-intellectualism (Goldstein, 2014).

In an effort to professionalize teaching, three options for teacher-hopefuls appeared during the 19th century. In 1823, Samuel Read Hall organized America's first school for teachers in Vermont (Lagemann, 2000). Following his lead, three teacher-training options emerged around the country: teachers' institutes, local academies, and normal schools. Teachers' institutes provided meetings for prospective teachers during which they learned lessons in basic school subjects over the course of several weeks. Teachers could also attend local academies, private institutions partially funded by the state, that offered a more practical education than had grammar schools. Two types of normal schools also provided training for teachers. Professional normal schools provided instruction in common school subjects along with specialized classes on the art of teaching and on school governance and opportunities to both observe and practice teaching. The second model of normal schools, the general, multipurpose one, reflected today's community colleges (Lagemann, 2000). Once the responsibility of local citizen governing boards, teacher certification became the responsibility of the state by the end of the 19th century (Lortie, 1975).

Fighting for control: Teaching in the 20th century. Teaching during the 20th century certainly reflected an embattled profession. While school and district authorities along with policy makers fought to control teachers, the latter simultaneously bonded together to fight for their rights. Despite the increased training required by prospective teachers at universities, the century bore witness to the back-and-forth nature of control over teachers' work.

The creation of the school superintendent in the 1890s symbolized the increasing centralization and bureaucratization of schools (Rousmaniere, 1997). Superintendents served as chief administrative officers between the governing citizen board and schools (Lortie, 1975). As a result of harsh working conditions, increased centralization, and corrupt politics in education, teachers joined together to form unions, advocating for labor rights during the first decade of the twentieth century (Lortie, 1975; Rousmaniere, 1997). The National Education Association grew

at the turn of the century from 10,000 members in 1919 to 220,000 by 1932 (Lortie, 1975; Rousmaniere, 1997), with teacher tenure first appearing in New Jersey in 1909 (Goldstein, 2014).

The engagement of teacher organizations waned during the First World War, however, as activism and dissent were squelched under the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Red Scare (Rousmaniere, 1997). Dissenters and activists were labeled as communists, and dissidence was viewed as "conduct unbecoming a teacher" (Goldstein, 2014, p. 94). Educators, therefore, were forced to comply with administrative demands (Rousmaniere, 1997), including the demand to sign a "loyalty pledge" to the United States and to promote this loyalty to students (Goldstein, 2014). Fears about unpatriotic and communist teachers would resurface in the 1950s, "driven by international war hysteria combined with agitation over the growing domestic political strength of teachers unions" (Goldstein, 2014, p. 95).

While dealing with the intrusion of administrators and the government into their personal political affiliations, teachers' work lives also came under increased scrutiny during the social efficiency movement of the 1920s. Joseph Mayer Rice, at the end of the 19th century, surveyed a number of American schools and subsequently published several articles attacking public schools for "incompetence, inadequate pedagogic knowledge, and a lack of quality in teaching" (Schubert, 1986, p. 74). He continued his work during the first decade of the 20th century, examining why some schools fared better than others. He argued that practitioners needed scientific management: defined goals, close supervision, and valid measurements of results. Heeding his recommendations and adopting practices from the field of business, school administrators of the 1920s employed scientific management, viewing teachers as "factory hands…agents charged with implementing detailed specifications developed in central headquarters" (Lortie, 1975, p. 5). This movement spurred debates about the necessity and nature of teacher evaluations (i.e., Should teachers be graded or simply identified as satisfactory or unsatisfactory?) (Rousmaniere, 1997). The factory model of schooling and the corresponding micromanaging of teachers persist in the 21st century.

Ironically, during the first few decades of the 20th century, teaching was portrayed in New York City popular media as the most glamorous profession for women (Rousmaniere, 1997). In order to qualify for the "glamorous profession" of teaching, applicants' personality traits were of equal importance as was content knowledge. Rousmaniere (1997) detailed the personality traits that were assessed: family backgrounds, grades and absenteeism rates in high

school and college, physical health, appearance, speech, age, extracurricular activities, reading habits, handwriting, hobbies, marital status, and family responsibilities. Applicants were subjected to tests that measured their sympathy, knowledge, public opinion, and emotional history. These entrance exams reflected the widening role of teachers' work during the era of social efficiency, which viewed teaching as responding to the whole child's needs. Under social efficiency, teachers were not only expected to guide students toward certain vocations, but they were also expected to act as nurses, social workers, homeroom teachers, and health educators (Rousmaniere, 1997).

The aims of schooling and the subsequent responsibilities of teachers reflected the changing needs of society during the 20th century (Lagemann, 2000). After the Great Depression, teachers were expected to teach "life adjustment" courses. During the 1920s, vocational education and citizenship became primary, replaced by social reconstruction the following decade. From WWII forward, preparation and patriotism reigned supreme. As detailed in chapter one, reforms of the 1950s emphasized science and math, while the 1960s and 1970s demanded outcomes to prove that federal funds were being used efficiently.

During the 1950s, teachers fought to gain control over their salaries through collective bargaining efforts that replaced the superintendent as their representative to the local school board (Lortie, 1975). By the 1970s, public school teaching was arguably the most unionized profession in America, with over 1,000 strikes occurring between 1960 and 1980 (Goldstein, 2014). Coincidently, or not, as teachers' power rose with each collective bargaining victory, teachers' reputations weakened, illustrated by the desire for objective measures of teacher performance and experiments with merit pay. The National Commission on Excellence in Education's (1983) report, *A Nation at Risk*, laid the groundwork for the "war on teachers" rhetoric that continues today.

Historical contributions to teacher identity. The preceding overview of the history of teaching in America provides numerous implications about what it has meant to be a teacher at different points in America's history. Based on society's expectations for teachers, teachers' changing responsibilities, the status of the profession, and the policy environments, we can infer how teachers might have made sense of what it meant to be a teacher. During colonial America, teachers might have understood their work to be of some sort of moral worth, over which they were trusted to exercise their professional judgment. Despite a lack of training, teachers might

have felt that being a teacher meant having autonomy to carry out one's responsibilities. Later, during the 19th century, teachers might have experienced less autonomy with the increase of supervision. Additionally, women teachers might have felt inferior to male teachers due to lower salaries. Their sense of professionalism and expertise might have increased due to the growth of teacher training schools. Finally, teachers' sense of self might have felt conflicted during the 20th century due to expectations to serve the whole child while simultaneously increasing student performance on outcome measures.

Teacher livelihoods: On being a teacher. While the previous section examined the historical developments of teaching in America that have undoubtedly impacted teachers' identity, this section extends the discussion by considering the experiential domain of teacher identity. Specifically, this section explores teachers' decisions to teach; the induction and socialization processes of the job; their daily life in classrooms; the rewards and purpose of their work; the ubiquitous nature of uncertainties in teaching; and the ethos of the job.

The decision to teach: Coming to the job. As previously mentioned, Kelchtermans (2005) contended that one of the aspects of teacher identity, or self-understanding, is job motivation, which includes one's reasons for coming to the job. This section, therefore, explores the various reasons why individuals are drawn to the teaching profession. One of the oft-cited attractors of teaching is its interpersonal nature. Understandably, individuals who love working with people, specifically children, may find a perfect match in teaching (Ayers, 2010; Hansen, 1995; Lortie, 1975). Ayers (2010) argued that teaching is a human activity that is "relational and interactive… multidirectional" (p. 29). Since each student has different hopes, interests, needs, and experiences, each student-teacher encounter is unique. Some have maintained that good teaching is a matter of love – deeply caring for and being committed to one's students (Ayers, 2010).

Additionally, Lortie's (1975) sociological research on teaching as an occupation revealed that service is another appeal to teaching. Individuals choosing teaching feel that they are involved in service of a certain moral worth (we saw this recurring theme in the discussion on the history of teaching in America). The service theme has roots in both religious and secular aspects of American culture. Teaching has been associated with an expression of one's religious faith. In secular terms, it has been viewed as a service alongside other service-oriented vocations

(Hansen, 1995). Ayers (2010) argued that some choose teaching with the hope of changing the world.

The service attractor, Lortie (1975) posited, was more likely to appeal to those individuals who approve of the prevailing system of schooling, which relates to his third finding – the theme of continuation. Some choose teaching because they enjoyed school as a student and want to continue working in schools through adulthood. Those who choose teaching for this reason, Lortie (1975) argued, would be less likely to change and more prone to adopt practices from their apprenticeship of observation (i.e., the teacher practices one observes while a student). This theme hints at Lortie's (1975) conclusion that teaching tends to be a conservative profession.

Referred to less frequently than the interpersonal, service, and continuation themes, was the material allure of teaching (i.e., money, prestige, and employment security) (Lortie, 1975). Interestingly, Lortie (1975) found that teachers were hesitant to talk about the material benefits of the job. He hypothesized that perhaps teachers downplayed the material benefits due to normative pressures related to teaching as a service. Teachers are supposed to be dedicated to the job, induced not by prestige and money (Lortie, 1975).

Finally, teachers also noted the time compatibility of teaching as an attractor to the profession. Most Americans work more days during the year than teachers, even though the length of the school year has increased since colonial schooling. This aspect of teachers' work has been the source of much criticism, as people have criticized teachers for having "easy jobs" (Lortie, 1975). Similar to teachers' responses to the material benefits of the job, teachers were hesitant to emphasize time compatibility as their top reason for choosing to teach. However, they were less hesitant to project this reasoning onto others in the profession.

Molding a teacher: Socialization and learning the ropes. Teachers' identities are not only influenced by the path they take to teaching, but are also impacted by their socialization through formal schooling and personal experience on the job (George et al., 2003). Their apprenticeship of observation, college training, and practice teaching constitute their formal preservice training. Unlike other professions, individuals choosing teaching as a profession have a unique opportunity to observe those already in the profession during their years in K-12 schooling (Lortie, 1975). This is referred to as a teacher's apprenticeship of observation and affords individuals an acquaintance with the job's tasks and identification with those in the occupation. It is important to note, however, that this "apprenticeship" is experienced from a

student's narrow vantage point, resting largely on the student's imagination about the teacher's work life. In other words, the student only sees a teacher's on-stage performance and lacks the insight of the behind-the-scenes nature of the job (Goffman, 1959).

A teacher's socialization continues through formal training throughout college. While the nature of teachers' undergraduate training varies, their schooling includes both general and specialized coursework (Lortie, 1975). Noting the amount of time spent on pedagogical training, Lortie (1975) argued that teaching, compared to other "established professions" (e.g., medicine, law, engineering), consists of far less special schooling. Furthermore, he contended, "Special schooling for teachers is neither intellectually nor organizationally as complex as that found in the established professions" (p. 58). His interviews with teachers revealed their perceptions on their specialized training. Though they acknowledged both the complexity and difficulty of their work, Lortie (1975) found that teachers also criticized the preparation they received, complaining about inadequate training in classroom management, technology, and teaching methods. Additionally, their practical courses in education were too impractical and utopian, and professors were too far removed from classroom life (Lortie, 1975).

Concluding preservice teachers' socialization through formal training is their student teaching experience. Lortie (1975) found that most teachers ranked student teaching above college courses in terms of usefulness. Perhaps this is not surprising since student teaching more closely reflects the realities of the job than do college courses. Additionally, Lortie (1975) noted that student teaching gives preservice teachers a sense of movement toward the goal of teaching. Practice teaching provides the future educator with reassurances of effective practices. The impacts of student teaching, Lortie (1975) cautioned, should not be exaggerated due to the relatively short duration of the apprenticeship combined with the limited view of working with one supervising teacher.

Noting the transition from college graduate to beginning teacher, Lortie (1975) referred to the induction stage of teaching as a sink-or-swim approach. Only a few months after concluding their student teaching, first-year teachers assume the full responsibility of teaching. Unlike those professions that gradually increase workers' responsibilities over time, new teachers perform the same tasks as veteran teachers. Exacerbating the anxiety inherent to starting a new job, the physical structure of schools, what Lortie (1975) referred to as the "cellular organization," isolates teachers from one another, constraining their interactions (p. 72).

Given the individualistic nature of teaching, the first months of teaching tend to be a private ordeal (Lortie, 1975).

Although principals often spend more time supervising beginning teachers than with those having more experience, the teachers in Lortie's (1975) study cited informal exchange as having a greater influence on their learning to teach. When asked how they learned to teach, teachers ranked the following in descending importance: experience; peers; courses in education; and in-service training, school officials, and professional reading. The influence of peers on their work amounted to adapting colleagues' tried and proven practices to align with the teacher's way of doing things. Accordingly, Lortie (1975) found that the individual teacher acts as a gatekeeper, screening which ideas will be implemented in his/her classroom practices. The individualistic nature of teaching led Lortie (1975) to conclude that "socialization into teaching is largely *self-socialization*; one's personal predispositions are not only relevant, but in fact, stand at the core of becoming a teacher" (p. 79). One is able to draw a parallel between Lortie's (1975) conclusion and Palmer's (1998) argument that individuals teach who they are.

The daily grind: Life in classrooms. Missing from Lortie's (1975) discussion of schoolteachers is an examination of the daily rituals of classroom life, where the teacher spends the majority of his/her time at work. As mentioned previously, teachers' experiences and work contexts contribute to their sense of identity (Day & Hadfield as cited in Day et al., 2005; Liu & Xu, 2011). To provide insight into this part of a teacher's identity, I first consult Philip Jackson's (1968/1990) *Life in Classrooms*, wherein he detailed his attempt to understand students in their natural habitat where they are first introduced to institutional life, the elementary school. Although teachers' lives did not serve as his sole focus, Jackson's (1968/1990) findings illuminate aspects of elementary teachers' daily life that many observing in schools might take for granted. During his time as a participant observer, he identified three characteristics of schools with which students and teachers must deal: crowds, praise (i.e., evaluation), and power. In addition to Jackson's (1968/1990) findings, this section will discuss two other characteristics of teachers' work lives: teachers' roles and responsibilities (Rousmaniere, 1997) and the ubiquitous nature of uncertainties (Hansen, 1995; Lortie, 1975).

Crowds, praise, and power. Jackson (1968/1990) found that classrooms are busy places impacting teachers and students in numerous ways. Since much of instruction involves talking, the teacher serves as a gatekeeper who manages the flow of dialogue. For example, students are

often encouraged to raise their hand to speak, silently communicating to the teacher that they have something to say. They are then expected to wait patiently for the teacher to call on them. In this way, one aspect of teachers' work is crowd control, literally managing bodies. Additionally, Jackson (1968/1990) referred to elementary teachers as supply sergeants who control the allocation of material resources, such as scissors and glue. Elementary teachers also control who receives special privileges (e.g., hall monitor, line leader, board eraser). The school's master schedule illustrates the crowded nature of schools, dictating when each class goes to lunch and specialty classes (i.e., music, computers, physical education, art, etc.). In the classroom, the teacher serves as a timekeeper, managing the duration and transitions between school subjects, restroom breaks, lunch, specials, and recess. Jackson (1968/1990) noted that "some kinds of controls are necessary if the school's goals are to be reached and social chaos averted" (p. 13).

A second important aspect of elementary classroom life, and thus contributing to teachers' identity is the use of evaluations. According to Jackson (1968/1990), "Tests are as indigenous to the school environment as are textbooks or pieces of chalk" (p. 19). In schools, the teacher administers most of the evaluations, while peer- and self-evaluations occur less frequently. Jackson (1968/1990) found that evaluations occur in both private and public, taking on both spoken and written forms. Teachers often pass judgment about student work in front of peers, for example, by commending a student's expression during a read aloud. Student work that serves as an exemplar or is chosen for display sends evaluative messages to the rest of the students about outstanding work. Teachers not only evaluate students' attainment of educational objectives, but they also evaluate students' character traits, as illustrated through teachers' reactions to student disruptions or noncompliance (Jackson, 1968/1990).

Jackson's (1968/1990) third finding related to classroom life is the unequal distribution of power in classrooms between the teacher and students. Children first learn to comply with the wishes of their parents and later with their teachers. Additionally, Jackson (1968/1990) argued that classroom life is the first time when students learn to either comply with power wielded by a relative stranger or face the consequences. Teachers command students' attention through the physical arrangement of the classroom, through proximity to students, and through verbal cues. Jackson (1968/1990) concluded that the teacher serves as the student's first "boss" (p. 31).

Jackson's (1968/1990) study of elementary classroom life provides insights related to elementary teachers' identity. Due to the crowded nature of schools, teachers fill various managerial roles: gatekeeper of dialogue, supply sergeant, and timekeeper. Evaluation also plays a large part of teachers work through formative and summative, verbal and written mediums. Finally, Jackson's (1968/1990) findings elucidate the power dynamic present in teachers' work with students.

Responsibilities of the job. As previously mentioned in the earlier section on the historical evolution of the teaching profession, the 1920s witnessed the changing role of teachers from purveyor of information to catering to the needs of the whole child. Some of the aims of the social efficiency movement persist almost a century later, undoubtedly contributing to teachers' sense of identity. Teachers are still expected to wear multiple hats, for example, serving as students' counselor, nurse, and social worker. They are expected to foster relationships with students, parents, and colleagues (Lortie, 1975), while also providing evaluative marks on students' work. Teachers must be good communicators: instructing students, collaborating with colleagues, and keeping parents informed while maintaining rapport.

Arguably one of the main responsibilities the teacher faces each day is creating and teaching the curriculum. In doing so, s/he seeks to answer the perennial curriculum question: "What knowledge is of most worth?" (Lortie, 1975). Regardless of one's philosophy of education (e.g., essentialist, progressive, social reconstructionist, etc.), the teacher is in a position to answer that question (Schubert, 1986). While external forces may exert control over curriculum decision-making through mandates requiring the adherence to certain curriculum guides and policies and the use of district-adopted textbooks, Schubert (1986) argued that teachers "go into classrooms daily, close the door, and teach as they see fit" (p. 157). In answering the abovementioned question, the curriculum both reflects and directly influences a teacher's identity.

The ubiquitous nature of uncertainty. In the midst of the profession's various roles and expectations, teaching is marked by a substantial amount of uncertainty (Hansen, 1995; Lortie, 1975). Lortie (1975) found that teachers have a difficult time rating their performance due to questions about aims and assessment and feelings of inadequacy, self-blame, failure, and despair. They question the amount of impact that they are responsible for versus that which students and past teachers are responsible for. Due to the isolation of their work, teachers must evaluate their

own work, which results in a lack of authoritative reassurance (Lortie, 1975). Consequently, the ambiguities of teachers' work must impact the evaluative component of one's self-understanding: their self-esteem (Kelchtermans, 2005).

Rewards and purpose: Teachers' perspectives on their work. Given the nature of teachers' work, how do they derive satisfaction and what gives them a sense of purpose? Kelchtermans (2005) posited that teachers' self-esteem, as an element of teachers' identity, involves teachers' self-evaluation of their work. Drawing on Lortie's (1975) findings related to teachers' rewards and purpose, this section addresses the self-esteem aspect of teacher identity. Three types of occupational rewards will be discussed in relation to teaching: extrinsic, ancillary, and psychic. The latter of which is related to teachers' sense of purpose.

Extrinsic, ancillary, and psychic rewards. Extrinsic rewards are related to one's earnings in terms of income, prestige, and power. Lortie (1975) argued that the structure of teaching as an un-staged career constrains an emphasis on extrinsic rewards. A staged career is one in which the beginning employee may start out earning a relatively low wage but is presented with opportunities to move into higher earning positions. Teaching, conversely, presents individuals with steady but little income growth over one's career. Lortie (1975) contended that the lack of stages in teaching impacts the career in two ways. First, it promotes a present rather than future orientation toward the work because longevity yields little reward. Second, the un-staged reward structure does not incentivize above-average work levels. Lortie (1975) concluded that the culture of teaching, its traditions, "make people who seek money, prestige, or power somewhat suspect…The service ideal has extolled the virtue of giving more than one receives; the model teacher has been 'dedicated'" (p. 102).

Ancillary rewards are often the taken-for-granted aspects of the job since all other colleagues experience them. These rewards are objective and subjective in nature, perceived as rewards by some but not by all. For example, the work schedule of teaching might be an ancillary reward for parents who wish to spend summers and holiday vacations with their families. These rewards tend to be stable over time and not specified in contracts (Lortie, 1975).

Finally, Lortie (1975) found that psychic rewards matter more than extrinsic and ancillary rewards to teachers. Psychic rewards are "subjective valuations made in the course of work engagement" and vary between persons (Lortie, 1975, p. 101). Teachers reported satisfaction in their work when desirable results with students are reached. Moreover, teachers feel encouraged

when positive things occur in their classrooms. Specifically, teachers reported high satisfaction levels when they feel that they have "reached" their students – that their students are learning (Lortie, 1975, p. 106).

Teachers' level of psychic reward is closely linked to their sense of purpose and achievement (i.e., the sense of accomplishing something) (Lortie, 1975). One might say teachers' psychic reward levels are positively correlated with their perception of attainable goals. While curriculum goals rated highly with the teachers questioned in Lortie's (1975) study, teachers identified other goals of importance to them: the moral dimension of teaching, the responsibility to instill in students a love of learning, and the necessity to reach *all* students. Teachers derive personal satisfaction, and increased self-esteem, from meeting both instructional and relational outcomes. Similarly, teachers respect colleagues for both enhancing students' learning outcomes and winning students' affection and respect.

Teaching as a moral endeavor. Lortie (1975) contended that the emphasis by teachers on the moral purposes of teaching rests on an assumption that teachers should "supplement the moral influence of the family" because "they see school as doing the work the family has failed to do" (p. 113). According to Hansen (1995), the relationship between a teacher and his/her students reveals the moral impact of teachers on students. The student-teacher relationship sends messages about how to interact with other people. In other words, teaching has been equated with a moral enterprise because it is a social enterprise (Thomas, 1990). Likewise, teachers make decisions daily that rely on their moral judgment and strength, drawing on the core of their character (Hansen, 1995). Parents entrust their children to schools and teachers, and teachers are obliged to care for students and uphold certain responsibilities (Thomas, 1990). Teaching involves more than educating the intellect. Rather, teachers engage students' attitudes, concentration, imagination, effort, and dispositions.

Ethos of the job. Considering his findings related to teachers' coming to the job, socialization, and reward systems, Lortie (1975) claimed that three outlooks lie at the core of the teaching profession: conservatism, individualism, and presentism. These, he argued, constrained teachers' willingness to change (Hargreaves, 2010). Thus, teachers' identity is marked by two conservative tendencies: teachers rely on personal convictions to guide their decisions, and the outcomes that teachers seek are less than universalistic (Lortie, 1975). Due to the uncertainties inherent to their work, teachers may experience anxiety that causes them to

cling to the familiar. Accordingly, teachers desired fewer interruptions during their day and more support, exhibiting a preference for doing the same things that they have always done (Hargreaves, 2010).

Second, teaching is marked by substantial individualism (Lortie, 1975). Lortie (1975) contributed this finding to numerous aspects of teachers' work. Since the rewards teachers deem most important are based on ambiguous criteria for achievement, teachers evaluate, for themselves, their own level of effectiveness. The lack of a standard of practice or technical culture combined with the sink-or-swim nature of the job means that teachers are left to cope alone. The physical setup of the school isolates teachers from their colleagues, restricting collegial interactions (Hargreaves, 2010).

Additionally, Lortie (1975) found that teaching is more of a present-oriented rather than forward-looking career. Due to the uncertainties of the job, teachers tend to focus on the present, relying on the unpredictable nature of psychic rewards. Exacerbating the presentism of teaching, Lortie (1975) claimed, is the un-staged nature of the career. As mentioned previously, beginning teachers are expected to uphold the same responsibilities as veteran teachers. There is little incentive to pursue long-term goals since one's career trajectory in teaching remains stable over time, and one's psychic rewards depend on the students in one's care.

In summary, Lortie (1975) argued that these three characteristics of the teaching profession made education resistant to change. Hargreaves (2010) explicated Lortie's theory through the use of an equation: If you add presentism and individualism, then you get conservatism. Since Lortie's (1975) sociological study on teaching as an occupation, scholars have assessed the reliability of Lortie's findings during different eras of school reform. In the early 1990s, researchers found that increased standardization during the 1980s augmented the amount of conservatism, individualism, and presentism in schools. Other studies revealed that with increased standardization, teachers felt a loss of autonomy and therefore experienced a decrease in their psychic rewards (Hargreaves, 2010). Hargreaves (2010) claimed that the data-driven decision-making of the current policy climate in education has resulted in a new conservatism, wherein teachers collaborate more (less individualism), but interactions are technical and uncritical. Whereas Lortie's (2010) conservatism related to perpetuating traditional practice, conservatism under the push for data-driven decision-making has to do with ends and means:

> The means hurry interaction, and focus around data-driven improvements and just-in-time interventions to accelerate progress in narrowly defined basics of literacy and numeracy. The ends are concerned with improved achievement scores in narrowly conceived areas of curriculum […] This is conservatism of ends by narrowing and exclusion, reinforced by a conservatism (and presentism) of hurried and unreflective means that inhibit professional engagement with [the] deeper and wider questions of teaching and learning. (Hargreaves, 2010, pp. 150-151)

Hargreaves' (2010) findings have numerous implications for the impacts of policy on teachers' identities.

Teacher identity and accountability reform. The preceding sections explicated the contributions of history and teachers' experiences to their sense of identity. This section explores the third dimension, the political environment, focusing on the current accountability policies that were summarized in chapter one. Given the current policy environment in education, how do current reforms alter teachers' sense of identity? This section will provide a review of some of the scholarship that has examined and or touched on teachers' identity in the context of accountability reforms. Based on a review of the literature, two overarching themes were identified and will organize the subsequent discussions in this section: 1) from responsible professional to performative technician; and 2) a humanistic profession in a dehumanizing era.

From autonomous professional to performative technician. Day (2002) and others have examined the empirical impacts of recent reforms on teachers' identities. Drawing upon findings from two longitudinal studies that examined the impact of policy on teachers' work, Day (2002) identified specific ways that teachers' sense of professionalism is altered. The first study, a cross cultural study conducted in England, France, and Denmark (McNess, Broadfood, & Osborn, 2003), illuminated ways that because of the emotional nature of teachers' work, teachers are vulnerable to policy changes which "reduce opportunities for them to exercise creativity and develop caring relationships with their pupils" (Day, 2002, p. 686). Moreover, these researchers found that:

> The role of teachers as knowledge constructors has been eroded, […] autonomy in classroom decision making has been constrained, […] their roles have become more instrumental, and […] their worth is judged principally on their success in complying to central agendas. (Day, 2002, p. 687)

In summary, this longitudinal study revealed ways that three components of teachers' professional identity – knowledge, autonomy, and responsibility – are impacted by accountability reforms (Day, 2002). Despite its international setting, Day's (2002) research is relevant to the American accountability reforms in education.

Day (2002) also discussed the findings from a four-year study, the VITAE project, that surveyed 1,400 teachers on their work, lives, and effects on students. Data analysis centered on the impact of reforms on teachers' motivation and commitment, beliefs and values, and efficacy and job satisfaction. This study's findings, echoing that of the first study examined by Day (2002), revealed ways that increased measures of public accountability have undermined teachers' professionalism. Interestingly, this examination brought to light two different types of professional identity in the reform landscape: The first includes responsibility for the care of the cognitive, affective, and social aspects of students' education; and the second refers to teachers whose primary purpose is to train students to pass tests (Day, 2002). This distinction between teacher identities reveals an evolution of the teacher's professional identity toward an instrumental and technical identity. Sachs referred to this type of professional identity as entrepreneurial, describing those teachers who are "individualistic, competitive, controlling and regulative, [and] externally defined and standards-led" (as cited in Day, 2002, p. 681).

A humanistic profession in a dehumanizing reform era. Overlapping with the previous section that outlined some of the literature around teachers' changing identities from professionals to technicians (some might go so far as to say "automatons"), scholars such as Kelchtermans (2005) and Lasky (2005) have also investigated the ways that recent reform efforts have impacted the emotional, vulnerable, and relational aspects of teacher identity.

Teacher emotions. Interested in teachers' emotions in educational reforms, Kelchtermans (2005) theorized that reform work is emotional for teachers due to their beliefs about good teaching as part of their self-understanding, or dynamic view of identity, as a teacher. Kelchtermans' (2005) conceptualization of self-understanding allows one to see how reform work can have emotional ramifications for teachers. One's *self-esteem*, evaluation of his/her job performance, is based on the balance between *self-image* ("what am I doing?") and *task perception* ("what ought I be doing?"). Considering the composition of a teacher's self-esteem, it makes sense that teachers will experience a range of emotions (i.e., guilt, anxiety, doubt, shame) when reforms demand that they adopt a new way of doing things (self-image) that is

inconsistent with their deeply held beliefs about good teaching (task perception) (Kelchtermans, 2005; Lasky, 2005).

Reforms have had other emotional impacts on teachers, as explicated in Lasky's (2005) study of teacher vulnerability during reform. Due to the high-stakes nature of the exams used in a teacher's school to determine high school graduation eligibility, one teacher reported the emotional difficulty she experienced when reporting to a student that the student would not be graduating because of an inadequate test score. Her emotions are evident in her retelling of this scenario to the interviewer:

> […] When I'm sitting telling some student, "you flunked the test by 4 points." And I know this girl, she's a wonderful kid. Tears are streaming down her face. And I'm thinking I'll never forget this. I'll never forget telling this girl she had to go through this (expletive) humiliation […]. (Lasky, 2005, p. 912)

The high-stakes nature of accountability reforms has numerous emotional ramifications for teachers as well as for students.

Teacher vulnerability. Lasky (2005) extended the conversation on the impact of accountability reform on teachers' emotions by examining teachers' professional vulnerability. Framed through a sociocultural theoretical lens and situated in one urban school in Ontario, Canada, Lasky (2005) conducted surveys and interviews to understand four secondary teachers' experiences of professional vulnerability and agency in the context of externally mandated reforms. Lasky (2005) defined vulnerability as:

> A multidimensional, multifaceted emotional experience that individuals feel in an array of contexts. […] It can be an experience of openness and trust, which is necessary for love, experiencing compassion, learning, and relationship building. […] In short, a person feels safe in his or her environment to take the risk of losing face and experiencing loss or pain. (p. 901)

Kelchtermans (2005) viewed this type of vulnerability as necessary for fostering teachable moments between teachers and students.

Lasky (2005) also noted how feelings of vulnerability can arise due to "powerlessness, betrayal, or defenselessness in situations of high anxiety or fear" (p. 901). This type of vulnerability often causes teachers to withdraw, which inhibits learning, trust building, and collaboration. Feelings of fear, anger, and defensiveness associated with feeling vulnerable in

this sense may result in a lack of risk taking or innovation (Lasky, 2005). Based on his analysis of teachers' career stories, Kelchtermans (2005) concluded, " Vulnerability is always [a] feeling that one's professional identity and moral integrity, as part of being 'a proper teacher,' are questioned" (p. 997).

Narratives from the four secondary teachers that Lasky (2005) interviewed revealed teachers' thoughts about and experiences of being vulnerable with their students. Teachers believed that being open with students benefited student learning and socio-emotional development. One teacher discussed how teachers become vulnerable when taking risks in the classroom to try something new. With more experience, one teacher expressed an increased comfort with vulnerability. In these instances and atmospheres of openness in the classroom, teachers are able to take advantage of teaching moments that extend student learning.

When analyzing the interview data, Lasky (2005) found that accountability reforms caused these teachers to experience "increased guilt, frustration, and inefficacious vulnerability because they saw themselves being less effective as teachers" (p. 911). These feelings of inefficacious vulnerability were due to work intensification and feelings of de-professionalization. One teacher, describing the reform context, acknowledged the extent to which teachers have always been scrutinized by the public, but pointed out that now, under current reforms, the government has systematically and constantly surveilled teacher work. This scrutiny has resulted in a "blurring of personal and professional vulnerability," since teachers' personal identities are enmeshed with their professional identities, which are under attack (Lasky, 2005, p. 910). While teachers tried to maintain an open vulnerability with their students, they also experienced inefficacious kinds of vulnerability as reforms assaulted teachers' sense of self-worth.

Teacher relations. Teaching, as a humanistic profession, necessitates vulnerability. Without vulnerability, Lasky (2005) argued, the interpersonal relationships within the classroom are lost. A teacher's ability to be vulnerable with her/his students determines whether or not s/he is able to foster relationships with her/his students. For the teachers in Lasky's (2005) study on teacher vulnerability in the context of reform, one of the dimensions of professionalism identified by all four of the interviewed teachers was the relationship built with students:

> The willingness to blur the boundaries between the personal and professional with their students was a core component of their teacher identity, reflecting their fundamental

> beliefs about how to teach students effectively by building rapport, being human, and by grasping hold of unplanned teachable moments. (Lasky, 2005, p. 908)

These teachers described why building rapport with students was important, how they built relationships with students, and the impacts of accountability reforms on their relationships.

For these teachers, trusting relationships with their students were a prerequisite for learning (Lasky, 2005). Connecting with students facilitated a greater level of student engagement and interest in the subject being taught. The four teachers used varying approaches to facilitate relationships with their students, and one noted the amount of time required to develop relationships with students. Some employed humor while others made positive phone calls home at the beginning of the semester. One teacher noted the extensive amount of feedback she provided on students' work. They all agreed that sharing their personal life with their students, being available outside of class to listen and sometimes give advice fostered respectful student-teacher relationships (Lasky, 2005).

Kelchtermans (2005) noted, "accountability procedures either neglect or instrumentalize (and thus reduce) the interpersonal dimension in teaching" (p. 999). Lasky's (2005) conversations with four teachers revealed the impacts on relationships as experienced by teachers. Due to the requirements and conditions under the standards-based reform and high-stakes accountability, teachers expressed having little time to build relationships with students. They felt pressured to focus on the curriculum, which "constrained their ability to develop trusting relationships with students" (Lasky, 2005, p. 911).

Accountability and identity: Implications. Although not exhaustive by any means, the few researchers who have examined teacher identity within the current accountably era have started the conversation from which further research should be conducted. My review of their findings revealed two shifts in teacher identity. First, teachers in the current accountability climate are no longer treated as professionals, those who are trusted to make decisions in the best interest of their students, and are, instead, treated as performative technicians. Moreover, findings revealed that teachers' creativity, knowledge, and autonomy have been greatly constrained. Second, accountability reforms have resulted in the dehumanization of the teaching profession. Teachers have experienced a range of emotions due to the misalignment of their beliefs about teaching and the expectations inherent to accountability reform mandates. For example, having to share students' inadequate test scores with them has taken an emotional toll

on teachers. Due to work intensification, teachers have also experienced inefficacious vulnerability with their students, resulting in instrumentalized or neglected student-teacher relationships.

Understanding teachers' identity in the context of accountability reforms is an often-overlooked discussion when reviewing the literature on the impacts of high-stakes policies on teachers. This gap in the research is significant considering the moral impact teachers have on their students. As Hansen (1995) reminded us:

> For better or for worse, every teacher has a distinct and varying influence on students' orientations toward learning, toward knowledge, toward other people. Moreover, those differences have to do with lot more than overt dissimilarities in personality and teaching style. They have to do with the ethos of the person, his or her characteristic conduct when in the presences of students, his or her reputation, expectations, hopes, fears, worries. (p. 11)

Hansen's (1995) words reiterate Palmer's (1998) sentiment in this chapter's epigraph, that teachers project the condition of their soul onto their students. Through the use of *currere*, the present study sought to serve as a mirror for five teachers to enhance their sense of self. In doing so, we – the readers – gain perspective through this window into teachers' oft-ignored identities within the current policy climate in education.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

Methodology

Due to the nature of the present study's research question, *How do veteran elementary school teachers narrate what it means to be a teacher in the current reform era*, this study is situated within an interpretivist discourse of research in general, and Deweyan pragmatism in particular (Benton & Craib, 2010; Biesta & Burbules, 2003). Interpretivists seek to "*understand how others make meaning of their world with a further assumption that people construct their own worlds in some way*" (Quantz, 2014a p. 1, emphasis in original). Interpretivism furthered the present inquiry by prioritizing teachers' narratives about the meaning of teaching to them. Conversely, situating the research question within other discourses (i.e., standard, critical, and post-critical (Quantz, 2014b)) would have altered the direction and wording of the question.

Within interpretivism, two conceptualizations of knowledge exist: pragmatism and phenomenology (Quantz, 2014a), the latter of which was rejected for the present study due to phenomenology's "bracketing out" of subjective perceptions in favor of pragmatism's intersubjective view of knowledge (Quantz, 2014a). Pragmatism originated in the United States during the second half of the 19th century (Benton & Craib, 2011) and is often viewed as the first American philosophical movement based on the writings of three individuals: Charles Pierce, William James, and John Dewey (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). Due to the influence of modern science, pragmatism has been associated with an experimentalist theory (Biesta & Burbles, 2003).

Ontology. The object of study was the narrative each veteran elementary teacher employed when discussing his/her conceptions of teaching in an accountability reform context. Considering the varying notions of "narrative" in qualitative research, it is necessary to clarify how I used narrative in the research. In literary writing, the narrative genre includes a plot, characters, and a theme or multiple themes. Stories in this genre are told in a sequential order (Quantz & Talbert, 2015). In qualitative research, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) defined narrative as "the study of how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future" (p. 24).

Deweyan pragmatism allows the researcher to consider how narratives occur within the transaction between mind and matter (i.e., the environment), referred to as transactional realism (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). For Dewey, knowledge is constructed through experience; it is

active and dynamic. How people come to make meaning of things depends on their experiences with those things, or the place at which they enter the transaction with their environment.[4] Biesta and Burbules (2003) clarified this point by providing the example of the horse and the varying experiences of a paleontologist, jockey, zoologist, and horse trader with horses. Each account of the horse is no less real than the other; rather, each is different based on the transaction between the individual and the horse. Given this perspective, it follows then that each teacher's narrative is no less accurate than that of other teachers. The difference is based on the transaction.

Dewey's (1938/1997) theory of experience has certain implications for narrative inquiry (Kim, 2016). Since experience is the starting point for narrative (Kim, 2016), then an understanding of experience is necessary for understanding narrative. For Dewey, experience consists of both an active and a passive element. Kim (2016) explained the combination of these two elements through an illustration of a child touching a flame (active element) and getting burned (suffering the consequence of the action, the passive element). Experience, then, is a necessary component for education, and this connection is elucidated in Dewey's (1916/1997) definition of education as the "reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience" (p. 76).

Kim (2016) also noted how Dewey's (1938/1997) *continuity of experience* or "experience continuum" and *interaction of experience* have specific implications for narrative inquiry. The continuity of experience refers to an understanding that all experiences both build upon past experiences and modify future experiences. Understanding this theory of experience when conducting narrative inquiry allowed me to view my "participant's experience in continuity of the past, present, and the future, not in a linear but circular or even rhizomatic way" (Kim, 2016, p. 71). Dewey's experience continuum aligns nicely with the four moments of *currere*. Dewey's *interaction of experience* is based on the idea that individuals are constantly involved in situations where they are engaged in transactions with objects and/or other people (Kim, 2016). Therefore, as a narrative inquirer, bearing in mind Dewey's interaction of experience, I was

[4] Dewey and Bentley (1949) stressed the distinction between *transaction* and *interaction*. For them, transaction implies a shared process for knowings and the known. Conversely, interaction denotes two separate components involved in a common process.

mindful of the participants' transactions with their environment, including with myself, the researcher.

One might conclude, as others have done, that Deweyan pragmatism is relativistic – anything goes and everyone has his/her own truth. However, this is where Dewey's view on the intersubjectivity of knowledge is relevant. For Dewey, communication is the result of individuals working together to achieve a common goal by adjusting individual actions to create a coordinated response (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). The difference between human and non-human experiences (i.e., "transactions of living organisms and their environment") is that the former's experiences are "mediated by culture"[5] (Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 29). Language, the most important product of culture, refers to all things that have meaning (i.e., rituals, ceremonies, spoken and written words, pieces of art, monuments, etc.). Meaning is derived from the role that objects play in human action. Communication, as a process of coordinated action, relies on the ability of individual actors to anticipate each other's actions by recognizing symbols for what is yet to come (Biesta & Burbules, 2003).

Therefore, when making meaning of veteran elementary teacher narratives, a Deweyan pragmatic lens allowed me to reject the objective/subjective dualism, which views knowledge as "completely of the world" or "completely of the mind" (Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 11). Instead, I derived meaning from the transactions between teachers and between teachers with their environments.

Epistemology. Overlapping with the preceding section's discussion on the objects of study, this section will briefly outline how Deweyan pragmatism affected the way knowledge claims are justified within this work. For Dewey, mind and matter, or thought and materiality, are not separate. Therefore, if one defines epistemology as knowledge about an external, knowable reality, then Deweyan pragmatism can be viewed as an anti-epistemology (Biesta & Burbules, 2003; Dewey & Bentley, 1949), rejecting a "spectator theory of knowledge" (Kadlec, 2007, p. 17). However, this does not mean that Dewey rejects conversations about knowing and knowns.

Dewey's unification of mind and matter is referred to as praxis (Quantz, 2014a). Praxis

[5] Biesta and Burbules (2003) noted that Dewey defined culture as "everything that is the product of human action and interaction" (p. 29).

denotes "the process in which the individual's own meaning making arises as the result of a 'career' which includes the individual's past, present, and future experiences" (Quantz, 2014a, p. 8). Knowledge in this sense is in process, dynamic, ever changing – what some have referred to as anti-foundationalism (Kadlec, 2007). Praxis is exemplified in Dewey's philosophy of experience.[6] This dynamic view of knowledge is portrayed in Dewey's (1938/1997) experiential continuum: "every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects, whether we wish it or not, the quality of subsequent experiences" (p. 35).

Another unique characteristic of Dewey's pragmatic view of knowledge is his argument that knowledge is active. Knowledge is located neither external nor internal to a person, but is rather located in action (Quantz, 2014a). "All knowledge is active: through experiment and communication, we come to order our experiences in ways that allow us to apprehend the consequences of propositions in action" (Kadlec, 2007, p. 19). Therefore, as a pragmatic researcher, I combined one-on-one interviews with other mediums of data collection (i.e., classroom observations and electronic communication through e-mail).

The basis of meaning for Deweyan pragmatism is not experience, but is what Dewey referred to as *habit*. Habits, rather than referring to automatic reflexes, are instead "patterns of possible action" developed "through constant transactions with [one's] environment, through [one's] continuous attempts to maintain a dynamic balance with [one's] environment" (Biesta & Burbles, 2003, p. 11). Additionally, Kadlec (2007) noted that habits are "acquisitions that require the use of reason and active preference" (p. 72). Through transactions with one's environment, one develops more specific habits and a more "differentiated" understanding of the world (Biesta & Burbles, 2003, p. 37). Specifically, this view of knowledge as active maintains that knowledge is concerned with relations – those between our actions (experiences) and their consequences (Biesta & Burbles, 2003). While action is necessary for knowledge, "knowledge is conscious only when reflection is introduced" (Biesta & Burbles, 2003, p. 51).

[6] Dewey (1938/1997) defined experience as a transaction between an individual and his/her environment (i.e., person(s) one is talking to, toys being played with, book being read, etc.) (pp. 43-44).

In the present study, *currere*, a theory discussed in chapter two and a method discussed in the following section, enabled research participants (i.e., veteran elementary school teachers) to reflect on their past and present experiences and the implications these experiences have for their future experiences, presenting them with opportunities to learn from their experience, or as Dewey would say, to formulate new habits. This reflection process illuminated their knowledge related to their experiences. Considering the abovementioned aspects of Deweyan pragmatism related to research, assertions made are not descriptions about a "knowable" world but are rather descriptions of the relationship between one's actions and their subsequent consequences (Biesta & Burbules, 2003).

Methods

Narrative inquiry. To illuminate veteran elementary school teachers' experiences, this study employed narrative research methods. However, it is important to recall the abovementioned object of study is also narrative. That is to say, in accordance with Connelly and Clandinin (1990), in this study, "narrative is both phenomenon and method. Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study" (p. 2).

Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) notion of narrative inquiry is based on the premise that education is "the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories" since they believe that humans, as "storytelling organisms," lead storied lives (p. 2). Narrative inquiry has important implications for educational work because "it brings theoretical ideas about the nature of human life as lived to bear on educational experience as lived" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 3). Narrative, moreover, provides a way to organize human experience (Kim, 2016).

Additionally, since "the very act of gaze on an Other by the anthropologist in the field [is] in a Foucaultian sense an exercise of power" (Erickson, 2006, p. 238), narrative inquiry somewhat levels the power imbalance inherent to research by positioning the participant as a co-researcher. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) noted that research has tended to silence practitioners, but narrative may empower them to tell their stories. Likewise, narrative brings the "lived experiences of teachers" to the "forefront as a way to reshape the views on education" (Kim, 2016, p. 19).

"As a method, [narrative] begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals" (Creswell, 2013, p. 70). Narrative research provides unique insights when attempting to uncover stories of individuals' experiences (Creswell, 2013), by providing a frame through which individuals make sense of their lives (Leavy, 2008). "The narrative mode of thinking […] uses stories to understand […] the changes and challenges of life events, and the differences and complexity of people's action" (Kim, 2016, p. 11). Narrative methods enable the researcher to "collaboratively access participants' life experiences and engage in a process [that reveals] multidimensional meanings and [presents] an authentic and compelling rendering of the data" (Leavy, 2008, p. 27). Because narrative inquiry "incorporates the feelings, goals, perceptions, and values of the people whom we want to understand," it "leads to ambiguity and complexity" (Polkinghorne, as cited in Kim, 2016, p. 11). Through this process, human experiences come to be known, allowing "the portrayal of rich nuances of meaning in emplotted stories" (Polkinghorne, as cited in Kim, 2016, p. 11).

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) went so far as to say that narrative allows us to think of the whole by placing experience in the context of the past, present, and even the future. This process is complex since people are simultaneously living and telling their stories (Leavy, 2008): "A person is, at once, engaged in living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). Complicating the process even more, by engaging in narrative inquiry, researchers become part of the process, resulting in a "shared narrative construction and reconstruction through the inquiry" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 5). In an effort to reflect the complexities inherent to narrative inquiry, I engaged participants in Pinar's (1976) process of *currere*.

***Currere* as method.** As a method, *currere* focuses on individuals' self-reported educational experiences grounded in context, rather than quantifying behaviors to establish causality (Pinar et al., 1995). *Currere* treats the self and the existential experience as data sources (Pinar, 1976). As reviewed in greater detail in chapter two, *currere* involves four "steps or moments that are temporal and reflective" (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 520): revisiting past experiences ("the regressive"), anticipating the future ("the progressive"), understanding the past and the future together ("the analytic"), and mobilizing for action based on this understanding ("the synthetical") (Pinar, 2012).

In the present study, the four stages of *currere* provided a guide for the exploration of teachers' narratives about teaching in the context of recent reforms. Influenced by Chehayl's (2007) use of *currere* in research with teachers, I adapted Pinar's (1976) method of *currere* to scaffold my participants' responses during interviews and to organize their narratives during write-up. When introducing *currere*, Pinar (1976) encouraged those utilizing his suggested method to experiment, stating, "Modifications are welcomed as you work. […] We must be utilitarians" (p. 55). Specifically, I guided teachers through the *currere* process during each of our four one-on-one interviews. For instance, the first interview began with a question that prompted the teachers to reflect on his/her regressive moment, with subsequent interviews following the same protocol for the other three *currere* moments. Rather than being an entirely individual endeavor, the resultant *currere* narratives were co-constructed. Inspired by Chehayl (2007), I generated a *currere* timeline to organize and restory teachers' narratives, and I shared this evolving timeline during the second through fourth interviews.

Since *currere* is rooted in phenomenology (Pinar et al., 1995) and the present study is based on pragmatic epistemological assumptions, it is necessary that I clarify how I viewed each moment of *currere* through a pragmatic lens. The chief difference between Pinar's phenomenological *currere* and *currere* as I used it is found in the regressive, progressive, and analytical stages. As noted in chapter two, during the regressive moment, one attempts to recall the past as it was experienced, isolated from the present's influence on our memories of the past. Pragmatic epistemology, specifically Deweyan pragmatism, maintains a unification of mind and matter, referred to as praxis. Accordingly, the regressive moment of *currere* involving praxis does not encourage one to isolate the present from the past, to get at the past as it was experienced. To the pragmatist, such a separation is impossible to achieve. Similarly, when one considers the progressive moment, s/he should not try to artificially separate one's continuum of experience from one's imagined future. Likewise, the analytical moment that involves a sort of phenomenological bracketing of both the past and the future to get at the present as it is does not align with pragmatic epistemology. Instead, I adapted this moment to guide teacher participants through the second part of Pinar's (1976) analytical stage: the consideration of the interrelation of one's past, present, and future.

In reference to the regressive moment, some may question the veracity of participants' memories about their past experiences. The issue of nostalgia was raised during the proposal

stage of this dissertation and therefore warrants a brief discussion. Could participants' memories not be conflated or hazy, especially considering the years of experience that I am asking my particular participants to recount? These concerns are understandable. For instance, one participant has to recall 27 years of teaching experiences plus those formative years prior to becoming a teacher. Rousmaniere (2000) dealt with such questions head on when writing about the place of memory in curriculum, and her thoughts provoke the reader to reconsider the intent of asking participants to reflect on their past:

> What we remember tells us as much about ourselves in the present as it does about ourselves in the past because memory works not as a snapshot of the past, but as an interpretive connection of past and present. So the issue about memory is not so much how accurately people remember their past, but "how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them." (Thomson, 1998, as cited in Rousmaniere, 2000, p. 90)

The attraction of memory, then, is that it helps one make sense of one's present.

A second question that surfaced during my dissertation proposal defense dealt with whether or not I would explain or share the *currere* process with my participants. Would I guide them through the process without sharing the language of *currere* with them, or would I explain Pinar's (1976; 2012) curriculum theory so that they could understand it and use it beyond my project? After talking with Chehayl (2007), I decided to utilize the language of *currere* in each of my interviews. I viewed it as a reflective tool with which I could leave them should they choose to use it after our time together. Prior to the first interview with each participant, I drafted and emailed an overview of *currere*, which I brought with me to each interview to serve as a reference when questions arose about each reflective moment. At the end of our fourth interview, after concluding their discussion about their synthetical moment, I asked each participant to share their thoughts about the *currere* process. I included these reflections in chapter 10.

By engaging participants in the process of *currere*, I hoped that individuals would develop a heightened sense of self as a teacher in the recent reform context. Through this process, perhaps their reflection and learning would move them toward self-transformation. When considering the whole of their experiences and self as a teacher in the synthetical moment,

I hoped that they would feel a sense of increased agency to take steps to align who they are with who they hope to be as a teacher.

In addition to guiding participants to reflect through each of the four *currere* moments, I have included my *currere* narrative beginning in chapter one and continued in chapter four. My purpose for its inclusion is to story myself into the dissertation, to explicate and take ownership of my positionality as a third-grade teacher turned doctoral student. My regressive moment influenced the genesis of this study and has been present throughout my project from the initial question formation to the final write up. Its inclusion serves as a way to interrogate my researcher subjectivity as well as the way both my narrative and those of my participants' overlap and are co-constructed.

Participants. Since "the intent in qualitative research is not to generalize the information […] but to elucidate the particular" (Creswell, 2013, p. 157), the sample size for the present study consisted of five teachers. Using convenience sampling (Creswell, 2013), I sought veteran elementary teachers: those who teach in grades kindergarten through sixth with 15 or more years of experience. I networked with professors at Miami University as well as current and former doctoral students to connect me with veteran elementary teachers who might be interested in participating in my study. Once I received a list of names, I contacted prospective participants via email and provided an IRB-approved recruitment letter (see Appendix A). After several contacts, I was left with seven possible participants. One stopped responding to my emails, and the other was no longer in a classroom and instead served in a new role as a teacher leader for her building.

I met face-to-face with each of the five remaining prospective participants in a one-on-one setting to provide detailed information about the study and to seek their consent (see Appendices C and D). This initial, unrecorded meeting provided an informal avenue for me to begin establishing rapport with my participants. During this conversation, I sought information about participants' years of experiences, grades taught, and teaching locations. I detailed the ethical considerations should they consent to participate in my study. We discussed our mutual expectations about interviews and classroom observations. We negotiated my role as a classroom observer: how I would be introduced, where I would sit in the room, whether I could walk around and engage with students, that I would be observing teacher behaviors and would not be noting individual student behaviors, etc. I answered any questions that participants had

about the research, and I provided them with an informed consent to read and sign. We concluded the meeting by scheduling interviews and classroom observations. All five of the teachers I met with agreed to participate in the study.

The five teacher-participants work in four different school districts in Ohio, all at public schools. Mattie Bell and Katie Sprunger teach at Potter Elementary[7] serving approximately 320 students in grades kindergarten through six: 64% of the students are white; 17% black; 12% multiracial; 5% Hispanic; and less than 1% Asian, Pacific Islander, or Indian/Alaskan Native. All of the students at Potter meet Ohio's designation of "economically disadvantaged."[8] Ms. Bell, who was in her early forties at the time of this research, teaches fifth and sixth graders at Potter. Ms. Sprunger, also in her early forties, teaches kindergarten at Potter. Steve Grayson, in his early fifties at the time of this research, teaches language arts at Uptown Intermediate, which serves approximately 375 students, grades four through six: 68% of students are white; 22% black; 7% multiracial; and less than 3% Asian, Pacific Islander, or Indian/Alaskan Native. Roughly 98% of Uptown students are labeled "economically disadvantaged," about 10% higher than the district's average and 54% higher than the state's average. Joanie Cunningham, also in her early fifties, teaches third grade at Happy Days Elementary, serving approximately 664 students, grades two through six: 72% of students are white; 8% Hispanic; 8% black; 6% Asian; 5% multiracial; and less than 1% Pacific Islander or Indian/Alaskan Native. Approximately one-fourth of students at Happy Days are labeled "economically disadvantaged," 5% above the district's average, and 20% lower than the state's average. Jada Shoals, in her mid-fifties, teaches fourth grade at Broadview Elementary, serving approximately 350 students, grades kindergarten through five: 86% of students are white; 6% black; 4% Hispanic; and less than 4% Asian, Pacific Islander, Indian/Alaskan Native, or multi-racial. Approximately half of

[7] Participant names, school buildings, and districts within this study go by participant-chosen pseudonyms.

[8] In Ohio, students are identified as "economically disadvantaged" if they are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches, live with a family member who is eligible, are recipients or whose guardians are recipients of public assistance, or whose parents/guardians have completed a Title I student income form and meet the specified guidelines (Ohio Department of Education [ODE], 2015).

Broadview students are identified as "economically disadvantaged," roughly 10% higher than the district's average, and 5% higher than the state's average. All five teachers self-identify as white, and four identify as female, reflecting a nationwide trend in teacher demographics. As recently as the 2011-2012 school year, 76% of public elementary and secondary teachers were female, and 81% of teachers were white (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2013). The five participants' teaching experience varies from 17 years to 27.

Data collection. Upon receiving approval to conduct research from Miami's Institutional Review Board and consent from building principals and participating teachers (see Appendices B and C), I spent time with the participants to gather their stories through interviews and classroom observations.[9] I scheduled classroom observations between interviews so that notes gathered during observations could serve as conversation starters during subsequent interviews.

Interviews. In narrative inquiry, it is imperative that the researcher listens to participants' stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Leavy (2008) reiterated the importance of listening in narrative work when describing what she identified as the biographical narrative interpretive method. This method is based on a practice of noninterruption, during which the researcher provides a "narrative-inducing" question and allows the participant to tell his/her story (Leavy, 2008). Following Leavy's (2008) recommendation, I conducted four rounds of interviews with each participating teacher, totaling 20 interviews. Over the course of each interview, I guided teachers through the four moments of *currere* (see Appendix E). Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. While I initially wanted to conduct a focus group interview with all five participants, due to time constraints and scheduling conflicts, I was unable to find a date and time during which all participants could meet together.

Classroom observations. In addition to interviews, I spent time in each teacher's classroom gathering data from observations. Over the course of four or five visits to each teacher's classroom, lasting between one and four hours, I took field notes of my observations, asking, "What is going on here?" while closely monitoring my research bias by asking, "Am I seeing what I hoped to see and nothing else?" (Glesne, 2011). Often, these observations provided talking points during interviews, surfacing more narratives of experience. Additionally,

[9] IRB approval was granted on July 24, 2015.

classroom observations provided me with opportunities to contextualize teachers' experiences (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006).

Data analysis. When analyzing data in narrative research, "the researcher extracts an emerging theme from the fullness of lived experiences presented in the data themselves and configures stories making a range of disconnected research elements coherent, so that the story can appeal to the reader's understanding and imagination" (Leavy, 2008, p. 28). This process, referred to as restorying, allows the researcher to reorganize the stories gathered through the data collection processes into a "framework that makes sense" (i.e., told in a chronological manner) (Creswell, 2013, p. 74). Through the narrative method, I analyzed, or restoried, the data through Pinar's (1976) four lenses of *currere*: the regressive, the progressive, the analytical, and the synthetical. During the restorying process, I reflexively interrogated how my own subjectivity influenced the way I "restoried" the teachers' narratives in order to prevent my story from becoming theirs (Creswell, 2013). At the beginning of the second, third, and fourth interviews, I asked participants to review the *currere* timeline I had drafted based on our previous interview(s). This exercise provided each participant with an ongoing opportunity to review my rendering of his or her narrative.

Due to the individual nature of *currere* (Pinar et al., 1995) I chose to treat each teacher's narrative as a separate chapter within this dissertation. Each narrative portrays an individual teacher's story of his/her lived experience and the sense he/she makes of that experience. My decision to treat each narrative individually aligns with the necessity of *currere* to the curriculum field – to recognize each individual's education and contribution (Pinar, 1974):

> It is not that the public world – curriculum, instruction, objectives – become unimportant; it is that to further comprehend their roles in the educational process we must take our eyes off of them for a time, and begin a lengthy, systematic search of our inner experience. (as cited in Pinar et al., 1995, p. 519)

At the conclusion of each narrative, I provide a brief interpretive discussion, wherein I situate aspects of each teacher's narrative contextually within the social milieu of his/her school district, connected to the other narratives within this dissertation, and/or within the relevant extant literature.

Credibility. To ensure credibility during the research process, I adhered to Eisner's (1998) three standards for qualitative inquiry: structural corroboration, consensual validity, and

referential adequacy. Structural corroboration involves the use of multiple types of data (i.e., triangulation) to support or refute an interpretation (Creswell, 2013). While seeking structural corroboration, one looks for recurrent behaviors or "typifications" (Eisner, 1998, p. 110). Not only is it important to use multiple types of data, but one should also consider disconfirming evidence. Second, I sought consensual validation through member checks (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011; Shaffir & Stebbins, 1991; Stake, 1995) by asking participants to review the *curreres* that I wrote. Participants were asked to "verify that [I] have reflected their perspectives; inform [me] of sections that, if published, could be problematic for either personal or political reasons; and help [me] develop new ideas and interpretations" (Glesne, 2011, p. 212). Since I knew that participants would not approach or assess my interpretation of their narrative through the same theoretical lens that I used (Lofland et al., 2006), I did not ask them to review my interpretive discussion that followed each of their narratives. Instead, I sought their feedback only on their *currere* timelines and written narratives. Finally, I endeavored to achieve referential adequacy by illuminating teacher narratives so as to enlarge understanding for both those in the education field and the education policy field (Eisner, 1998).

Trustworthiness, ethics, and power. Prior to beginning the data collection phase of this study, I sought approval from Miami University's IRB for conducting research on human subjects. This process included an outline of the ways that I intended to meet the following research criteria: providing participants with enough information to make an informed decision about participation, assuring participants that they could withdrawal at any time, eliminating all unnecessary risks, and ensuring that the benefits outweighed the risks (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011). I also provided research participants and building principals with an informed consent (Creswell, 2013).

I followed Shaffir and Stebbins' (1991) recommendations for maintaining relations and building trust with participants. One of the key ingredients to maintaining positive relations with participants is through the building of rapport. I worked to build rapport through handling personal and sensitive information with tact. Moreover, I treated participants as people, not as objects of study. For example, I was open to conversations about teachers' experiences outside of the proposed study's aims. We often began our interviews with informal conversations about their day at school, weekend plans, and the news. Second, I offered assistance as was desired by the participants during classroom observations. For instance, during one of my observations in

Joanie's classroom, I helped students work through problem-solving questions during a math tutorial and enrichment period. I also lived up to the bargains struck when gaining access to the field site: anonymity of responses, confidentiality, and little disruption to the learning environment (Shaffir & Stebbins, 1991).

During data collection, I followed Creswell's (2013) and Glesne's (2011) standards of ethical research. When conducting interviews with the participating teachers, I used an interview protocol guide to 1) state the purpose of the study, 2) discuss confidentiality and anonymity of responses, 3) note that participants can withdraw at any time, and 4) seek permission to record our conversation using a password-protected recording device. Additionally, I sought reciprocity during my time with participating teachers. According to Glesne (2011), reciprocity is "the exchange of favors and commitments, the building of a sense of mutual identification and feeling of community" (p. 177). One way of showing reciprocity between the researcher and the researched is through attentive listening, being grateful, and taking the participant's comments seriously (Glesne, 2011). To clarify, remuneration was not utilized in the present study. Instead, I sought human reciprocity, treating participants with respect. I tried to exemplify each of these characteristics during my semi-structured interviews with each teacher.

Furthermore, since I observed teachers in their classrooms during the school day, I tried to be sensitive to the environment in order to avoid disrupting the learning and instructional processes for both students and teachers. For example, to prevent interrupting teachers' instructional time, I posed questions during times when students were working on independent or partner practice.

Finally, I tried to be aware of and alleviate as much as possible the power imbalances that are inherent to research (Creswell, 2013; Eisner, 1998). Erickson (2006) commented on this power imbalance when he noted the "lack of awareness of the ways educational research tends to silence and misrepresent those who possess the least authority in schools – teachers, students, and parents" (p. 236). Therefore, rather than "studying down" those who have the least authority in schools, I chose to study alongside teachers. To do this, I tried to maintain a learner's stance by not spending an inordinate amount of time sharing my personal impressions and evaluations. I also worked to build rapport by listening to each participant as s/he shared her/his experiences, by being consistently present, and by being an unobtrusive observer in their classroom. I shared my analyses and writing with teacher participants and solicited their feedback.

Limitations. Interpretive discourses, as neither purely empirical nor normative, require researchers to consider the ways that their own biases alter the interpreted meaning of those being studied (Quantz, 2014a). Since knowledge occurs in interaction between people, eliminating all bias is impossible. To continuously confront my biases, I practiced reflexivity by adopting "processes that allow[ed] [me] to step outside [myself] and reflect on [my] actions and thinking" (Quantz, 2014a, p. 13). Reflexivity moves beyond a simple awareness of one's subjectivity and rather toward an interrogation of one's subjective I's (Peshkin, 1988). Throughout the research process, I documented and confronted my feelings and reactions through an informal "subjectivity audit" (Peshkin, 1988, p. 18). This practice enabled me to "consciously attend to the orientations that [shaped] what I see and what I make of what I see" (Peshkin, 1988, p. 21).

Chapter 4: Researcher Positionality through *Currere*

As a qualitative researcher, my values, ideologies, and experiences cannot be separated from my research projects (Creswell, 2013; Eisner, 1998). Accordingly, "all writing is 'positioned' and within a stance" (Creswell, 2013, p. 215). Reflexively interrogating my positionality as a researcher is necessary for understanding how my background and experiences shape my approach to and interpretations included in the present study (Eisner, 1998). My personal biography should be viewed as a tool: "It is not an interference, it is a necessity (Eisner, 1998, p. 193). Moreover, as an interpretive researcher (Quantz, 2014a) adopting a pragmatic lens, my knowledge claims result from my praxis, "the process in which the individual's own meaning making arises as the result of a 'career' which includes the individual's past, present, and future experiences" (p. 8). Dewey's (1938/1997) theory of the continuity of experience, that all experiences build upon past experiences and modify future experiences, impacts me as a researcher in that I "[enter] the research project with a history which both alters and is altered by the present experience in the field and which will alter and be altered by any future experiences" (Quantz, 2014a, p. 8). Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to reflexively explicate my positionality as a researcher through Pinar's (2012) *currere* to provide the reader with an understanding of my praxis.

Regressive Moment: The Prequel

I began chapter one with an excerpt from my regressive moment, detailing the influence of data-driven decision-making on my practice as an early-career teacher. However, my regressive moment begins long before I became a teacher and deserves attention here, in what I am referring to as the prequel to chapter one's regressive moment. As I asked my participants to do, this moment includes a reflection on my apprenticeship of observation, recruitment to teaching, and training (Lortie, 1975).

Growing up in rural Ohio, I attended two schools throughout my time in the K-12 setting. The first I attended until midway through my sophomore year of high school, with about 100 students per grade. I recall some fond moments from my elementary years that contributed to an overall positive attitude toward schooling and perhaps to my eventual decision to become a teacher. As Rousmaniere (2000) reminded readers, "There is a connection between our first experiences and our later responses, and […] our early experiences of education shape our adult

ways of evaluating schooling" (p. 88). I remember playing school often during my first year and my kindergarten teacher crying on the last day of the school year, foreshadowing how I would respond 20 years later when saying goodbye to each group of third graders I taught.

From second through fourth grade I was one of many students placed in an experimental group-teaching classroom. Walls had been knocked down, and probably around 50 students were placed in the same large room with three to five teachers. I remember learning about numbers and a teacher illustrating how big one million is by having our one classroom computer count over a few days until it reached one million. I remember parents, including mine, coming to our class and talking about their jobs and the time my grandpa beat my fourth-grade classmates' calculators during Grandparents' Day. We made Oobleck, a fluid that has both liquid and solid properties, named after Dr. Seuss's (1949) *Bartholomew and the Oobleck*, which was obviously amazing as a young student. We went on walking field trips to the local cemetery and stopped by the town's one ice cream shop on our way back to school. Each day, my classmates and I gathered on the carpet for read aloud time, and I specifically enjoyed Mr. Hoce's character voices when reading *James and the Giant Peach* (Dahl, 1961). He also paid for my fourth-grade school pictures when I realized I had forgotten my picture money at home, and if you have ever been a teacher, you understand how traumatic not having picture money can be for a child. I felt a special bond with Mr. Hoce, perhaps because of his sense of humor, or the way he reminded me of my father, or that he did not let me sit out during picture day. The best teachers engage students in learning through a variety of mediums and support their students beyond academics.

I remember the first time I experienced major difficulty understanding a math concept, which occurred during my sixth-grade year with my first exposure to algebra and solving for x. Ms. Lyle recognized my frustration and stayed after class to illustrate how to find the missing variable by using a balance scale. Two years later, I received the eighth grade mathematician award for my performance in algebra I, a high school level math class. The best teachers recognize students' frustrations and confusion and find creative ways to explain the content in an accessible manner.

Midway through my sophomore year of high school I transferred via open enrollment to a smaller school where my dad had attended and still knew many of the community's families. I now attended school with approximately 50 students in each grade. The low enrollment numbers

naturally facilitated a familial atmosphere in which I felt comfortable and at home. My eccentric French teacher challenged my classmates and me by only speaking French during class. Likewise, my algebra II teacher required us to take quizzes each day over math content learned in earlier grades so as not to forget what we had learned. While frustrating at times, both of these teachers taught me the importance of high expectations.

Before beginning my first year as a teacher, I served in various informal teaching capacities. During high school, I formed study groups to help my friends and classmates on chemistry homework, and I served as a counselor during my church's Vacation Bible School weeklong summer program. During summer breaks from college, I taught swimming and lifesaving at a Boy Scout camp, where I felt the responsibility of ensuring my students' success, confidence, and safety in and around water.

When choosing a major in college, I do not recall considering options beyond education. I enjoyed my schooling experiences as a student and wanted to continue working in schools as a teacher, reflecting the conservative nature of the teaching occupation identified by Lortie (1975). As some of my participants' narratives will allude to, teaching seemed to fit who I was as a person. As a first-year college student at Evangel University in Springfield, Missouri, I was required to complete Gallup's Strengths Finder assessment, which identified my top five strengths at the time: empathy, positivity, includer, developer, and WOO (wins others over). I recall sitting in a Strengths Finder workshop on using one's strengths in his/her future career and thinking that my strengths would make me a strong teacher because I could relate with people, and good teaching necessitated robust interpersonal skills.

Reflecting on my training to become a teacher, a few formative moments stand out in my memory. Most of the content during my college education classes was devoted to learning various techniques for presenting material across the content. I spent little time considering the rationale behind suggested teaching practices, and instead, made mental note of the numerous strategies my professors shared with me. During a curriculum class, I learned how to write behavioral and measurable objectives using Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy and how to write a lesson plan following Madeline Hunter's recipe for success: objectives, materials, anticipatory set, input, modeling, guided and independent practice, closure, and assessment. More important than the mechanics of lesson planning, I remember learning from my professor that learning

should be interesting, exciting, and relevant. The creative side of me vowed to figure out how to make all future lessons engaging.

During student teaching, I attended regular seminars at Evangel to discuss my experiences with other student teachers and to learn about an array of topics from the education department faculty. While I do not remember the content of these seminars, I know that much of the time was devoted to classroom management topics including a book study of Wong and Wong's (2001) *The First Days of School: How to Be an Effective Teacher* that stressed the importance of establishing routines and procedures with one's students. I still recall one professor's lecture on the importance of connecting with students. He shared a story about a difficult student he had worked with and how learning about that student's interest in racecars enabled him to build a relationship with that student that resulted in the student's improved behavior. His story inspired me to seek close relationships with my students through which I would understand their multifaceted interests, personalities, and histories. Dr. Greve's lecture on connecting with students had the biggest impact on my classroom management approach. For instance, during my four years as a third-grade teacher, I attended several students' football, baseball, soccer, volleyball, and basketball games on the weekends. Showing up for my students outside of school strengthened our relationship in school.

From the time I landed my first teaching job until the time I actually met my students either at Meet the Teacher, an evening when students and their families meet their teacher prior to the start of school, or on the first day of school, I had the typical first day jitters accompanied with sheer excitement to finally put my acquired knowledge to practice in my own classroom. I attended new teacher orientation and trainings, met with my assigned mentor teacher, and talked with my cooperating teacher from student teaching since we now taught in the same building. I had a clear vision of the kind of teacher I aspired to be based on trainings attended, exemplar teachers observed, and my own teaching experiences during college and substitute teaching before beginning my first job. I would be consistent and firm, creative and engaging, technologically savvy and innovative, empathetic and patient, and organized and prepared. I had attended training with other first-year teachers where we listened to a veteran teacher talk about her first day routines. I experienced the usual first day nightmares – when teachers dream of every possible thing that could go awry on the first day – a few nights leading up to the start of the school year. Yet, I felt confident, ready, terrified, and hopeful.

Despite my jitters, I consider my first year of teaching to be a success. I never drowned: I always knew where my students were; I worked through issues with parents; my students seemed to enjoy being in my class; my principal gave me a positive evaluation; and I felt that I was living out my calling as an elementary teacher. I was doing exactly what I was meant to do; I was using my strengths in a career that meshed with who I was as a person.

That is, until what it meant to be a teacher changed when the district I taught in began placing an increasing amount of emphasis on data-driven decision-making. Those aspirations that I clung tightly to prior to meeting my first group of third graders were surpassed by an almost obsession with students' performance on the district's standardized assessments. My teacher identity was still young and malleable. I believed what I was told about what it meant to be a good teacher, which now involved using data to inform decisions. If you could go back and observe my interactions with students, you might say that I am being too hard on myself, that I engaged my students in a variety of learning activities and that my students seemed truly happy to be at school. But, upon closer examination through a prolonged visit over my last three years as a teacher, you would notice the subtle ways the district's assessment infiltrated and began controlling my classroom practices. This is where my regressive moment continues at the beginning of chapter one.

Progressive Moment

Throughout my doctoral journey I have often wondered what it would look like to return to the elementary classroom given all that I have learned during this season. Having in the last few weeks been offered a position as an elementary teacher in the district that I left three years ago, these hypothetical ponderings are now my reality. This timeout from teaching to pursue a doctorate is coming to an end with each written word of this dissertation, and I am confronted with the upcoming weeks, months, and years that lie ahead. What does it mean to return to the classroom given all that I have learned from dozens of texts read, conferences attended, research conducted, conversations had, and moments of cognitive dissonance experienced? I remember the question that took me by surprise during my oral defense of my comprehensive exam: "How will teaching look different when you return to the classroom?" At the time, I was frustrated by the question, thinking*, What does this have to do with my comprehensive exam?* While I still

can't answer the latter, the former beckons with each passing day as I find myself getting closer and closer to reinstating my elementary teacher title.

As I sit here trying to imagine possible futures I am reminded of the struggles experienced by my dissertation participants when trying to imagine their progressive moments. The future is filled with numerous unknowns, and as Lortie (1975) found, teaching is a present-oriented career that affords teachers little opportunity to reflect on their professional future exacerbated by work intensification and increasing pressures to comply with a slew of district mandates (Hargreaves, 2010). Unlike my participants, however, I have the time to consider my future, and I want to use this time wisely. My choice to pursue a doctorate is analogous to pressing pause on my teaching career – an opportunity to consider a new start. This timeout has allowed me to take a step back from teaching, to zoom out from the day-to-day happenings inside my classroom's walls to consider the world of education beyond the classroom: the interaction of policies, stakeholders, and ideologies. I compare this moment to an almost out-of-body experience portrayed in film when a character's surroundings are frozen in time, while she looks around and takes in her milieu. As I pause to look around, what do I see? What do I like? What do I want to change? Where do I go from here? How do I view my role as a teacher? I have to press play at some point, and I need to know where to go and what to do because when I do, I am not the same person I was when I pressed pause. Experiences have changed me. My worldview has evolved through my academic studies. What will it look like to be an elementary teacher given these changes to my identity? As I imagine possible futures (Pinar et al., 1995), I recognize my aspirations, fears, and interests.

Considering my return to the elementary classroom brings with it a weighty responsibility to somehow align my future actions with those espoused values that I have identified over the last three years since leaving the classroom. Rather than detailing specific changes I intend to make when returning to the classroom, I choose to outline key values that I want to carry from my doctoral studies into my practice as an elementary teacher. First, I intend to check my decisions as a teacher against Dewey's (1938/1997) theory of experience, particularly those

experiences he identified as miseducative by asking whether or not my curricular[10] decisions "[arrest] or [distort] the growth of further experience" (p. 25). When Dewey (1938/1997) referred to growth, he did not simply mean expertise in a specific area but rather referred to those experiences that promote growth in a number of directions. Sure, my adoption of teach-to-the-test practices resulted in growth in test scores, but what, if any, new directions were made available to my students because of this "growth"? Did my data-informed decisions promote their sense of curiosity as learners? In this way, I have a responsibility as an educator to evaluate the direction of my students' experiences by considering the influence of present experiences on their future.

Second, I aspire to Noddings' (2003) ethical ideal by caring for my students. To Noddings (2003), the ethical self arises from a relation between one's actual and ideal selves. Through engrossment, I care for my students by "feeling with" them, by receiving "the other into myself" to feel and see as my students do (Noddings, 2003, p. 30). By caring, as Noddings defined it, I actively consider my students' point of view. When, as a teacher, I fail to consider students' feelings and perspectives related to my educational decision-making, the caring relationship is hampered. For instance, pressuring students to obtain certain benchmarks through frequent goal setting and conversations about performance, I ignore how such actions might make students feel less like a human and more like a data point. Further, being an ethical teacher in the age of accountability requires protecting students from the pressures that I might feel as a teacher in the present moment (Gunzenhauser, 2012).

Third, examining whether or not my decisions are educative *and* ethical requires a commitment to honest reflection. As will be reiterated through some of my participants' narratives, self-reflection is imperative for improved practice. Teachers often participate in two types of reflection: reflection on action and reflection in action (Poetter, 2014). The former refers to thinking about one's past actions; whereas the latter refers to adjustments made during an act. Neither of these practices is new to me as a teacher. I reflected often during my time teaching third grade. However, my lenses for reflection are now different. Some of the

[10] When I use the term *curriculum*, I am adopting Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) broad notion of curriculum: "A curriculum can become one's life course of action. It can mean the paths we have followed and the paths we intend to follow…as a person's life experience" (p. 1).

questions I ask have changed and are reflected by my concern about educative and ethical experiences for students. Likewise, I wish to extend my reflection to include a more critical stance. Critical teacher reflection involves an analysis of how issues of race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and ability, among others, shape students' learning experiences (Howard, 2003). This reflection enables teachers to "construct pedagogical practices that have relevance and meaning to students' social and cultural realities" (Howard, 2003, p. 195). Being a critically reflective practitioner requires me to honestly evaluate how teaching to the test homogenizes students' educational experiences while ignoring their backgrounds, interests, and realities. Further, this reflection illuminates ways that such practices perpetuate existing inequities and the status quo (Martin et al., 1976; McNeil, 2000).

My hopes and aspirations for the future are met with a number of questions and fears. While I have taken a three-year hiatus from teaching, life in schools has continued. The proliferation of one-to-one technology initiatives that pair each student in grades three through 12 with a device (i.e., Chromebook, iPad, etc.) presents additional instructional complexity that I will be faced with when returning to the elementary classroom. How will the increased accessibility to technology and accompanying expectations by district leaders to integrate technology and instruction change the way teaching and learning look? Furthermore, how will these changes align with my espoused philosophy of education?

Likewise, how will the move toward test-based teacher evaluations in Missouri mirror what my participants have experienced since Ohio's adoption of the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES)? Will I feel the temptation to forgo my philosophy of education in favor of one that views test scores as primary in order to earn a higher rating on my evaluation (Gunzenhauser, 2012)? When I left teaching in Missouri, my evaluation was not tied to my students' test scores, and I still felt the pressure to help them perform. How will this generation of high-stakes teacher evaluations compare to and/or exacerbate the pressure I felt before? How will I resist falling into the same practices that I adopted when I was still teaching?

As some of my participants' narratives will reveal, building and district leadership responses to state mandates set the tone for how stressful and powerful the new test-based evaluations are for teachers. The superintendent where I am returning is new since I left. How much does he emphasize test scores? What type of building leadership can I expect from the principal who will hire me? Will s/he emphasize test scores more than my former principal?

Currently, my former principal has required grade level teachers to track and display test performance in the hallway. When I was teaching, I was expected to have a "data wall" in my classroom, but now the information is made more public since the inception of hallway displays. Will the principal that I work for expect the same? If so, how do I cope with these changes given changes to my philosophy of education detailed above?

Analytical Moment

As my regressive moment illuminated, schooling for me as a student was a positive experience, partially because I enjoyed some of my classes and teachers, but more so because I have always been good at playing the game of "school" and assuming my role as "student," resulting in congenial interactions with teachers and high marks at the end of the quarter or semester. From a young age, I have been able to, as symbolic interactionists would say, take the role (i.e., attitude or perspective) of the other (i.e., teachers in the school setting) onto myself (Mead, 1934). In other words, I have, for as long as I can remember, tried to identify within myself the way that others view me. I have tried to anticipate how others would respond to my actions and have thus adapted my behavior to result in the desired response from those around me (Charon, 1992). Eager to please teachers and adults around me – recall my "wins others over" (WOO) strength – I quickly identified what the teacher expected of me and how to *play the game* that year or semester. I took pride in fostering relationships with teachers that my peers often complained about because I knew that being successful in school in terms of earning the highest letter grade meant getting and staying on the good side of one's teacher.

This strength paid off in the majority of my classes throughout my years as a student. I did what the teacher wanted and received my A. While learning would seem to be one's goal throughout schooling, for me, earning the top mark was the priority. At the time, I think I convinced myself that the two were synonymous. I now recognize that one is not necessarily indicative of the other: Earning an A does not necessarily mean that I learned more than someone earning a C. Rather, I knew how to earn the A. I knew how to cram before the test, how to write the paper to my teacher's liking, and how to participate in class. I knew how to play the game of school. Being a successful student, for me, meant earning the highest grades.

The desire to earn the highest mark in school as an indicator of success carried over into my practice as a classroom teacher. Rather than seeking an A on a report card, I learned how to

play the game of teaching to the test to result in high test scores on my students' district and state assessments. Those in positions of leadership touted high test scores as markers of effective teaching, and I wanted to be viewed as an effective teacher. I sought outside approval to validate my practices as a beginning teacher. Looking back, I want to believe that this was not a purely selfish desire but that helping students perform well on standardized assessments would have long-term benefits for them, too.

While my apprenticeship of observation, those years as a student spent observing teachers (Lortie, 1975), conjured various images of a highly effective teacher (i.e., creative, engaging, relational, and challenging), district expectations to produce high test scores during my initial years as a teacher usurped previous notions about good teaching. Despite what I believed about good teaching, I came to understand that being highly effective, or successful, as a teacher centered on helping students to perform well on tests by using data to inform one's decisions about curriculum and instruction. I became, as Ayers (2010) phrased it, "party to [my] own depersonalization" by following orders passed down by "the experts" (p. 32).

Looking back, I imagine that my lack of experience as a teacher combined with the desire to please my building principal and be "successful" contributed to my unknowing adoption of what Gunzenhauser (2012) referred to as a default philosophy of education. Gunzenhauser (2012) argued that the high-stakes nature of accountability reforms pressure teachers into adopting a default philosophy that views test scores as dominant, supplanting teachers' professional philosophies of education that might promote different purposes and values in education. A default philosophy "results from a lack of reflective, engaged dialogue by educators and school communities about their goals and practice" (Gunzenhauser, 2012, p. 9).

It was not until I stepped away from teaching to pursue full-time doctoral studies that I had the chance to engage in reflective dialogue with other educators, education activists, and scholars. I began to understand that the decisions I made as a third-grade teacher were unethical and incongruent with my professional philosophy of teaching and learning. When I was teaching third grade, I was unaware of the way accountability pressures caused me to ignore the beliefs I had held about teaching and learning when I first began teaching. As I mentioned during my progressive moment, this period that is coming to an end with the writing of this dissertation has allowed me to revisit and reconstruct my beliefs about teaching and learning. While I have a renewed sense of commitment to my philosophy of education as a beginning teacher, my beliefs

have evolved to encompass those values that I have come to recognize during my doctoral studies. This timeout has allowed me to place my experiences against a broader landscape that encompasses ideology, issues of difference, theory, policy, research, and literature. During this moment, I have realized that my experiences are not unique in that I was not alone in the pressure I felt to comply with external expectations. There are countless others, including the five participants in this study, who feel tempted to forgo their philosophy of education in favor of one that views students as a means-to-an-end (i.e., a test score) rather than an end-in-themselves.

At the same time, however, I have realized that teachers have a choice to act ethically in spite of the circumstances that confront them (Ayers, 2010). As Gunzenhauser (2012) reminded readers, teachers, in positions of authority over students, have control over the way they wield power in their classrooms. Do they allow student-teacher relationships to become instrumentalized by treating students as objects to be manipulated in order to produce desired outcomes on a test? Still, despite these new insights, when considering returning to the elementary classroom, I have been fearful that my desire to be "successful" in my superiors' eyes and my ability to play the game in order to meet the "success" criteria (i.e., high test scores) will resurface and squelch my desire to reconstruct a different path forward as an elementary teacher. Perhaps this fear contributed to my desire to study veteran elementary teachers. Was I seeking out mentors whom I hoped would redefine teacher success for me? While I hoped that teachers with years of experience would have the wisdom and hindsight gained from teaching through years of various reform waves, I was somewhat disappointed to realize that they were not immune to the temptation to forgo their beliefs about teaching and learning.

Synthetical Moment

> Grown-ups like numbers. When you tell them about a new friend, they never ask questions about what really matters. They never ask: "What does his voice sound like?" "What games does he like best?" "Does he collect butterflies?" They ask: "How old is he?" "How many brothers does he have?" "How much does he weigh?" "How much money does his father make?" Only then do they think they know him. If you tell grown-ups, "I saw a beautiful red brick house, with geraniums at the windows and doves on the roof…," they won't be able to imagine such a house. You have to tell them, "I saw a house worth a hundred thousand francs." Then they exclaim, "What a pretty house!" […] But, of course, those of us who understand life couldn't care less about numbers! (de Saint-Exupéry, 2000, pp. 10-12)

Throughout my doctoral journey I have tried to imagine what my seventh-year teacher self would have looked like had I not taken a timeout from teaching to pursue full-time doctoral studies. What would my teaching identity have entailed had I continued along the same path, uninterrupted? Would the attention that my colleague and I received from a local university, our alma mater, and invitations to present at various schools about our students' high test scores have encouraged me to continue along the same path? Would I have further refined my teach-to-the-test skills until I figured out a way for 100% of my students to meet the district's expected gains in all subjects? Would I have continued to send third graders on to the next grade who described their fondest memory of our time together as their improved test scores, as in the case of the fifth grader discussed in the beginning of my regressive moment? Fortunately, this period of reflection has provided me with an opportunity to imagine different futures.

Despite my inclination to "win others over," I have an opportunity to return to the elementary classroom and define successful teaching *my* way. While it may be difficult to find mentors who have figured out how to resist the temptation to forgo their professional philosophy of education – though, I know they exist – I have Dewey, Noddings, Howard, and others as my guideposts. Through critical reflection (Howard, 2003), I will continuously interrogate whether or not the experiences I am facilitating in my classroom are educative or miseducative (Dewey, 1938/1997). I will consider whether my actions "[enable] the choices of others and … [support] the human impulse to grow?" (Ayers, 2010, p. 36). Additionally, I will evaluate whether or not I am practicing an ethic of caring (Noddings, 2003) toward my students by treating them as whole persons and placing them above subject matter (Ayers, 2010).

I have committed to teaching ethically and providing students with educative, rather than miseducative, experiences while we share a classroom. This commitment demands a departure from my past teacher self, that part that bought into others' definitions of success that contradict my beliefs about the aims and purposes of education. It requires taking the time to honestly reflect and critically interrogate my decisions with students (Ayers, 2010). It requires constantly revisiting my beliefs and commitments about teaching and learning while evaluating whether or not my actions align with those beliefs. It means being aware of the symptoms that accompany the gradual acceptance of the status quo that devalues students as humans: a narrowing of the curriculum, less time for interpersonal relationships, a decreased focus on creativity and exploration, and an obsession with data. As the Little Prince (de Saint-Exupéry, 2000) reminded

us at the beginning of this section, I want to care about the things that make my students human: their friends, their day, their home life, their dreams, their interests, their experiences, their likes, their dislikes, and their hopes for the future. Treating them as numbers fails to treat them as people – people who will grow up to be people's neighbors, bosses, workers, friends, spouses, and parents.

Chapter 5: Mattie Bell

Mattie Bell, nicknamed "Spitfire" as a child, has been teaching at the elementary level for 18 years. Her teaching experiences have spanned grades three through six, and she currently co-teaches a group of fifth and sixth graders in a multi-age classroom at Potter Elementary. Potter was founded on a progressive philosophy of education that valued a non-graded approach to schooling, shared leadership, parent involvement, student ownership, and critical thinking. Mattie's involvement serving on building and district leadership committees along with her teaching experiences have provided her with unique insights about teaching in an accountability era. Throughout my conversations with Mattie, I saw numerous glimpses of Spitfire as she passionately advocated for teachers while remaining focused on students during each *currere* moment.

Regressive Moment

Mattie's reflections during her regressive moment illuminate those aspects of her past that contributed to her evolving sense of identity as a teacher. The chronological portion of her regressive moment began with a discussion of her recruitment (Lortie, 1975) to teaching from her childhood through college. She then detailed her initial forays as a teacher during college field experiences, student teaching, and later substitute teaching. Finally, she reminisced about early years teaching at Potter.

The second portion of Mattie's regressive moment moved away from a chronological rendering of events contributing to her identity toward a present reaction to the past, specifically to district changes she has witnessed more recently and her accompanying feelings. In comparison to her distant past, her recent past feels heavier and darker. Mattie feels "beat down" by exterior circumstances and her evaluation, referring to this period as "nightmarish." She describes the "dark cloud" of testing and how teaching is not simply an academic job. During these conversations, Mattie's comments reveal what it means to her to be a responsible professional as a teacher. Accordingly, Mattie feels a certain amount of responsibility to resist district mandates that she does not philosophically agree with as being in the best interest of students as she details instances when she brought her concerns before the district leadership. At the same time, however, she recognizes the temptation to forgo her professional philosophy

(Gunzenhauser, 2012) since her evaluation reflects her students' test scores. Each of these topics serves as talking points throughout this restorying of Mattie's regressive moment.

Recruitment and learning the ropes. Mattie remembers playing school as a child and wanting to be a teacher from a young age. She described schooling as a positive experience, identifying herself as a "good student." Due to her hardheaded temperament, those closest to her nicknamed her Spitfire at an early age, which later contributed to her interest in pursuing a degree in law. During high school, her strong will and informal debates with peers seemed to point toward a career as a lawyer. However, during her first year of college, she chose to pursue teaching after reflecting on which career she could see herself in. Additionally, she was attracted to the "pleasant atmosphere" that teaching afforded. She acknowledged having moments since then when she has second-guessed her decision not to go the law route, sometimes wishing she could both teach and be an attorney.

Mattie recalls the influence of her first teaching experiences on her evolving conception of her teacher identity, beginning with her two field experiences during college. For her first field experience, Mattie was placed with a veteran teacher in a first and second grade, multi-age classroom at Potter Elementary. During this experience, Mattie admired her cooperating teacher's passion about teaching, hands-on approach, and creativity. She remembers the classroom's positive environment, which caused visitors to feel excited to be there. In contrast, Mattie spent her second field experience in a sixth-grade classroom at an urban school surrounded by a 12-foot fence and abandoned neighboring buildings. Her cooperating teacher based her instruction on a textbook, which Mattie found to be mediocre at best. Mattie remembers the teacher's low expectations for her students and how she yelled at them during class. Reflecting back, Mattie shares how fearful she was going there being white and from a middle class world going into a school where poverty was rampant and the students towered over her. When she and her peer had the opportunity to teach this group of sixth graders, they chose to plan project-based lessons and give students positive attention, and the students responded well. Comparing the two experiences, Mattie recalls asking herself, "What would fulfill me more? Which environment do I want to teach in?" Her experiences at the urban school taught her "there's way more to teaching than just the academics."

Mattie completed her student teaching in first grade during the fall semester. She enjoyed her time with her cooperating teacher, who made learning meaningful and connected to

the real world. During this experience, Mattie recalls growing in her ability to build relationships with students. The surrounding community where Mattie student taught was mostly middle class and white. She learned to work with higher achieving students whose parents were actively involved in their children's education. Mattie's cooperating teacher was diagnosed with cancer around the time Mattie graduated from college, allowing her to assume a long-term substitute position in the spring. When reflecting on this experience, Mattie recalls learning that "you get to [students'] heads through their hearts."

Between student teaching and being hired for her first teaching job, Mattie held four long-term positions as a substitute teacher: first grade, first/second grade at Potter, fifth grade, and another first grade. Looking back, Mattie remembers being drawn to certain schools because of their diversity: "There were more kids who had need." She started realizing that she derived the greatest satisfaction from working with students who had needs beyond academics, and she felt she could support them.

"Teaching felt lighter": Early years in the profession. Mattie's experience subbing in first grade at Potter paid off when she was offered a position as a third- and fourth-grade teacher in a multi-age classroom at Potter. Initially disappointed to work with older students, Mattie looked forward to returning to a school climate with socioeconomically and racially diverse students. Looking back on those first few years teaching, Mattie describes them as feeling lighter: "It felt like you could really look at and plan their academic journey without people constantly questioning or second-guessing or making you do things certain ways."

Decision-making occurred at the individual buildings within her district. Her practices aligned with her beliefs about teaching and learning. While proficiency tests were still around at that time, "they weren't like this horrible cloud hanging over your head… this monstrous cloud like PARCC and all these new assessments are now." She had time to meet and collaborate with her colleagues, and she exercised control over curriculum decision-making based on what she knew about her students and the curriculum, and this made her feel empowered. She felt a different level of trust while still being held accountable. Those working in the district's administration building supported teachers, and she describes them as "friends of teachers" and "pro teacher." District leadership included teachers in curriculum decision-making, promoting a collaborative climate in the district. Meanwhile, she felt she could help support students' needs beyond academics, which she estimates required about 20 percent of her teaching at the time.

Nightmares and dark clouds: Reflections on recent changes. Fast forward from her first years at Potter to more recently, and Mattie identifies four major shifts that have made her job more difficult: external decision makers, evaluations, testing, and an increasingly high-need student population. She describes these years as "nightmarish," greatly affecting her job satisfaction: "I really didn't like coming into my job at all. The sad thing: It wasn't because of the kids. Again, it's because I didn't feel like I could do it well." During these years, she questioned whether teaching was for her and even researched requirements for earning a degree in law.

External decision makers. Whereas decision-making was once site-based, those at the district level have assumed control over many aspects of Mattie's work. Often, Mattie finds she vehemently disagrees with decisions made by those at the district level that directly impact her teaching. She remarks on the discrepancy between district goals (i.e., relationships, relevancy, and rigor), the means by which district leaders expect teachers to meet those goals (i.e., workbooks), and Mattie's philosophy of education: "By god, if a workbook can teach it better than I do, then I need to get out of teaching!" Even though district personnel have not been teachers for over two decades and spend only a few minutes observing in her room, "they know more than you!" The brevity of district leaders' classroom visits frustrates her when they make assumptions about issues they do not understand because they lack context.

Recent experiences working with administrators have caused Mattie to feel as though the administration is the "other." They no longer work to build relationships with teachers. Instead, they often appear intimidating by standing at her classroom door displaying little emotion before leaving. Recent attempts by district administrators to seek teacher input have seemed artificial. For instance, after encouraging teachers to share their opinions at a meeting, one board member responded, "Now that you've aired your dirty laundry…" To Mattie, administrators do not try to understand teachers' perspectives. They even blame teachers when misunderstandings between teachers and district personnel arise. Sometimes they employ fear and threats as a form of coercion. Recently, district leaders had a meeting with the Potter staff and threatened to close the school if test scores did not improve.

District administrators' tactics have caused Mattie to feel inadequate: "My self efficacy really took a dive." Instead of finding support in the district's leadership, Mattie feels that some of the administrators make her job more challenging. Even her principal is unable to reassure

her since principals are expected to be middle managers or else their job is on the line. Whereas a past Potter principal shielded her and helped teachers keep the priority on students, Mattie now feels that teachers are fighting the battle alone. All these practices and the resultant feelings displace energy from where it should be, on the students, according to Mattie.

Evaluations. In addition to the transition from site-based to district-based decision-making, recent experiences with her evaluation have left her confused, frustrated, and with a decreased sense of self-efficacy. Under Ohio's Teacher Evaluation System (OTES), teachers are rated accomplished, skilled, developing, or ineffective (ODE, 2013). Based on her students' test scores last year, Mattie was rated as "skilled," which means that she is on the formal evaluation cycle this year. She believes she received this rating because her students did not show enough growth on last year's assessment: Even though they demonstrated a year's growth, they did not exceed it. Her lack of understanding about why she was labeled "skilled" is further complicated because her principal's classroom observation feedback was so positive. She does not understand how her students' science scores could be among the highest in the district, and yet she is rated "skilled": "I don't even know why I'm skilled!" Her rating contributed to a feeling that she is "not good enough." To her, constant changes to the evaluation formula and the assessments used obscure teachers' understanding of their evaluations. Additionally, she questions principals' motives behind assigning ratings:

> Our principal said last year, she told another teacher, "We're really not supposed to give out accomplished." Really?! You're just… no one is going to get accomplished because you were told by someone that there shouldn't be many accomplished teachers in the district because their scores aren't high enough?

Testing. Over the last few years, a substantial part of Mattie's evaluations has included her students' scores on standardized tests as Ohio transitioned to test-based teacher evaluations under OTES. Mattie refers to the current generation of testing as "heavier" than past tests and even refers to them as "monstrous." Since the district administration insists on all students passing the test, they have begun mandating certain test prep materials, such as workbooks. In addition, questions about teachers' time management and instructional decision-making have come under increased scrutiny. For example, in the last few years the principal sat down with Mattie and her colleagues about their students' math scores. The principal questioned the impact of math contracts on students' performance on state assessments. During my classroom

observations, I observed math contract time, and during this part of the day, students engage in a variety of self-directed activities related to a math objective or essential question. Fortunately, Mattie and her colleagues convinced their principal that math contracts needed to stay based on students' mathematical growth reflected in their Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) scores.

Our conversations also revealed the impact her students' scores have on her self-efficacy. During our time together, she received last year's scores and learned that her students did not meet benchmark in some areas. She described how seeing the scores made her feel: "You failed. You didn't meet it." Even though there were areas to celebrate – those areas where her students scored in the top three classes in the district – the district pays attention to only those areas found lacking: "If you don't pass, you fail." She reflected on how the pass/fail mentality affects her personally: "I got home that night and I just felt bad. I thought, *This is not good! This is what state tests are doing to teachers*!"

As she often did during our time together, Mattie shifted the conversation away from her and put the focus back on her students. Mattie is not opposed to being held accountable for her students' academic growth, but she believes that an assessment of their growth should not be based on only one measure administered on one day. Moreover, assessments of students' growth should reflect where each individual student started. Likewise, only looking at whether or not her class met benchmark downplays individual student progress: "Now it doesn't show how far [students have] grown. It doesn't show how they were kids that I was thrilled passed. … They struggle so much, and these assessments have become so incredibly rigorous." Not only do the tests make her feel like a failure as a teacher, but she imagines the deleterious impact on her students when they receive their scores:

> So, when a kid gets their results, because I can think of a handful of kids from last year who were so worried about this test… some of them passed; some of them didn't. What does that do for the ones who didn't? On this day, you took this one test, and you didn't pass it, and so … you failed.

Despite the district's emphasis on reaching certain benchmarks, Mattie tries to encourage students that effort is what matters: "We try to make it about not passing a test but just about growing and showing the best of who you are."

60/40: Teaching is more than academic work. Exacerbating the challenges brought by exterior mandates, test-based evaluations, and high-stakes testing, Mattie describes the

increasing non-academic needs of her students. Reflecting on her early years at Potter, teaching felt like 80 percent academic and 20 percent other (i.e., social needs, emotional needs, food needs, and counseling needs). Now, however, Mattie places the percentages at 60:40, respectively. Non-academic factors consume students' attention, distracting them from learning while they are at school. The district's insistence on workbook usage undermines students' education by failing to engage them in interesting, relevant, and meaningful learning activities. Moreover, in a school with such a high percentage of students living in poverty, Mattie feels that testing makes it harder than it already is for students to connect to school.

Resistance, activism, and the allure of compliance. Despite the challenges caused by recent changes in Mattie's district, throughout these regressive reflections I was able to identify a number of responsibilities that Mattie feels as a teacher, beyond those captured in her evaluation. To Mattie, teachers have a responsibility to grow students' minds, to grow them as citizens and as people. As a teacher, she feels "emotionally moved to make a difference in kids' lives." More important to her than her students loving her, Mattie wants them to know she loves them. She strives to be a cheerleader and a counselor, reaching students though their hearts, not their heads. She recognizes the immense role that teachers play in students' lives since students spend arguably more time with teachers during the school year than they do with their parents. Through constantly seeking to improve, Mattie works to create meaningful and relevant learning experiences, resulting in working long hours, leaving school late, and taking work home. Teaching is exhausting work that does not end at the final bell: "You carry it home in your mind. My mind cannot shut off from school. My husband says I'm obsessed."

Part of the responsibility Mattie feels as a teacher is to advocate for students when she perceives that district leaders have misplaced their priorities. In doing so, Mattie has found herself resisting certain mandates and requesting meetings to call attention to her concerns. When the district provided teachers with workbooks to help students pass the state test, Mattie creatively subverted district expectations since they did not align with her philosophy of education: "I cannot come to school everyday and do a workbook page with 25 kids when I know it may be helping six or seven of them. I can't do that. That's not what I signed up for." Instead, Mattie provided the workbooks for a small group of students who enjoy paper-pencil tasks.

Last year Mattie wrote a letter to the district's board of education about a number of issues that she found concerning, and the superintendent requested a meeting with her and any of her colleagues she wanted to bring. As a school of choice, the teachers were concerned that the unique characteristics of Potter were being lost under all of the district's curriculum mandates. The meeting resulted in the superintendent encouraging the staff to submit a proposal for an initiative they wanted to implement that would reestablish Potter's unique philosophy of education. The teachers settled on project-based learning (PBL) and received training to begin implementing PBL practices in their classrooms this year. When reflecting on the positive outcome of her decision to write a letter to the board, Mattie viewed her efforts as successful:

> So that I think is what kind of lit my fire, kind of taking that first step saying, "Enough is enough. Here, I'm putting it out there. Whatever happens happens." Because too many teachers are scared to say anything because they don't want that target on their back. And I thought, *You know, … if something were to happen, and I were to lose my job as a result of me doing this, I'll still be able to sleep at night* because I think when you wear something so heavily on your shoulders, and you don't do anything about it, and there could be something you could do about it, then that starts eating you up more than the worry of the repercussions.

Mattie feels a responsibility to professionally and honestly "[call] people out on their responsibilities" without fear for losing her job.

Another aspect of being a responsible professional deals with being aware of the ways her evaluation lures her into abdicating her philosophy of education. When reflecting on the impact of seeing her students' scores from last year and the resultant effect they had on her evaluation as a teacher, Mattie recognizes the temptation to teach to the test. Since 50 percent of her evaluation is based on her students' scores, she finds herself considering practices that do not align with her beliefs about teaching and learning:

> And I have to stop myself sometimes. I absolutely have to stop myself sometimes and say, "Nope, I can't do that." I really want to do this for my small group, get them on that computer, and it's not that I never expose them, but I know that's not what's going to be best for them in that moment. I can't take time away from teaching them specific skills they need and ways to help them grow to stick them in from of a computer to practice a state test. … "No, Mattie, don't do it."

Progressive Moment

Mattie's reflections during her progressive moment build on her experiences detailed during our regressive conversation, painting a future that is both grim and bleak. More specifically, she has witnessed "trickle-down effects" of governmental decisions directly impacting her work with students, which frames how she views the future. Three recent trends influence her predictions about the future of education: the homogenization of education, schools as institutions, and a teacher shortage. Given these trends and legislative calls for accountability, she wonders if teachers will adopt unethical practices, and she considers her own personal and professional future. Finally, she is cautiously optimistic that conditions may be starting to improve, pointing toward a better future than the one she currently imagines.

Now trending: Current practices hint at a grim future. Mattie views recent changes, the ubiquity of standardized assessments in particular, as homogenizing education. The expectation is that all students should be doing the same things, and all classrooms should look the same. Such expectations and practices disregard the humanity of teaching – that the job deals with people:

> Human beings are not robots or machines. So, to say there's a one-size-fits-all theory – whether it's about academics, or behavior, or anything, any aspect of education – that just doesn't mesh with me and my philosophy on teaching. … It's not a warehouse. We're not just pumping out little robots.

Mattie fears that current expectations and pressures will continue to undermine teachers' efforts to foster student creativity and empower individuals.

Mattie's reference to schooling as a warehouse in which students are robots relates to a second trend that she has noticed: schools as institutions. Schools viewed in this sense are comparable to factories and prisons, with standardized protocol for workers/inmates to follow. To illustrate her point, she refers to a recent training on a school-wide behavior management initiative called CHAMPS. During the training, one of the presenters described the ideal school as one where a red line was drawn down every hallway, and students learned to walk silently to the right of the line when walking down the hallway. Such a description conjures images of future schools in Mattie's mind: "I just picture this science fiction future school where everything is white and drab and there's just little mechanical people walking in the hallways. And I can't imagine that ever being our goal for education."

The warehouse image causes Mattie to consider how recent changes have contributed to a teacher shortage that she only sees worsening with time. Currently, her district struggles to find substitutes to fill in for teachers when they are absent, and the district had difficulty filling teaching vacancies at the beginning of the year. If, as Mattie predicts, teachers' names will be printed next to their students' test scores in local newspapers, why would someone choose to subject him/herself to that type of humiliation by choosing to pursue a career in teaching? Scaring people away from the profession is problematic:

> You can't put mandates in place that are going to scare off people from even wanting to step foot into a school to teach children because this isn't a field that can just go away. You have to have schools. You have to have people there to teach kids.

She questions why someone would willingly choose a profession that bases their evaluation on students' performance on a single test taken on a single day.

Mattie is also concerned about those currently in teaching. How will teacher actions alter over time when half of their evaluation is based on student test scores? She questions whether or not they will forgo their philosophies of education in favor of practices that they perceive better prepare students for the test:

> I'm so scared that some teachers are going to get so worried about how the state tests affect their evaluation that they'll be willing to do that and try that. … Who is affected by that? It's these kids who show up everyday. They're the ones who are going to struggle with faulty education just because of this pressure that's put on every level.
>
> …
>
> What kind of teachers are we creating for our classrooms when we surround education with such unrealistic, high-stakes measures? What kind of teachers are we creating? Are those the kind of teachers [who are] going to make these students the most successful in life?

Not only will teachers possibly adopt unethical, teach-to-the-test, practices, but they might also seek employment at schools with historically higher-achieving students. As a result, Mattie fears that students attending urban schools will suffer the most: "And then again, those kids who need those teachers who care the most are going to be the ones who have the hardest time getting any good teachers in there."

What does the future hold for Mattie? While talking about her predictions about the future of teaching, Mattie considers what lies ahead for her and the remainder of her career. As district decisions have frustrated her, she has contemplated whether or not administration might be a plausible option. Typically, she rejects the notion because she views the administration as "them" and teachers as "us" and has not wanted to be a part of "them." However, more recently, she has reconsidered: "I've thought that maybe "them" needs to be replaced with people who have more understanding and empathy for what's going on in the classroom and who have different beliefs." On a lighter note, she jokes about winning the lottery, quitting her job, and tutoring students at Potter without all of the other expectations that come along with being a teacher: "I think I would absolutely adore my job if I didn't have that ugly side of it." Despite the tenuous nature of her professional future, she hopes to still be in education.

Cautious optimism: Hopes for a better future. The absurdity of recent trends gives Mattie hope that perhaps people in power will soon realize that present conditions in education must change. Ohio's decision not to continue using Pearson's Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test after only one year in use shows her that despite many bad decisions, maybe education is heading in the right direction. However, she wonders what type of assessment will replace it since the new tests are said to be similar to PARCC. Surely, decision makers will realize that the number of assessments has to change since an inordinate amount of instructional time is currently lost due to testing, and it seems that they may be realizing this since the PARCC replacement tests will be administered one less time each year. In addition, Mattie hopes that districts will move beyond one form of assessment for both teachers and students.

When talking about Ohio's Third Grade Guarantee (ODE, 2015a), Mattie thinks that decision makers at the state level will realize that retaining hundreds of students in third grade is senseless: "Do we really want high schools filled with kids who are 19 and they haven't graduated and they're allowed to drop out at 18, when they're juniors in high school?" She notes that the state has already had to modify the reading proficiency levels required for promotion to fourth grade, and she hopes that state decision makers will realize that current expectations are unrealistic.

Mattie hopes for a better future for her students who say they want to become teachers. She feels conflicted because she wants to support their dreams, but she also wants to see them happier than she has felt recently in her career:

> I don't tell them, "Honey, don't do it." I'm like, "Oh! That's great!" But my heart is thinking, *Oh! It has to get better.* I would never in a million years tell them that because I don't want to: If they have that dream and that's their passion and that's what they want, we need people who have that. Maybe by the time they're there, a light bulb will click on for somebody.

Analytical Moment

Mattie's analytical moment expands upon her understanding of what it means to be a veteran elementary teacher today by revisiting her regressive and progressive moments. After reviewing her *currere* timeline from our first two interviews, she briefly remarks on the negativity that currently shadows teaching while also considering how one change has been positive. Her present experiences contribute to an amalgam of feelings that surface during this discussion. During the second part of our conversation, Mattie analyzes the interrelations of her past, present, and future, providing a more nuanced understanding of her present.

Present: It's so easy to be negative. Recent changes in Mattie's district have produced an atmosphere of negativity in which Mattie has found herself often unable to escape. In this climate, humiliation is rampant and recognition is scarce, trickling down from state actions and impacting teacher feelings. The Ohio Department of Education grades each of the state's schools via a report card. Mattie comments on the humiliation of being publicly labeled a D school.[11] At the district level, administrators dwell on areas found lacking rather than celebrating progress made:

> And honestly, the injection for us every now and then is needed, too. You just have to feel like you're doing something right because it's always about, "Ok, well, great. Eighty percent of them did well. This 20 percent, what are you doing with them? What are you

[11] Both Mattie and Katie, teachers at Potter, referred to the grade attached to their school, the specific grade differed between the two. Whereas Mattie labeled Potter as a D school, Katie identified Potter as an F school. I was unable to verify this information on the ODE website.

going to do with them? What's their modified instruction? Why aren't they growing? Why aren't they at level?"

The focus is always negative: "What are you not doing right? What do you need to do better?"

This negative climate only exacerbates Mattie's tendency to be her own worst critic. She constantly questions and worries about what she could be doing better instead of enhancing areas that are going well: "Oh, I should have done this differently! Oh! I could have done this better! Oh, this would have worked!" The district's emphasis on improvement and reliance on data strikes a chord with Mattie because her identity is enmeshed with her job; her craft is part of who she is as a person:

> That's what being a teacher is. It's going to the ends of the earth, and this is for me personally, going to the ends of the earth, [to] do what you can to spend… we spend all these hours… your heart and soul and everything in it, and you just… you're judged always by those numbers on a piece of paper.

No matter what she does, it does not feel good enough. The negativity takes a toll on her physical and emotional wellbeing. She spends sleepless nights worrying about whether or not she is doing a good enough job helping her students reach their full potential and how that will be reflected in their test score data.

Despite the negativity that surrounds her work, she clings to the bright spots in her job, the "injections," as she refers to them. For instance, when past students come to visit her or when a past student, now in high school, chooses her as his/her special educator for National Honor Society (NHS) inductions. These injections interrupt the sense of deteriorating self-efficacy she feels when she receives her students' test scores:

> It's kind of nice because I get those reminders at this stage of my teaching about, okay, so on paper, when you're looking at state tests, it doesn't always look like you're making a difference. But then you hear your evidence by these kids who come and they remind you.

She also identifies Potter's adoption of project-based learning (PBL) as a positive change that gives her a sense of renewed pride. During my classroom observations, students had been spending PBL time researching the Mayans, Incas, or Aztecs and integrating subjects leading up to a presentation to members of the community that Mattie and her colleagues invited. Reflecting on how the presentation went, Mattie realized that her students were capable of more

than she had expected. She feels proud to have gone through the difficulties last year when she wrote the letter to the board of education and met with the superintendent: "[The students] wouldn't have had this opportunity had we not spoken up last year and gone for what we really wanted to do." About the benefits of PBL, Mattie describes students' excitement, newly acquired knowledge, and ability to discuss their learning. Her students' experience during their first PBL unit energizes her and gives her hope for future units.

Past in the present and present in the past. Mattie identifies two ways that her past impacts her present. As mentioned earlier, when students she has taught visit her and talk about the impact she has had on their life, she feels an increased sense of self-efficacy. Visits from past students and being chosen as someone's special educator for NHS remind her why she went into teaching: "My past students who now become part of my present again and just remind me, *Okay, this is why you're doing this. This is why you're in this*." She reflects on how focusing on the present distorts where she has been and the impacts she has made:

> And it is just my reminder of why I do this because sometimes when you're just stuck in the present and your current circumstances and … you can't see where you've come [from] or how you've influenced people. It can … really bog you down.

Her past also impacts her present as she considers the importance she has always placed on establishing and maintaining positive relationships with her students. Her years of experiences have provided her with insights about how to motivate students and help them respond. She has learned how to speak to kids in a manner that breaks down defense mechanisms.

Listening to the reasons a past student chose her to be his/her special educator for NHS caused her to compare her present practices to those of the past. She wonders if she is too negative now, thinking that perhaps she was more positive in the past: "I was hula dancing, and I was on tables, and I … I don't remember going home and feeling just completely exhausted and overwhelmed and worried." She does, however, acknowledge that her past experiences have expanded her present toolbox: "But I think when you think about it, there's no way I could be where I am now without those 20 years of experience. The kids have made me who I am as a teacher."

Future in the present. When reflecting on the way the future impacts her present, Mattie realizes that her thoughts about the future are filled with worry. She worries about her

students' test scores and how they will in turn affect her evaluation, so she thinks about how to prepare them now to succeed on the upcoming spring assessment. Receiving a "skilled" rating on her most recent evaluation has exacerbated her anxiety. Then, she finds herself worrying about test scores that seem too good to be true when she feels she should be happy to see their great scores:

> Oh my god! They're going to question me. It's going to not seem like relevant data because they did so well. Then I started worrying about *that*. Is someone going to look at this TBT form and think, *Well, how could they have done so well?*

This reflection reveals a tension in her worry. While wanting her students to perform well on the test that will in turn result in a higher evaluation for her, she realizes that her worry and resultant actions do not align with her values and teaching philosophy. She finds herself tempted to modify lessons that her principal observes in an effort to boost her evaluation to make up for her students' performance on the test. In other words, she wonders if scoring "accomplished" on her classroom observation will be enough to give her an overall "accomplished" rating when her students' scores are figured into her evaluation. This temptation conflicts with her values:

> And then I'm like, *No, no, no, Mattie. No, no, no. You already said this is not what you value*…. I am worrying about the future and that was affecting my present in that I'm trying to do something that I don't believe in.

Mattie carries the burden of her worry about the future into the classroom, as evidenced in her reflection on her interactions with students. She notices herself fussing at students too much and wonders if she is going to become grumpier each year. Her tolerance for different things in the classroom (e.g., noise levels) has changed with age, but she wonders how much of the change can be attributed to the pressure she feels to help students perform well on standardized assessments: "Do I fuss at kids too quickly because … I'll be evaluated on that one day, and 'I know you can do it, so you have to do it. You can't just not do it on the day you're tested!'" Even though she recognizes that her students give her hugs and ask to come home with her, she still feels that she is grumpy toward them: "And I don't want to be that grumpy person." She wonders if the pressure will eventually become too much to handle: "Each year, am I going to get more fed up and let the weight of it all make me into someone I don't want to be as a teacher? I don't want that." The thought of staying in a job where the negatives outweigh the

positives does not seem appealing to her. "What if things don't change?" she wonders. While some recent changes (i.e., PBL) have been positive, she keeps her excitement at bay: "I don't want to get too excited about [recent improvements] because I don't want to be let down." Her experiences have taught her that positive improvements are fleeting. She questions what she should do now, professionally, that will result in a more positive outcome in the future.

How the past impacts the future: Cautious optimism revisited. When looking at her regressive reflections on her *currere* timeline, her past experiences pull her in two directions when considering her future. Her distant past, the early years at Potter, serve as bright spots in her past that she views as an "almost euphoric stage of teaching." Those years make her want to anticipate a brighter future, but then she looks farther down her regressive moment timeline and sees the dark cloud of her recent past. Her experiences over the last few years make her skeptical: "It just feels like decision-making just gets worse every year. It gets worse and worse and worse…" She questions where the change should come from: government structures, district changes, from the teacher. As far as teachers are concerned, Mattie wants to turn her worry into action instead of being one who admires problems: "I think you almost need a full week to just sit down and talk and brainstorm with other people." She remembers a principal who encouraged Potter staff to use their voice to stand up for their beliefs.

Synthetical Moment

During our fourth and final conversation, Mattie synthesized her reflections from her regressive, progressive, and analytical moments. This fourth moment illuminated for me as the researcher what it means to Mattie to be a teacher since the passage of *No Child Left Behind* and other trickle-down accountability policies adopted by Ohio and enforced in her district. To be a teacher today means to serve many masters, while also meeting more than the academic needs of one's students. Mattie has learned through her *currere* reflections that teaching today also requires one to balance between the professional and personal and to practice self-reflection rather than self-abuse. With a better understanding of her teacher identity, Mattie reflects on her aspirations and commits to remaining positive with her students despite the negative circumstances in which she finds herself.

Teaching in 2015-2016. According to Mattie, to be a teacher today means to have many masters, requiring one to choose which master s/he will serve. Mattie tries to keep her students

as her main master: "To me, the most important master is your students because that's who you're here to serve. That's who you're here to support, help grow." Meanwhile, other masters have different expectations for her: the state, the district, principals, and even colleagues. While she has her opinions about how best to meet the needs of her students, "maybe somebody else, one of the other masters, doesn't feel that's the best way to reach children or to teach children." For example, she attended a faculty meeting at Potter recently when her principal said, "Our job is to get these kids to pass the test." Mattie vehemently disagreed when reflecting back on that meeting:

> Oh my gosh! That's not why I'm here. I want them to, and I want them to have all the skills and abilities they need to pass, but I just want that to be a great extra bonus. That is not why I'm here. Oh! That's so not why I'm here. I'm not here to just make them pass a test. I'm here to develop a whole child. I'm here to help create a strong citizen that can go out into our democratic society and make a difference and contribute and look out for other people's needs – not just their own. That's the kind of child I want to create, too, who's also very academically prepared. My job isn't to make a kid pass a test!

With such divergent views among masters, Mattie chooses to do what is best for her students: "Ultimately, you have to decide who do you value the most as your master and who do you want to please the most." Her *currere* journey has allowed her to place a new emphasis on the master she chooses to serve, her students: "I think I've put so much energy into appeasing or even just fussing about the expectations of the ones that aren't inside this classroom, that it's taken away my energy [from] the ones inside the classroom." Reflecting on why she went into teaching in the first place – to work with students – gives her a renewed sense of purpose amidst the cacophony of expectations coming from various masters. During the beginning of her career, she was oblivious to the various entities' expectations of her: She only saw her students: "I didn't sign up to teach to please the people above me. That's not why I signed up to teach. It really was about trying to make a difference with children." She realizes how easy it is to lose sight of one's focus the longer one remains in education.

To be a teacher today means finding ways to creatively subvert external expectations, while doing what works for one's students, which requires more than a focus on academics. To Mattie, teaching means being present for and supporting students. For example, she described a young girl who came into school one day with drawings on her arms and explained to Mattie that

her mom told her that if she makes it to 17 without becoming pregnant, she can get two tattoos. She shared another story about a boy who was tired at school because he stayed up late going to the store with his family because their food card is loaded at midnight on the first of every month. Teachers are life coaches, counselors, and nurses.

Because of the many subtitles that go along with being a teacher, teaching today requires a balance between the personal and the professional, something Mattie does not claim to have mastered yet. Instead of allowing external expectations to cause her to doubt her practices and obsess over pleasing others, Mattie recognizes that she should trust her gut and focus on her main masters, her students. Losing sleep over an evaluation is just as detrimental for her students as it is for her: "When you feel beat up and worn down and tired all the time, then that's not good for them. So I'm working on that, too, as a result of this [*currere*]." Self-reflection, not self-abuse, is a helpful part of this balancing act.

Aspirations: Find the positives and hold onto them. Despite the "nightmarish" events that have unfolded over the last few years within her district, Mattie wants to take control over the amount of power she gives to the masters competing for her attention and energy. Her analytical moment revealed the effects recent changes have had on her interactions with students: She found herself tolerating less and worrying more. She intends to make a change for the positive:

> I have to somehow figure out how to let all the worry go and find ways to acknowledge and celebrate the successes of my teaching and of my students' learning… I have to change my overall outlook because I do think the years of this negativity impact me every day without me realizing it. It's not a conscious thing. I don't consciously think until more recently, I think because of [our interviews], I don't really consciously think about how just my experiences have possibly changed my interactions with kids and the way I view myself and teaching. And do I really want to give it that much power? I am really giving these negative experiences a lot of power if I'm letting them make me constantly doubt and question what I'm doing. Self-reflection is fabulous, but when you're beating yourself up, constantly worrying about *are you doing the right thing?* Then it's not very powerful. It's not really self-reflection; it's self-abuse.

She wants to become better at prioritizing her students and what she believes is good teaching instead of wasting her emotional energy worrying about what her principal and other

administrators think about her. Dwelling on the negatives by admiring problems does not solve anything. Mattie plans to focus on her students' needs and lose the worry. She believes that if she passionately feels that her strategies are effective, then worrying about outsiders is pointless: "I have to figure that out and just commit."

Discussion

Mattie's narrative revealed ways that her identity as a veteran elementary teacher is enmeshed with recent decisions made at the district level. External controls have frustrated her, impacting the amount of autonomy she feels in the classroom. I argue in this discussion that Mattie's district's adoption of workbooks to boost students' test scores treats the district's students, all of whom have been identified by Ohio as "economically disadvantaged," as "other" by employing practices that district personnel would not adopt for their own children. Additionally, I detail how a culture of fear and anxiety permeates Mattie's district, directly impacting teachers' morale and the temptation to act unethically.

External control. Like Katie, who also teaches at Potter, a considerable portion of Mattie's narrative detailed the increasing role central office district personnel have assumed in decisions directly impacting teaching and learning. Short visits to her classroom, skepticism about her decision-making, demands to utilize workbooks, seemingly artificial attempts to include teacher input, threats, and blame tactics have caused Mattie to feel that many at the district level are not on the same team as teachers. Drawing from research on teacher professionalism and identity in the midst of reforms, Day (2002) found that practices similar to those enacted in Mattie's district reduce teachers' roles as "knowledge constructors," erode their sense of autonomy, instrumentalize their work, and base their worth on compliance with district expectations (p. 687). Each of these findings can be observed in Mattie's narrative.

Recall the meeting with her principal who questioned the efficacy of math contract time to improve student test scores. To convince the principal that this time was improving student learning, Mattie had to rely on her students' math scores on an upcoming standardized assessment. Her professional judgment and years of experience as a veteran teacher were not sufficient to prove the merits of math contract time; only the test score had that kind of persuasive power.

Another example of district leadership undermining Mattie's professional discretion is evident from Mattie's discussion of the district's adoption of workbooks with the intention of boosting student test scores. Given that on the most recent district profile released by the Ohio Department of Education in 2014 all of the students in Mattie's district live in poverty,[12] I am left questioning the district leadership's assumptions about the students it serves. In other words, does Mattie's district leadership buy into the myth described in McNeil's (2000) study of magnet schools during Perot-era reforms in Texas that teaching the basics is a way of bringing up the "bottom," (*bottom* here referring to a deficit view of students living in poverty)? Drawing from Delpit's (1995) work on educating "other people's children" in reference to conceptions of minority children, McNeil (2000), argued that rather than viewing students in poverty as *our* children, we view them as *these* children, abdicating our responsibility to provide them with the quality of education we would expect for our own children. The substitution of test-prep materials for the curriculum is based on misconceptions about poor and minority students: "…that for 'these children' repetitive practice in test-drill workbooks may be better than what they had before and is useful in raising the test scores of 'these children'" (McNeil, 2000, p. 253).

Mattie rejects deficit thinking and finds creative ways to subvert district expectations to utilize workbooks because she feels a responsibility to provide meaningful and relevant learning experiences for each of her students. Postman and Weingartner (1969) referred to this type of behavior by teachers as a form of "crap detecting." Through crap detecting, individuals recognize and are sensitive to changes and "have the motivation and courage to sound alarms when entropy accelerates to a dangerous degree" (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p. 4). Decisions by district personnel that replace meaningful learning experiences with test prep workbooks do not support Mattie's personal beliefs about teaching, reflecting a philosophical dissonance (Gunzenhauser, 2012).

[12] This measure is based on meeting one of the following criteria: students eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunch, including those who have not submitted an application; students or their parents/guardians receive public assistance; or students whose parents/guardians have completed and Title 1 Student Income form and fall within the qualifying income guidelines (ODE, 2015c).

Culture of fear and anxiety. Despite Mattie's resistance to district expectations incongruent with her philosophy of education, feelings of anxiety and even fear permeated her narrative. She mentioned that teachers in her district are fearful of countering district decisions because "they don't want that target on their back." McNeil (2000) argued that accountability pressures silence stakeholder voices, based in part on the "de-identification of individuals with social groups that have a shared history from which to voice a critique" (p. 268). I argue that the disunity in Mattie's district contributes to teachers' hesitation to criticize district decisions. By silencing dissenting opinions, Mattie's district stifles the potential to challenge the premises of its decisions. Accordingly, this culture suppresses opportunities "to pose countermodels" and "envision alternative possibilities" (McNeil, 2000, p. 269). Tienken and Orlich (2013) identified the infiltration of business values in education reforms that treat teachers as obedient workers expected to obey management without question.

McNeil (2000) drew the comparison between the culture of intimidation that accompanies accountability practices and communism under the old Soviet system. Further, she contended that such a culture eschews the democratic ideals of John Dewey (McNeil, 2000). This culture counters Potter's democratic approach to education, leaving Potter's staff trying to maintain some semblance of the philosophy on which the school was founded. Changes in building leadership in recent years have resulted in increased skepticism of teacher practices. Whereas past principals encouraged teachers to voice their concerns, now their input is no longer as valued.

Mattie, however, continues to seek and validate student voice in her classroom. During weekly "community meetings," Mattie and her co-teacher bring their group of fifth and sixth graders together in a large circle where they listen to and share concerns about classroom happenings. Prior to the meeting, students write their concerns on slips of paper, which serve as discussion points during the meeting. Those who have written concerns receive a microphone to detail their thoughts with their classmates. After the concerned student has shared, other students are invited to contribute to the discussion. One concern that I heard during a classroom observation dealt with a student getting trampled by classmates lining up for recess. The concerned student shared, "It felt like no one cared about me." After a few minutes of discussion, Mattie directed the class to the problem-solving portion of the discussion, at which point students

shared possible solutions: Students should line up more calmly; the teachers could call students by table to line up; students should no longer have extra recesses.

In addition to teachers' reservations to publicly decry district decisions and the resultant undermining of democratic values espoused by Potter, Mattie's narrative illuminated anxiety-provoking aspects of her work. According to Mattie, the root of her anxiety rests on the desire to support her students to the best of her abilities, a sentiment she shares with Jada, one of the other teacher-participants in this study. Therefore, when recent test-based evaluations have labeled her anything less than "accomplished, " her self-efficacy as an effective teacher is diminished. This disconnect between her high ratings on the classroom observation portion of her evaluation and her rating as a "skilled" teacher after test scores are factored leaves her questioning her practices and the meaning of her rating. Even though her students made a year's worth of growth, it was not enough to earn an "accomplished" rating on her evaluation, and she does not understand why. If the purpose of teacher evaluations is to improve teacher practice, then how can this goal be achieved when the very one being evaluated fails to understand the meaning of her rating? Then again, maybe the purpose is not really about improving practice. How is it that Mattie is labeled effective in the eyes of her principal who observes her practices regularly yet receives an overall "skilled" rating based on scores from a test taken on one day? Perhaps this is an example of what Ravitch (2011) wrote about when she predicted that value-added models utilized in test-based teacher evaluations, like the one adopted by Ohio,[13] "would likely lead to the misidentification of effective and ineffective teachers, because the measures are statistically insufficient to the task and because so many factors that influence tests scores would not be taken into account" (p. 270).

The negativity of the present moment in teaching. A turning point in Mattie's narrative occurred during her analytical moment when she recognized the grasp of external controls on her emotions, resulting in a negative outlook on teaching in the present moment.

[13] Value-added models track the amount of "value" that a teacher "adds" to student learning from year to year (Amrein-Beardsley & Collins, 2012). Under Ohio's Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS), teachers' value-added rating corresponds to student growth defined as "the change in student achievement for an individual student between two or more points in time" (ODE, 2013, p. 5).

Negative experiences with district personnel and her "skilled" evaluation have left her doubting her efficacy as a teacher. The "nightmarish" few years of her recent past has reduced her morale, causing her to question whether or not she would remain teaching in the future. The outcome-oriented conditions of Mattie's present moment in teaching have frustrated her to the point of tears while impeding her ability to sleep soundly at night. Noddings (2007) argued that both educational ends and means should be morally justified, noting that "if the means chosen cause sleeplessness and nausea, increased boredom, poorer relationships, reduced thinking, and lower creativity, they must be rejected" (p. 80).

Exacerbating the negativity that confronts her, Mattie noted the impact of the state's designation of Potter as a "D" rated school. Under *NCLB*, schools are labeled as "failing" if they fail to meet certain annual targets for each subgroup of students (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Darling-Hammond (2004) argued that the largest gains are required from the lowest-performing schools, which serve high-need populations. According to Sirotnik (2004), states, such as Florida, label schools with letter grades to portray a commitment to high standards "without doing anything to improve the quality of education provided to students where they know conditions are most severe" (p. 70). For Mattie, the school's public rating sends the message that this school is a failure.

Mattie's narrative raises concerns about the impact of external controls and a culture of fear and anxiety on new teachers. Recognizing the current teacher shortage in her district, Mattie fears that present mandates will scare high-quality candidates away from the profession. McNeil's (2000) findings in Texas validate Mattie's concerns: The increasingly controlling system caused many teachers to leave the profession while at the same time attracting those who were willing to comply with accountability mandates. Likewise, labeling schools has had detrimental impacts on the retention of highly qualified staff: "Applying labels of failure to low-scoring schools that serve low-income students reduces the school's ability to attract and keep qualified teachers" (Darling-Hammond, 2004, p. 13).

Conclusion

Examining Mattie's narrative in light of Dewey's (1938/1997) theory of experience, particularly his continuity of experience, through the use of *currere* has revealed ways that her understanding of what it means to be a teacher in the context of recent reforms relies on the

interconnection of her past, present, and future experiences. More specifically, Mattie's narrative exposes the challenges that veteran elementary teachers may face when district expectations and high-stakes evaluations are incongruent with their beliefs about teaching and learning. As Mattie continues teaching, she will need to reflect on the power that she gives to both student test scores and to what her various "masters" think of her. Furthermore, she will need to continuously interrogate how the pressures she feels to meet district expectations while simultaneously meeting her students' diverse needs impact her interactions with students, her decisions about curriculum and instruction, and her overall well-being.

Chapter 6: Steve Grayson

Steve Grayson is in his 25th year of teaching elementary school, 20 of which he has spent at Uptown Intermediate. Currently, he serves as a fourth-grade teacher but also has experience teaching at the fifth- and sixth-grade levels. He has taught social studies and language arts, the latter of which he teaches currently. Steve has a unique perspective on the school where he teaches since he attended school in the same building when he was a student. His nostalgia of the community and school from his time as a student often surfaced during our four interviews, contributing to his narrative.

Regressive Moment

The regressive moment of Steve's narrative illuminates the many ways his past experiences contributed to his perception of his teacher identity. Examining this moment provides context within which we might have a more holistic understanding of what it means to Steve to be a teacher in an era calling for greater accountability. This moment includes his reflections on his apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975), recruitment to teaching, training, and experiences as both a substitute teacher and classroom teacher. Enmeshed within this reflective moment are glimpses of the present looking backward toward the past, resulting in an amalgam of reactions and feelings. Each of these regressive reflections serves as discussion points that organize this first moment of Steve's *currere*.

Apprenticeship of observation, recruitment, and training. During our conversations together, Steve shared memories of the teachers who left an impact on him when he was a student, for better or worse. Three in particular influenced the kind of teacher he tries to be. His third- and fourth-grade teachers showed him the importance of connecting with students on a personal level. He recalled his third-grade teacher who brought in a television to show the World Series between the Cincinnati Reds and the Baltimore Orioles. Ever the baseball fan, evident in the many baseball analogies he used during our interviews, having a teacher who shared a passion for baseball left an indelible impression on him. Likewise, his fourth-grade teacher shared a slideshow of pictures on Fridays from her travels abroad, inspiring him and revealing a world beyond his limited trips to horse shows in Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky. From these experiences, he has chosen to share his personal interests with his students, telling them about the Beatles, Elvis, baseball, and horses, to name a few. A high school teacher's insensitive

reaction after his father's severe automobile accident taught him how important empathizing with one's students is. After spending the night at the hospital with his father, he explained to his teacher the reason for his incomplete homework, and his teacher responded, "Such is life."

Steve's reasons for coming to elementary teaching as a profession align with those identified by Lortie (1975), particularly the interpersonal attraction. From his experience coaching little league baseball and judging youth pony shows in Texas, Steve remembers always loving working with children. Having a wife as a teacher provided him with intimate insights into the lives of teachers. He brought in ponies to show her classes and enjoyed interacting with her students during his visits. He also recalls a pivotal conversation he had with his brother who had a lucrative, blue-collar job, which appealed to Steve just after high school. When telling his brother about his interest in getting a job with him, his brother told him that while he did make a lot of money, he hated his job and wanted better for his brother: "You're going to go to school and you're going to find something that lights you up, and that's what you're going to do." He remembers thanking his brother for that "kick in the teeth," as he called it, when his brother was dying of cancer: "You made me find something that I was passionate about, not just something that would pay the bills."

Steve did not travel the traditional path into teaching that typically begins after high school graduation with a bachelor's degree in education. Instead, he earned a degree in communications with the goal of becoming a sportscaster, which makes sense to me after he cleverly wove sports analogies into his stories about teaching. He soon realized he was not suited for a job that required him to uproot his family often. He worked in sales for a while and enjoyed working with people but did not like pressuring them to make a purchase. He saw stability in teaching and told his wife that he wished he had gone into teaching, so he went back to college and worked for a year and a half taking core education courses and completing his field experiences.

On-the-job training. His experiences teaching began when he was pursuing an education degree. Since college had longer breaks than K-12 schools, he substitute taught in urban schools near the university during his breaks from college. His stories about these early experiences working in classrooms often included his dealings with behaviorally challenging students. Principals appreciated the way he handled discipline without involving them, allowing

him to create strong support systems that would hopefully help him find a job after earning his degree.

The day before school started the fall after graduating with his education degree, the principal at his wife's school hired him to be a sixth-grade teacher, where he remained for four years. These first four years spent at a school on "the bad end of town" provided him with numerous experiences and insights into students' lives that differed drastically from his life growing up. For example, during his first week of teaching while supervising the playground, a student pulled a knife on a group of students. Later that year, another student was caught stealing from the school. During his second year, a student started challenging his authority, and after talking with him in the hall, Steve learned that the student's father had left over the weekend, taking everything. He recalls learning during those first years that being a teacher meant fostering positive relations with students, providing a safe atmosphere, and maintaining rapport. Remembering back, he shares that there were "bigger things in some kids' lives than what you were figuring on peddling that day…Not everybody grows up the way you and I grew up." For him, establishing that he was in control of the classroom by setting up boundaries was key.

The present looking back at the past. Part way through our conversation about Steve's regressive moment, he transitioned from a chronological discussion of his early experiences as a teacher to the way that teaching has changed for him over his 25 years in the profession. With each topic of change that he detailed, I tried to ascertain when he remembers the change occurring, but identifying specific years proved difficult for him. Therefore, the remaining topics of Steve's regressive moment will not necessarily reflect the order in which, if any, these changes transpired. Instead, these concomitant topics reveal Steve's often-vehement reactions to the way teaching has changed since the passage of policies calling for greater accountability in schools: increased focus on academics; less time for instructional foci that he deems important; external decision makers; blame, resentment, indifference, and nostalgia.

Increased focus on academics: "Kids are people!" Throughout our four interviews, Steve often related his discussions of and reactions to what he perceives to be changes in education in general and teaching in particular to the way that current practices fail to treat children as whole persons. He feels that his job now depends on standards and benchmarks, excluding topics of importance to him such as honor and the connection between school and real

life: “Students need to be civilized and apply what they’re learning in school to make their life, their families, their neighborhoods, and society better.” He bemoans the emphasis on testing, purportedly measuring one’s intelligence at the expense of fostering more desirable traits: “We never talk about making them more cultured, more gentile, having more integrity…You’ve got to give kids the tools to grow as people.” He believes that one’s work ethic, honesty, and integrity contribute to strong relationships, which are necessary for thriving in society.

Practices seem incongruent with espoused values, according to Steve: “We say all the right things” such as teaching students where they are while expecting them to hit benchmarks now. Because of increased pressure to hit benchmarks, he feels that students are being made to feel like failures. Subject matter previously taught in upper grades is now being taught in elementary (e.g., economics). The focus is “achievement, achievement, achievement,” which Steve argues will burn students out: “If a kid gets his work done and it’s right, we punish him with more.”

With an increased focus on academics, Steve fears that we are losing sight of outside factors of equal or greater importance to a child’s experience as a whole person. Reminiscing on his experience as a student, Steve recalls memorable learning experiences that occurred outside of school, like the time his dad took him out of school to attend a horse sale in Indiana. He also questions the ability of a student to perform well on a standardized test given his/her home situation. For instance, he refers to the inevitable disparity in test scores from a student whose dad just ran out on his family compared to Steve’s children who come from a stable home. His comments illuminate ways that he feels that the testing era of education has objectified students: “My mom always said, ‘People are more important than things.’ Well, people are more important than test scores, too, and that’s the bottom line.”

We make time for what matters: “Bell to bell!” A second change that surfaced during my conversations with Steve dealt with time. Reflecting what he believes is a shift in focus, certain areas lost time, while others gained. For instance, the subject matter that received more attention and time during teacher meetings and in-services changed. The number of daily recesses offered decreased from two to one during his time teaching at Uptown. He also recalls a time when teachers were allowed to take their students out for extra recess at the end of the day, a practice that would receive harsh criticism today. He quips that had he been a student in a school with only one recess he would be “the biggest discipline problem in the whole place ...

But you know what? These kids, if they're lucky, if they eat their lunch quick enough, they get a few minutes outside." They might even receive a purple slip for an extra recess on Friday.

Additionally, at least a decade ago, the school day was extended, and an intervention period eventually added. With these changes came a call for bell-to-bell instruction, which Steve refers to as a buzz word that implies that nine-year-olds be expected to focus exclusively on standards-aligned instruction for the duration of the school day. Zero time should be wasted with a bell-to-bell mentality. This idea seems ludicrous to Steve based on his beliefs about children and learning: "You can't do any of the things anymore that used to give kids a little, just a little glow, you know, because [everything has to] be bell to bell," adding that he read work by educator Charlotte Mason that "lessons should be no longer than 20 minutes." He wryly acknowledges that he is allowed to take students on field trips to the restroom, "At least they're up and they're moving."

Ironically, with the 15 to 20 minute extension of the school day, one would think that teachers have more time to focus on instructional time, but Steve does not feel this is the case. Instead, he feels that he has lost "hard instruction" time due to additional testing and meetings that interrupt the school day. According to Steve, making students more intelligent by testing them more often is analogous to fattening cattle by weighing them:

> You don't fatten cattle by weighing them all the time. You fatten them by getting them to the trough. And, we're taking kids away from the trough and just putting them on the scales constantly… It just seems like a colossal waste of time.

In addition, his building has implemented a delayed start schedule on Fridays to make time for teachers to meet with a woman from the state, which he finds to be a mix up of priorities:

> Kids are going to come in on an hour delay every week while we meet with somebody from the state over some kind of data collection thing. That's a beautiful thing if you think about it, isn't it? Get kids for an hour less so we can talk to the state an hour more.

He would rather use that time to plan "something nicer for the kids."

Who's running the show here, anyway?: "Bureaucracies make me tired." The person Steve titles, "the woman from the state," not only represents a change in time but also illustrates how decisions about schooling are now being made by those farther removed from schools. Steve argues that people now in power to make decisions are those with little or no experience working with children. He sees little value in the meetings with the woman from the state and

instead views those interactions as "hoops to jump through." He questions the efficacy of the required meetings with her: "What impact is she really going to have?" He sees no connection between his meetings with her and his practices as a teacher:

> It has no bearing on what I do in the classroom…and I'm going to jump through the little hoops like a trained beagle…and when it's over, I will go back, and I will do what I think works or what I can do given the constraints I'm [under].

He recalls another instance when the district paid 5,000 dollars to someone from a university to lead a workshop on developing a new mission statement when their time and energy would have been better spent elsewhere.

To be clear, when it comes to local decision makers in the district, specifically administrators, including the principals in his building, he holds them in high regard. He feels a great level of trust in his district and attributes that to "leadership with a strong moral compass." He remembers a past principal who scrutinized teachers' work and despite the school's success on the fifth-grade reading proficiency before she joined the staff at Uptown, she insisted on changing their approach to literacy instruction from phonics to whole language. That was the only negative reaction he shared about his experiences with building leadership.

"We're not in Kansas anymore, Toto": Blame, resentment, indifference, nostalgia. As I listened to Steve narrate his regressive moment, I picked up on various feelings that he has toward the changes that have come his way as a veteran elementary teacher. I sensed a feeling of obligation to help his students succeed on tests, not necessarily because doing so helps his students – maybe this is the case, but it never came up in conversation – but because he does not want his school, the leadership, or the district to be found at fault. The following excerpt from an interview elucidates this obligation:

> There are a lot of things that I know are better for kids, but my school's going to get nicked if we don't make this. I'm going to get nicked if we don't make this. We're all going to get dinged because that's what we judge everything by, that number. You can't judge human beings by numbers. They're people. People are more complicated than a test score.

As a teacher, he feels the weight of this obligation falling directly on his shoulders: "Everything now is thrown on us. I must not be doing my job. [The] principal must not be doing his job. [The] superintendent's not doing his job." He wonders where parents come into the mix.

Blame accompanies this obligation resulting in what Steve refers to as "peddling," which, after hours of conversation with Steve, I infer to mean doing what one can to appease those making decisions: "The only person taking the hit is the teacher, so obviously we're going to peddle. That's how you make your living."

This obligation causes Steve to feel resentment, indifference, and even nostalgia. He resents spending time participating in tasks that he feels are "basically jumping through hoops [and] checking boxes." At the same time, however, he exudes an air of indifference in areas where other teachers voice frustration and angst. For instance, when talking about the recent changes to the way that Ohio evaluates teachers under the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) that bases up to half of a teacher's evaluation on student test scores, Steve displays an almost laissez-faire attitude, which he partially attributes to being thick-skinned:

> Here's my thing: I do my thing, and then the hay's in the barn. [The students] know [the tested material] or they don't. They draw a version of the test … that clicks with them, or they draw one that doesn't. I don't know. Whatever. It just is what it is. I don't worry about it.

Steve further defends his almost apathetic attitude toward the test-based evaluations by noting the volatile nature of the test scores, hinting at the lack of control he feels over his students' scores. Making a connection to the treatment of Jesus before being crucified, Steve remarks on the treatment teachers receive based on their students' scores by saying, "One week [the administration is] throwing palms in your path and the next they're yelling, 'Crucify him!'" The volatility of the scores causes Steve to ask, "Why worry? What good does that do?"

Reflecting back on the changes of teaching from his apprenticeship of observation to the present, Steve often romanticized and longed for the past. He fondly highlighted holiday times at school when he was a young student, building a pilgrim village out of milk cartons and popsicle sticks around Thanksgiving and drawing a nativity scene on the chalkboard before Christmas. His nostalgia reminds him of a way of schooling that he wants for his students: "That's what I remember. I don't remember taking tests. I don't remember what my spelling words were. I remember those things."

Progressive Moment

Contrasted with the deeply personal nature of Steve's regressive moment, his thoughts about his future as a teacher take a drastic turn toward the impersonal. Perhaps this is due in part to what Lortie (1975) identified as one of the three sentiments of the teaching profession: presentism. While Steve predicts having five or ten years until retirement, his discussion about the future included his projections about different players in education, notably students and new and continuing teachers given the current climate in education. Despite the fair amount of tainted optimism, fear, and sadness that color his progressive moment, he holds on to hope that this too shall pass.

Steve refers to himself as "typically a glass-half-full-plus-free-refills kind of guy" when beginning to detail his progressive moment, remarking that until two or three years ago he would have still encouraged prospective teachers to go into the profession:

> And I would still say that to someone who really wants to do it, but now…I would realize more of it is going to be centered around things [not actually having to do with the students]… You're going to spend more time in all of this…drowning in data and everything.

He attributes this recent reservation to recommend the profession to the transformation of education from an art to a science. He details the current emphasis on breaking down skills in place of teaching students to apply skills, pointing to context clues as an example. Similarly, spending time and resources belaboring the school's mission statement diverts attention from teaching and learning: "And we spend millions of, billions of dollars, I guess, and all kinds of time and energy sucking the life out of both sides of this thing, kids and adults, to just try to come up with…some new insight." He reminisces and even idealizes the simplicity and efficacy of past teaching practices: "Good teachers used to come in and connect with kids and tell stories."

These "scientific" practices in education cause Steve to fear for the uncertain future that awaits new teachers entering the profession. He questions whether the reliance on data-driven practices will deter people who would make the best teachers from joining the profession since, he argues, "most people who go into teaching are people-oriented people." His statement implies that the interpersonal attractor of teaching is being usurped by the use of data in schools. He wonders if he would have chosen teaching had the profession looked back then how it looks today: "I look at this and I think, *If this is what teaching would have looked like 25 years ago, I*

don't think I would have been so willing to turn in the keys to the company car and go back [to college to pursue an education degree]." Instead of honing their teaching craft to meet students' diverse needs, Steve fears that new teachers will be forced to base decisions on data at the expense of treating students as people:

> I feel sorry for these [new teachers] that are going to come in and instead of going in and following [their] instincts with what to do with a kid… sometimes just realizing it's not all by the book. People are more complex than that. … All of a sudden, everything is data, data, data. You know what? … You don't want your child being a piece of data. You don't want your child being evaluated on nothing but numbers. They're people; they're not numbers. They're not widgets that you can measure for quality control. They're human beings. I guess my biggest fear is that we're losing that.

The increasingly high-stakes nature of students' test scores on teachers' evaluations causes Steve to fear the ways that teachers might act unethically in the future. He talks about current practices at the end of each school year when teachers assign students to classrooms for the following year and how these practices will change as students' test scores are tied to more than just teachers' evaluations:

> Eventually it's not just going to be evaluations. It'll probably be paychecks and everything else. … Once you start down a slope, you usually don't stop yourself until you hit the mud at the bottom. … I'm afraid as much for the kids as I am the teachers on that.

Steve's comments hint at feeling personally exempt from this temptation because of his seniority, the nearness of retirement, and having a solid track record as far as his students' scores are concerned.

Steve concluded his projections during his progressive moment by outlining his hopes for the future. Based on his experiences as a teacher with education reforms, he hopes that these changes are part of a pendulum swing in education policy that has reached its apex: "We've gone about as far as we can go and then it will start back." But his hope is shadowed by a fear that perhaps the inevitable nature of change in education is no longer the case: "But I don't know that it's a pendulum. And that's what scares me." He holds onto faith that those in educational leadership positions will make a positive change: "I do hope that at some point people will start

saying that, 'Hey! Enough's enough. Let's take a look at what we're doing here." Despite his tainted optimism about the future, Steve brings the focus back to his students:

> I guess the good part is there's always going to be kids. Even though sometimes, especially where I'm at, their lives are messier than what mine was … they're still children. You'll always have that. And that's the thing that I guess I would tell somebody who was thinking about going into teaching: If you can keep your focus on that, do it. Know what you're going to have to fight to hold onto that because if you ever lose that, you might as well be selling insurance.

Analytical Moment

Given the marriage of the present with the past during Steve's regressive moment and the future during his progressive moment, his analytical moment provided insights into how Steve views himself as a veteran elementary teacher without repeating those aspects of his present already detailed in the aforementioned sections. This interview proved to be a turning point from my perspective as the researcher because it was during his third interview when we started to dig behind the "what" of his narrative into the "why." One of the recurring comments he made during our first two interviews dealt with his perception of his average-ness as a teacher, so naturally part of the analytical moment involved unearthing what Steve means by this seemingly self-deprecating proclamation of what some, including myself, would view as an acceptance of mediocrity. In addition to discussing his present, we talked about the interrelation of the past, present, and future by examining how the future is in the present and the past in the future.

I'm just an average teacher. Steve's references to being an average teacher bothered me each time I listened to him utter the word "average." I questioned how someone in a position of great influence over students' livelihoods could accept anything less than exceptionalism. Who aspires to be average? Steve made the comparison once that a C grade is average, and that's not a bad grade. But in this student/researcher's mind, anything less than an A might as well be failing, and should we not strive to be A teachers for our students? Fortunately, I am thankful to have broached this topic with Steve so that I could lay my evaluative assumptions to rest.

Steve described what he meant by being an *average* teacher by comparing his practices to those of what Steve deems to be *excellent* teachers. Based on his description, I inferred that to

Steve excellent teachers are those who work hours at school after the students have left for the day, have decorative classrooms, assume a parenting role as a teacher, participate in extracurricular activities and clubs, and fight the external decision makers in education. In this discussion of average versus excellent teachers, both Steve and I noticed instances when his explanations and justifications seemed to contradict.

To Steve, teachers spend time working on tasks with little return: "We kind of go overboard in pursuit of things where there's not much bang for the buck." For example, he comments on teachers staying after school to laminate teddy bears or work on classroom decorations when he feels that it is the relationships that students remember, not what their classroom looks like. From his perspective, working longer hours does not yield improved relationships or higher test scores than what he experiences with his students. Steve draws an analogy between the length of a baseball season and that of a school year to illustrate the necessity of pacing one's self as a teacher:

> The school year is a marathon; it's not a sprint. It's a lot more like a baseball season… you have to find some way to still be functioning in March and April the way you functioned in August and September."

Likewise, a long workday leaves little time for family, something that is a top priority for Steve. He refuses to work late or participate in extracurricular activities at the expense of his family, adding that striving for balance makes him a better teacher.

While Steve endeavors to be an engaged father in the lives of his children, he resists the practice that other teachers adopt of being a parent in the classroom:

> I've never tried to be a dad to these kids. I can't… but I can be the best teacher I can for them. I can be an advocate for them. I can love them. I can care about them. But I can't take the place of [their] dad no matter what the situation is.

Steve contends that being a father in the classroom is not his role. He prefers to set up boundaries while still caring for his students. Being a parent in the classroom points to a problem that Steve associates with the expectation that teachers wear many hats:

> I think one of the biggest problems we have in education is we are trying to do too much, and so we spend a lot of time doing things we're not as good at as we are at what we could be … There's a point at which you're asking teachers to produce as much or more than they ever have.

Despite his decision not to father the students in the classroom, he tries to "augment some things that are missing" in his students' relationships with their fathers. One way he practices this is by listening to students: "One of the things that a lot of our kids just don't seem to get is somebody at home that listens to them, that talks *to* them or *with* them, not just *at* them."

Being an excellent teacher also involves standing up to the external decision makers in education who have enacted policies that place an inordinate amount of emphasis on testing and data-driven decision-making. Steve does not believe that he will defeat the "suits up in Columbus," as he refers to them, or Congress. Instead, he derives satisfaction from participating in "the little guerilla warfare" in his classroom. He considers victories in the battle against the suits when he teaches skills that cannot be measured on standardized tests, when the students come alive:

> I know you up in Columbus don't like this because it's not as measurable as your little AIR test and everything, but you know what? I can measure it, maybe not exactly, but when I see a kid come to life that's usually just… sitting there rolling their eyes and staring out the window and I see them come to life and get engaged … I can measure that.

The future in the present: Subverting is the name of the game. Due to Steve's impending retirement and the boldness that has come with age, he feels able to rebel and subvert the demands of those expecting him to "turn children into pieces of data – into numbers," for the most part. While he attends meetings and sometimes keeps his obstinate opinions to himself, once the meetings are over he returns to business as usual in his classroom:

> Because of my age and that feeling that I'm pretty much almost to the end of this particular race, I haven't let it affect me as much. … And I don't intend to let it affect me anymore than necessary.

He complies to a point, flying under the radar in order to keep people "off his back." He has resisted a team leader's insistence on using data binders to inform instruction. Similarly, he chooses to somewhat disregard the expected practice of his administrators to form intervention groups based on test data: "Big Brother is out there, but they can't look at everything… Sometimes I have that kid [in a certain intervention group] because of a gut feeling."

There are areas, however, where Steve feels that he has complied with external expectations in order to "play the game" of appeasing decision makers. We discussed my classroom observations during his reading instruction when students were completing reading

comprehension sheets even though he enjoys enhancing students' love of reading through novel studies. His choice to utilize worksheets is an effort to be able to provide administrators with a satisfactory answer should they question his methods for improving a student's test scores.

The past in the future: Empowerment through tradition and pride. Steve has either lived or worked in the Uptown community for 53 years, and because of his history with the community he has certain hopes for his students' future that he intends to help them achieve. Over the years, he has watched the family structures in his community change as people from his generation had children and moved out of the community. He feels a responsibility to maintain something of the culture he has known during his time in the community, and he works to achieve this both inside and outside the classroom. He hopes to spend his last years as a teacher empowering students by showing them that people from their community have gone on to do great things after school, and that they, too, will be fine. He believes and wants his students to know that grades do not determine one's future success or happiness. He also serves in a community-school partnership role that is dedicated to preserving the history of the area. His passion for American exceptionalism and tradition permeated many of our conversations.

Synthetical Moment

Our fourth and final interview focused on Steve's synthetical moment in an attempt to illuminate his new understanding of who he is in light of his past, present, and future. This moment reveals Steve's thoughts and revelations as to what being a veteran elementary teacher during the accountability era in education means for him. Likewise, this moment provided Steve with the opportunity to consider his aspirations (Pinar & Grumet, 1976) and to consider how his identity aligns with those aspirations.

Synthesizing his reflections over the previous three moments resulted in a renewed sense of purpose for Steve: "I think the thing that I've learned out of this reflective process is that the main reason I got into teaching is still the main reason that I want to continue teaching today, and that's to inspire kids." Achieving this aim with his students in the present education climate requires compromise and creativity. Steve believes that compromise is ubiquitous to all aspects of life, and education is no exception. Individuals are faced with the task of assuaging outside influences while staying true to their purpose and personal and/or professional philosophies. Accepting the necessity of compromise as a teacher is being realistic:

> There are always constraints that are on you. Education is no different. So I can sit here, and I can bemoan all of this, but these changes have happened. And I'm not going to change that. And that's not a defeatist attitude. There's a difference between being defeatist and being realistic.

One resists defeatism by accepting the reality that current policies have been enacted and finding ways to work creatively to stay true to one's purpose:

> That stuff's there. You can either let it be an excuse for not doing any of this other stuff that I'm saying is important to me, or you can just say, "Okay, fine. This is the world we live in. Now, how am I going to find a way to not let it stop me?"

To Steve, this realization means finding ways to be the kind of teacher he aspires to be, one who inspires children and teaches American exceptionality.

Steve acknowledges that he has taught more classes, students, and years than he will teach in the future. His limited time remaining in the profession causes him to consider how he wants to spend his last years:

> Time is the coin of life. You've only got so much of it. Are you going to let the knuckleheads and the bureaucracies dictate how that time's going to go for you, or are you going to find ways despite having to deal with them to overcome them? That's what I want to spend my next five to ten doing.

Steve hopes to spend his last years as a reading teacher engaging students in novel studies and teaching them about themes. He says that if test scores were out the window, his classroom would be completely literature based. Of greater importance to Steve, however, is the desire to spend his remaining years empowering his students to reach their potential, to develop their individual talents. He contrasts this aspiration with current practices that treat children as a number or a piece of data. Steve believes that schooling should help students make their dreams come true:

> I hope somewhere along the line, some kids will say, "You know what? Mr. Grayson encouraged me." I hope they'll say that I showed them that there were possibilities outside the box. They didn't have to color inside the lines. They didn't have to march to the same beat everybody else did.

In order to align his current identity as a teacher with his aspirations, Steve feels that he needs to be more intentional with finding ways to inspire students while also remaining passionate about

teaching through the end of his career despite the constraints he feels he is under. For him to keep his passion alive, he will have to not "let the knuckleheads [making decisions] beat [him] down." He intends to stay the course and finish strong and avoid counting down the time remaining until he receives his pension.

Discussion: The Instrumentalization of Teaching

One of the recurring themes I noticed during my conversations with Steve centered on his belief that teaching today is less of an artistic profession and more of a scientific one. For this discussion, however, I substitute the terms *technical* and *instrumental* in place for *scientific* due to historical developments in science resulting in a shift away from a positivistic[14] view toward a more discovery and inquiry-based process (Martin et al., 1976; Sander, 2014). When Steve uses *science* to describe the current condition of teaching, he adopts the older, more positivistic view. Thus, I believe that my adoption of *technical* and *instrumental* more accurately represents Steve's views. To deepen our understanding of Steve's concern about the transformation of teaching as an artistic to instrumental profession, I begin with a discussion of teaching as an art, followed with the transition toward a more technical profession, resulting in a number of consequences.

The argument for teaching as an art. While recognizing that not all teachers engage in teaching as an art, Eisner (2002) identified four senses that "confer on [the teaching act] the status of an art" (p. 156). Teaching has the potential to provide students with an aesthetic experience through the artistic ways in which teachers pose questions, give lectures, and orchestrate activities, which, taken together, result in a sort of performance. Like other artists, teachers make qualitative judgments *during* an act: "The teacher must 'read' the emerging qualities and respond with qualities appropriate to the ends sought or the direction he or she wishes the students to take" (Eisner, 2002, p. 155). Teachers respond to qualitative judgments and contingencies rather than solely relying on prescriptions and routines, balancing between automaticity and inventiveness. When teaching is an art, the ends emerge in process, discovered through interaction with students rather than defined beforehand.

[14] Positivists "accept as knowledge only claims about the relationships of measured variables" (Quantz, 2014b, p. 2).

Teacher as technocrat. Recent trends that 1) base instructional decisions on data rather than on one's understanding of his/her students; 2) attempt to break teaching down into a number of learnable skills; and 3) focus on achievement and measurement rather than promoting student understanding and growth as people and citizens contribute to Steve's belief that teaching is more of a technical profession than it was when he first became a teacher. Some have argued that these instrumental means are linked to positivism (Martin et al., 1976) fueled by economic concerns influencing the aim of education (Biesta, 2010; Sirotnik, 2004). Nineteenth and twentieth century positivists operationalized experiences through a shift away from understanding experiences toward measuring them (Martin et al., 1976). Measurement is a necessary ingredient in an accountability system that emphasizes efficiency and quality assurance (Biesta, 2010).

Steve's comment that the current focus in education is "achievement, achievement, achievement" aligns with Gunzenhauser's (2012) contention that value in education has been supplanted by student achievement. Drawing a connection to the business sector in which accountability centers on profit as the bottom line, Noddings (2007) argued that the bottom line in an accountability system of education is student achievement measured by standardized assessments: "It is as though we have decided that there is one aim in education: to produce high achievement scores" (p. 41). Under this aim, various forms of measurement have been employed to monitor progress toward the goal of increased achievement. Steve observes that it is as if accountabilists (Martin et al., 1976) believe that students will become more intelligent by testing them more frequently. Likewise, Meier and Wood (2004) argued that *NCLB* confuses measuring schools with improving them. Moreover, an obsession with measurement diverts attention away from students, as *what* is measured (i.e., achievement) becomes more important than *who* is measured (Gunzenhauser, 2012).

Collateral damage. Consequently, achievement-oriented practices lead to a narrow definition of education (Martin et al., 1976; Noddings, 2007; Sirotnik, 2004), which converts teachers into technocrats (Day, 2002; Hargreaves, 2010; Martin et al., 1976; McNeil, 2000; Noddings, 2007) and fails to treat students as whole people (McNeil, 2000; Noddings, 2007; Sirotnik, 2004). The reliance on standardized assessments as the preferred measure of student achievement ignores educational aspects of schooling that cannot be measured (Martin et al., 1976), greatly reducing the curriculum that teachers emphasize (Noddings, 2007). The use of

behavioral objectives which dictate what students are to learn detracts from other aims of education (Noddings, 2007) such as intrinsic purposes, including the "enhancement of knowledge and understanding, the fostering of rationality and good judgment, the opening of minds and overcoming of provincialism and close-mindedness, the enlargement of imagination, the fostering of creativity, and so on" (Sirotnik, 2004, p. 59). When only behavioral objectives get measured, then thinking, an unobservable act, goes unmeasured (Martin et al., 1976). Under this system, little room is left for Steve to promote ideals that he values: citizenship, honor, and American exceptionalism.

Curriculum, conceived of narrowly (i.e., through scripted curriculum programs), constrains teachers' creativity to act as autonomous and knowledgeable professionals (Day, 2002), or as Eisner (2002) argued, as artists. "Teachers," according to Noddings (2007), "should be models of educated persons," but instead serve as "machines to 'deliver instruction"' under a system that prescribes what should be taught (p. 56). The current climate that emphasizes efficiency and productivity instrumentalizes teacher work (Martin et al., 1976) through a reliance on behavioral objectives (i.e., observable and measurable goals for students) and the use of data-driven decision-making. Rather than engaging students in novel studies, Steve must supplement his reading instruction with more measurable means. Providing data to show student progress in reading is more easily facilitated through the use of a four-question reading comprehension worksheet than through literature discussions.

To Steve, the preceding issues are most concerning when current practices fail to treat students as whole people by ignoring the primacy of students' home situation, pressuring students to perform, and artificially separating their school experiences from life. McNeil (2000) argued that accountability systems that emphasize test scores overlook students' social, emotional, and intellectual development: "It is as if the 'whole child' became a stick figure" (p. 262). Further, outcome-oriented foci delegitimize "students as children, excluding human and cultural development" (McNeil, 2000, p. 262). When education is fueled by economic concerns, students are treated as future "workers," viewed as a means-to-and-end rather than as ends-in-themselves (Sirotnik, 2004). Steve, joined by Sirotnik (2004), Noddings (2007), and others, believes that teachers should help students grow as whole people.

Artist or technocrat: Steve's responses to changing expectations of teachers. Since my research question deals with how teachers *narrate* their experiences, my purpose in the

present study is not to evaluate whether or not Steve's practices are more artistic or instrumental. Instead, I base my discussion of Steve's responses to the transition toward teaching as a technical profession on his description during our four interviews. Steve believes that in some ways the current system that reduces learning to test scores challenges him to find creative ways to continue teaching topics of importance to him, echoing one of the findings in McNeil's (2000) study of Texas magnet school teachers' responses to Perot-era accountability reforms. One of the participating teachers argued with those saying that the system was hampering creativity by responding that the system required *more* creativity – creativity not to ruin their courses (McNeil, 2000).

One way in which Steve tries to creatively meet prescribed objectives while teaching about topics that he values is through the integration of Aesop's Fables. During one of my classroom observations, Steve talked to his class about the necessity to act as caring individuals during the upcoming days when fourth grade would be adding a teacher and moving some students from existing classes into a new teacher's class. He shared stories from his life that detailed moments when individuals were particularly caring toward him, like the cop who pulled him over but did not issue him a ticket after hearing about Steve's mother's diagnosis with cancer earlier that day. Students discussed examples of caring through a reading of "The Ant and the Dove" and "The Good Samaritan."

Conversely, Steve's compliance with expectations to employ more measurable forms of instruction, as detailed previously, is based on a desire to appease his administrators. More important, however, Steve acknowledges the reputation of his district and the surrounding community: "I don't teach in a district that this comes easy to." Having a life-long attachment to the community certainly influences his desire to be a part of improving the district's reputation by preparing his students for the standardized assessments.

Conclusion

Steve's attachment to the community where he grew up and has been teaching for over two decades revealed ways that his understanding of what it means to be a teacher in the context of recent reforms relies on the interconnection of his past, present, and future experiences. Second, his beliefs about good teaching center on a recognition and treatment of students as whole persons. As a result, his narrative exposes the challenges that veteran elementary teachers

may face when accountability policies instrumentalize teachers' work and undermine their beliefs about what knowledge is of most worth. Further, his narrative illuminates the tension teachers may feel to creatively integrate what they value as worthwhile curriculum while simultaneously meeting district expectations. As Steve finishes out the remaining years until retirement, he will need to assess whether or not his actions align with his espoused values that prioritize student empowerment, character development, a love of reading, and pride in one's community and country.

Chapter 7: Jada Shoals

Jada Shoals, a 17-year elementary teacher, teaches social studies and language arts to fourth graders at Broadview Elementary. Prior to teaching fourth grade, Jada spent 11 years at the fifth-grade level. Jada's experiences as a mother before becoming a teacher have influenced her teacher identity, as will be apparent in my restorying of her *currere* narrative. Likewise, in her quest to be a person of integrity, her school life and teaching experiences have been and continue to be inseparable from her selfhood. Accordingly, her narrative reveals the deeply personal and emotional impacts of accountability practices on Jada's identity.

Regressive Moment

Jada's narrative begins with a reflection on those past experiences that have contributed to her teacher identity. A return to the past is necessary to understand how Jada's past has superimposed itself onto her present (Pinar, 1976). In restorying her regressive moment, I chose to organize her reflections into three sections, beginning with a chronological rendering of her journey toward becoming a teacher. This initial section includes her college training (Lortie, 1975), decision to stay home with her children, and on-the-job training at the start of her career. Second, when reflecting on formative past experiences that shaped her identity, Jada chose to describe turning points in her career (i.e., leadership changes, grade level changes, grant writing, and continued education). Finally, I conclude Jada's regressive moment with a discussion of her observations of and reactions to a trend toward more prescriptive instruction that she has witnessed over the last decade.

Becoming a teacher. Judging from the banners that hang from Jada's classroom wall that read "Best Practice Teacher 2002-2003" and "Sunnyside Schools Master Teacher," one could easily assume that Jada has been teaching for over 20 years. In reality, her journey before becoming a classroom teacher involved a few turns and pit stops. Initially, Jada pursued a degree in journalism until her sophomore year of college when she made the switch to elementary education. Teaching seemed to mesh with who she was as a person: She was creative, enjoyed writing and music, and liked kids and being playful. Likewise, a teacher's schedule was compatible with that of a family. Jada married at age 20, and because of her husband's schooling she student taught during her junior year and spent her last year of college attending literature and history classes.

After graduation, and unable to find a teaching job, Jada worked in an administrative position at a college until her husband finished graduate school. They then moved back to Ohio to be near family, and Jada had two children within 18 months of each other. Her husband worked as a pastor, and she decided to stay home with their expanding family. When she could, she worked as a substitute teacher at nearby schools while her children attended school. During her substitute teaching experiences, Jada observed several instructional styles, adding to her repertoire of teaching strategies. Reflecting back, Jada recalls learning that good teaching meant integrating subject matter, which she employs today with social studies and language arts. Her perspective as a mother before becoming a teacher proved advantageous for Jada and still impacts how she views teachers: "A mother in the classroom. A nurturer. A guide. An encourager. A challenger." She served as the president of the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) at her children's elementary school, providing her with invaluable leadership experiences and insights about teaching and schooling from a parent's perspective.

Once her three children were in second, sixth, and seventh grades, Jada pursued a full-time teaching position after completing a yearlong substitute stint for her best friend at Broadview. The following year, the principal of Broadview hired Jada as a fourth-grade teacher, a position that she felt honored to assume. On this first year, Jada remembers feeling as though she had fallen behind in her teaching methods, having taken a 10-year hiatus from education since graduating from college. Even though she struggled to remember how to write lesson plans, she had the advantage of having a mother's perspective, which provided her with a sense of confidence:

> But what was there, especially at conferences, I'm a mom, and I can talk to [parents] about [their] kids like I want somebody to talk to me about my kid. I brought to the table experience of children, deep experience of children, not so much methods.

Her mothering inclinations are apparent from her description of her attitude toward teaching and working with young children:

> These kids are entrusted to me and if you're in my class, you are in my classroom for a reason, and I will love you. And I will make sure you are safe and challenged and get what you need.

Even during her first year, she felt a responsibility to love her students: "Kids sense it if you don't like them." Consequently, Jada treated students with dignity, no matter who they were, which meant believing that every child could learn.

Despite her confidence as a mother in the classroom, Jada questions her first-year teaching practices: "What the heck kind of teacher was I, anyway?" She found lesson planning challenging and still does because she finds it difficult to be driven by outcomes. Professional development opportunities provided her with strategies to reach each of her students, and despite the negative climate of Broadview's staff during Jada's first year, she tried to collaborate with colleagues to strengthen her craft.

Turning points: Shaping a teacher identity. Jada describes the first three years of her time at Broadview as tumultuous. Not only was there a bad vibe on the staff, but people at Broadview disliked Jada's principal. While Jada reacquainted herself with teaching methods and lesson planning, she found herself navigating a negative school climate while trying to socialize with colleagues and find common ground. She preferred to solve problems rather than cast blame, and she sometimes felt as though she was betraying the person who hired her. The unhealthy atmosphere put a strain on Jada's attempt to stay afloat during her first years as a full-time teacher.

Jada began her fourth year of teaching at Broadview under a different principal after her previous principal left. During this time, she developed her leadership skills by serving on the principal's Hall of Fame committee, which worked to earn Hall of Fame designation from the state. She collaborated with her best friend, Peg, who also worked at Broadview. Jada looped to fifth grade with one of her fourth-grade classes, where she remained for 11 years and taught with Peg and another colleague. She fondly recalls enjoying her fifth-grade team's energy and creativity when planning lessons for their students.

Around this time, Jada's passion for diversity and desire to deepen students' understanding of content culminated in a district initiative that she titled BRIDGES, which stands for Building Relationships to Increase Diversity and Gain Educational Success. After reading Ruby Bridge's (1999) book *Through My Eyes* with her students, Jada wrote a grant to bring Ruby Bridges to Broadview. Broadview, with a primarily white student population partnered with another urban school with a large African American population, and both schools' students were pen pals and read the book together. This experience empowered Jada, resulting

in an increased involvement in the BRIDGES diversity council and her pursuit of other grants, including one that provided multicultural books for Broadview's book room.

Jada's seventh year of teaching began under the leadership of her third principal, with whom Jada established a close relationship. She remembers attending informative and beneficial professional development sessions including sessions on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with this principal, including a book study and presentation of *Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessing & Grading in the Differentiated Classroom* by Rick Wormeli (2006), which she still uses today. Despite her growth as a teacher under this principal's tenure, several colleagues did not approve of the principal's handling of challenging students. At the same time, Jada recalls working with a "toxic" teacher who tainted Broadview's school climate.

In addition to strengthening her craft through Broadview's professional development opportunities, Jada describes her pursuit of a master's degree in teacher leadership as a pivotal learning experience. Her graduate studies broadened her learning in the areas of assessment and educational psychology while increasing her sense of professionalism. She saw the importance of being held accountable as a teacher by making decisions with intentionality and documenting her practices. During this time, she realized the value of reflection and began writing in a professional journal. Works by Parker Palmer, notably *The Courage to Teach* (1998), and Joel Spring prompted her to think more deeply about teaching and learning. She wrote a mission statement that still hangs in her classroom and serves as a reminder for both her and her students: "Above all, cultivate these things: A courageous spirit, a generous heart, and a disciplined mind." She appreciated engaging in professional conversations with teachers from different schools and districts:

> When you're in your classroom, when you just are in your zone, you don't know what's going on elsewhere and it's easy to become very myopic. So you find out what's going on in other districts. You see how other people do what they do. You listen.

Putting her teacher leadership skills to action, Jada wrote another $15,000 grant to bring author of *Lies My Teacher Told Me,* James Loewen (2007), and Carolyn Mazloomi, an African American author and textile artist who makes story quilts, to her district. This grant, through the BRIDGES council, was entitled "Bridging the Divide: Our Stories as Connectors." Loewen came to the community and the high school, and Mazloomi visited each of the elementary schools in Jada's district. Reflecting on why she wrote both this grant and the Ruby Bridges

grant, Jada recognizes her transition toward becoming a teacher leader, laughing at a passing thought to pursue administration: "Hell, no. Forget that."

Jada's fourth principal from 2009 through 2012 provided leadership that spurred Jada's growth in reading instruction and communication with students. Jada identifies teaching reading as an area of weakness for her and attributes improvements to reading instruction to her fourth principal, who was an experienced reading teacher. Jada admired her principal's communication style with students that encouraged students to practice self-discipline. Fay and Funk's (1995) *Teaching with Love & Logic: Taking Control of the Classroom* influenced Jada's attitude toward her students, as she held students accountable while also showing them empathy. She appreciated her principal's follow-through and documentation when working with teachers and worked to emulate these leadership traits in her classroom.

Over the past five years, Jada has changed grades three times. After spending 11 years at the fifth-grade level with Peg, Jada returned to fourth grade for one year and then moved back to fifth grade the next year. While in fifth grade, Jada taught with Peg who now had a gifted endorsement, causing all of the gifted students to be placed with her and the struggling readers with Jada. Dissatisfied with this arrangement, Jada returned to fourth grade where she has since remained. Although she misses working with someone with whom she shares many similarities, she appreciates working on a team with someone whose organizational strengths balance Jada's creativity. She learns from her fourth-grade colleague by observing her and reflecting: "That's where the reflection comes in. [If] you always do what you always did, you'll always get what you always got, right? So, it's important to reflect…" She also includes her students in her reflective journey by asking them to complete report cards for her. For instance, last year's class commented on her messy desk, which she notes she has since improved.

Toward more prescriptive instruction: Reflections on the past. While sharing the various turning points during her career in teaching, Jada remarked about the transition toward more prescriptive instruction, which I asked her to elaborate on after she finished detailing her chronology. This aspect of her regressive moment overlaps with some of the aforementioned turning points while also extending the conversation to reveal Jada's reactions to this shift. Jada recalls following Ohio's course of study for social studies and language arts to inform her instruction when she first started teaching. Before the high-stakes testing of today, Jada

administered Ohio's fourth-grade proficiency test, which I happened to take as a fourth-grade student in Ohio roughly 20 years ago.

Later, Ohio transitioned to the Ohio Achievement Test (OAT), and Broadview incorporated Response to Intervention (RTI) practices that placed students into tiers. Teachers closely monitored students in tiers two and three through ongoing assessment and documentation. In fifth grade, students took the OAT in reading, writing, math, social studies, and science, which the Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA) eventually replaced. By this point, teachers found released items from previous years' tests online and assigned them to their students in preparation for the spring assessment: "Because you have to get those scores!" Jada explained how the OAA affected her teaching:

> We want to get good scores for our school. So, up until that time, until like March, we'd give them for homework now and then. We'd go over a packet a week, go over a story a week, and then amp it up in February and talk about test-taking strategies. … Then you'd give them a half practice test in January to see how they would do.

Then, only a few years ago, Ohio adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), causing Jada's district to develop a curriculum guide with which teachers were required to note which items they taught and when. Jada does not mind having a curriculum guide to follow so long as the items on it are "worthy things for kids," and she appreciates having direction when planning her lessons. Shortly thereafter, Ohio also implemented Pearson's Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) to assess students' mastery of the CCSS. After only one year of PARCC, Ohio dropped it for the American Institute of Research (AIR) assessment that will be implemented this year in language arts and math. Meanwhile, students take the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) computerized assessment three times per year.

Pressure to perform well on Ohio's standardized assessments mounted when Ohio implemented the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES), which ties up to half of a teacher's evaluation to his/her students' test scores. Jada's performance on her OTES ratings over the last few years has been inconsistent, leaving her confused, frustrated, and offended. A few years ago, she barely missed the *accomplished* rating because her students' test scores were two points shy of the goal: "I think it's ridiculous. And it makes me mad." Another year, Jada's students

performed so well on the reading assessment that she was asked to serve on a district panel of reading teachers.

This year, Jada's principal gave her a *skilled* rating in an area that she prides herself in: knowing her students. This rating offends her and causes her to want to address her principal:

> I want to say to [my principal], "Are you getting pressure to not give people *accomplished*? Is it that you're not supposed to, because don't you know me? Don't you know that this is an area that I'm strong in? ... You know me. You know what I do. You know the relationships I have with my kids. How can you give me skilled in this? What's behind *your* motivation for that?" … In our OTES meeting, she said, "When I see it, I know it," and I want to say, "You've seen it. You know it. You know that I go to kids' soccer games. You know that kids write me letters. You know that … I'm on the football field because I'm somebody's Special Educator."

The pressure she feels for her students to perform well on the state assessments causes her to constantly question her teaching practices and decisions:

> You question yourself. You go, "Oh my god! I shouldn't' have done the *Book Whisperer*, or I should have done the *Book Whisperer*, or I shouldn't have done this, or I should have done that, or what did I do?"

She finds herself tempted to project the pressure she feels onto her students: "And then I think for *me*, one of the worst parts has been then looking at your kids like, 'You have to perform!' That's terrible!" Likewise, it is easy to blame one's students when they do not perform well: "So, when [someone] say[s] [to me], 'You don't measure up,' that's just like, 'Ahhh really?! I don't because the stupid kids…because they rushed through the test.' Really?! Is that how I'm going to be?"

The desire to receive a high rating on her OTES evaluation has augmented Jada's workload:

> I work really hard. I work hard. I'm at school at 7:30 every morning, give or take three mornings a month. And I stay at school. This year I'm trying to get out of there by 5:30. Last year, I'd be there 'till 6:00, sometimes 7:00. Last year for my OTES, I spent 14 hours working on the paperwork. 14 hours working on the paperwork. Being explicit. Being thorough. Being…tons of data.

She refers to OTES as a "carrot" dangled in front of teachers to in order to motivate them to work harder than they already do. For Jada, OTES has the reverse effect by demotivating her and diverting attention from why she chose teaching as a profession in the first place:

> When we talk about why [I went] into [teaching], if we looked at that regressive moment, I didn't go into this to train horses or win a contest. But I do want to do my best, and I want my kids to do their best. So, it's demotivating. It's demotivating and adds pressure where I already put a lot of pressure on myself.

Reflecting on how OTES has impacted her teaching, Jada remarks, "It's made me neurotic. It's made me depressed. It's put extra pressure on me, and I don't think that's helped me in any kind of way."

As a result of the trend toward more prescriptive instruction, Jada has found herself coping with the changes. Because of the volume of content to cover, teachers have less time to engage students in deep reflections during each unit: "We need to keep moving, and if a student didn't get it, well, that's too bad. Have to move on." Teachers have less time to participate in BRIDGES. Additionally, little is left to her professional discretion, and she has questioned whether or not to remain in the profession. Last year, Jada considered quitting. She had 29 students in her class, and several moved in and out. Her class size and transient student population on top of the pressures brought on by OTES exhausted and overwhelmed her, and she pondered, "I wonder what I could do? I wonder what I'm qualified to do elsewhere?"

Progressive Moment

Jada's regressive moment hinted at the uncertainty of her future in the teaching profession, which she expanded upon during her progressive moment. Jada's reflections about the future include her projections for her personal and professional future, including various goals, aspirations, and questions. She also reflected on the constancy of change in education, impacting her predictions about the future of education beyond her classroom's walls. This broader view of the future included her hopes and fears for the teaching profession and public schooling in America. Finally, she reflected on the advice she will offer to her daughter considering a career in teaching.

With 10 years remaining until retirement, Jada envisions what the future holds for her. She acknowledges that she can stay in teaching but questions whether or not she wants to and

whether she can and wants to keep apace with the demands created by recent changes along with all of her involvements (i.e., grant writing, literacy council, and lobby days). She considers the possibility of retiring from Broadview, acknowledging her fear to go elsewhere: "This is what I'm good at. I'm established here and respected here." (As an aside, when reading over her progressive moment notes, Jada added, "until now" to her feeling of being established and respected in her building, reflecting the way her test results altered her feelings.) Despite her uncertain future, Jada intends to continue strengthening her skills as a reading teacher, hoping to put a beloved book in every child's hand.

Jada also ponders retiring from a job other than elementary teaching. Perhaps she will pursue a job at the high school level, where she would be able to dive deeper into content with students. However, she questions the practicality of taking additional classes and whether the transition would be worth the money. She also briefly revisits the idea of pursuing her principal's license but rejects the notion because of her perception that principals lose touch with the classroom. Although she prides herself in curriculum development, working in her district's curriculum department sounds like deskwork. Nevertheless, Jada aspires to publish someday, potentially an exemplar children's book or curriculum that she has developed to accompany her museum in a box social studies units.

Despite the uncertainty that the future brings, Jada feels confident that change in education is inevitable: "One thing I know is that things always change. They *always* change." She associates recent changes with a pendulum in education that will begin to swing the other way, largely depending on America's next president. In Ohio, Jada predicts that OTES will change as people realize that it is ineffective. She anticipates a change to high-stakes testing, although she does not explicate the anticipated change. With these changes, Jada hopes that teachers will have more time in the future to collaborate.

The inevitability of change surfaces fears for public schooling and public school teachers. Jada specifically notes the influx of charter schools in Ohio, siphoning money away from public schools. She is concerned about the re-segregation of schools and considers what her role should be as an activist for public schools: "What can I do about it? I don't know. I don't have any energy left over at the end of the day to do anything but post an article [on Facebook] about the charter school debacle in Ohio."

Jada's fears take a personal turn when she considers her daughter's current work as a paraprofessional in education and the possibility of her pursuing a teaching job. Although I think she might have changed her mind by the end of our fourth interview, during her progressive moment, Jada felt that she would not recommend her daughter go into teaching, but she would never tell her that. It takes her a moment to arrive at this conclusion because she acknowledges, "No profession is perfect." She does, however, share some advice that she might tell her daughter:

> Be prepared to work hard and [not] get a lot of glory. In reality, what job is perfect? … But you better be prepared for long hours and not a lot of support – not a lot of support in the world and from parents. So, you better be doing it because you want to do it and you feel called.

Despite the fact that teachers are underpaid and under-valued, Jada believes that teaching is a calling, a belief that has kept her in the profession when she has had thoughts of quitting:

> I think being a teacher is a calling, I really do. I feel like I'm doing what I'm meant to do, and so I'm okay with the late hours. I'm okay with all the other parts of it because it's what I feel *called* to do. It's what I do well. It's where my passion lies. It gives me opportunity for growth.

Analytical Moment

Jada's analytical moment returns to the present with a consideration of the interrelations of the past, present, and future. Between our second and third conversations, Jada's progressive and analytical moments, she received her students' test scores on the standardized test taken in the spring of 2015. The following excerpt from an email that she sent me set the tone for our third conversation, Jada's analytical moment:

> I received my test scores this past [Thursday] for [the] Ohio state [social studies test] last year. They were TERRIBLE. State [average scaled score]: 211. My district: 217. My score: 209. I take such pride in my [social studies] knowledge and instruction … this was, and remains, excruciating for me. Deflated, devastated, and decimated. That's how I am right now. And so ... our conversations may help me gain perspective. Or not. Maybe I'll quit. I am only half jesting. Considering that I generally work from 7:30 [until] 6:00

each day, write grants to bring [social studies] to life, etc., I am sincerely struggling. [So]... like I said, our meetings are fortuitous.

Consequently, we spent the first part of our third conversation discussing Jada's reflection about her test scores related to what it means to her to be a teacher in an accountability era of education. This reflection included a discussion of the impact of her students' test scores on her, revealing a tension between what she knows is effective teaching and the impact the scores have on her. The second half of Jada's analytical moment illuminated the impact of the future on the present and the past on the future.

The present moment: To be a teacher is to be a performer. A recurring theme that surfaced during my time with Jada was the importance of integrity to her. Therefore, it came as no surprise when Jada drew a pie graph on a piece of paper during our third interview depicting the various aspects of her identity, two-thirds of which she labeled teaching. Teaching is part of who she is; it is not a separate portion of her life that she leaves behind at the end of the school day:

> It's huge. It's not my only identity. I'm a mother. I'm a wife. I'm a friend. I'm a sister, cousin. … If this were a pie graph [drawing], it would be … at this point in my life, when my kids are grown and my grandchildren live far away, it would be about this much. It would be a Pac Man eating me up. … Teaching consumes me. It does. It consumes me, which is why I stay there so late.

Because her identity is intimately connected to her teaching experiences, her scores have a significant impact on her. Receiving her principal's email detailing Jada's class's performance on last year's state social studies assessment made her feel like a failure, and talking about it to me surfaced several emotions:

> I thought, *Oh my lord! I pride myself on what I do in social studies. I got those museums in a box and put a lot of time and thought into reading strategies and just feel*… I was so sick. I was just absolutely devastated … that I had a score lower than the state and that the average scaled score for our district was so many points higher than mine. I felt like a failure. I felt like a failure. Look, I still have tears in my eyes.

Despite her continued growth in reading and social studies instruction and the pride she feels when it comes to her museum in a box curricula that she developed for social studies units, her students' scores have caused her to doubt her instructional decisions and practices: "But it's

not enough. It wasn't enough last year." For fear of repeating last year's scores, she finds herself losing sleep at night, worrying about moving too slowly through social studies content: "Oh my gosh! I'm still in Native Americans. I'm not going to get through everything!"

Feelings of blame and worry accompany Jada's test scores. She holds herself responsible for her students' below-average performance on last year's reading and social studies assessments: "How else do you say it besides, 'You don't measure up'?" She refuses to complain about her students' scores because those who complain are, in her opinion, being irresponsible and shifting blame. She worries what her colleagues will think of her after seeing her students' scores. Even though she does not fret about losing her job, she still wants to be respected. Jada's principal tries to reassure her by blaming students for not taking the test seriously enough and blaming the test administration schedule. For a moment, Jada considers the influence of last year's large class size and transient population on her students' test scores. Being a person of integrity prevents her from abdicating responsibility: "That feels like me blame shifting and not taking responsibility because I have integrity and think everything is my responsibility and my fault."

Amidst the amalgam of emotions Jada experiences after receiving her students' scores, her comments reveal the tension she feels between what she knows to be good teaching and the impact of the scores on her. Beyond test scores, Jada reflects on various forms of positive feedback she has received about her teaching. Past students have written letters of thanks to Jada for leaving an indelible mark on their lives. After receiving her test scores, her principal assured her, "Don't be sick. We'll work on it. These scores don't reflect what you do in your classroom. You're an amazing teacher." Her colleagues tried to encourage her: "You're the best teacher there is!" Even Jada's past test scores have been high.

Despite the various voices proclaiming her efficacy as a teacher, the loudest voice that Jada hears comes from seeing her students' test scores on last year's test, and the self doubt creeps in: "I think I'm an effective teacher. I think… although, I don't know." She views the test scores as the "hard evidence" of her performance as a teacher, which leave her questioning her abilities: "On one hand, I feel like I'm damn good, and on another hand, I feel like a total failure." Still, she tries to remind herself that her experiences should validate what she knows to be good teaching: "I know my calling. I know my past experiences have helped shape me to be

on social, emotional, and intellectual levels, and at least a fairly effective teacher." Nevertheless, being a person of integrity inhibits her willingness to dismiss the gravity of her scores:

> There's a lot I feel like I can be proud of, but then I see those scores, and yet, I can't not take that seriously because of who I am. … If I was doing it for the money or if I felt like I could walk away, it wouldn't matter. But it does because I do care.

Jada's reflections lead her to the conclusion that being a teacher in the present context of accountability in education means to be: "A horse trainer, or a magician, [or] a performer. It's about being a performer."

Interrelations of the past, present, and future. In an attempt to reveal the nuances of Jada's present, her analytical moment included a reflection on the interrelation of her past, present, and future. When considering how the future impacts her teaching today, Jada touches on the rapid-fire changes in technology in schools. She has spent hours creating lessons to use with her interactive whiteboard only to find out that the district will be removing Smart Boards from classrooms in favor of newer devices. These changes impinge on her motivation to continue creating lessons with technology integration. In addition, Jada reflects on the impact of accountability measures on her present:

> [High-stakes tests] wield so much power right now. That's the hard thing. Even if that does change, there's so much money in [the testing industry], the changes will be financially (and politically) driven. Testing is a multi-billion dollar industry. That is absolutely frightening. It's going to be driven by profit and not by caring about *students*. That whole piece where these companies can mine student data is frightening. … Still the test has so much power as we've just noticed in the beginning of this interview. It impacts my teaching today because I couldn't sleep last night because I'm not going to get a grade, because I might not pass the test; my kids might not pass the test in the spring.

As a result of the looming spring test, Jada feels neurotic about helping her students perform well on the test. She attributes the influence of the spring tests on her present to recent practices that have implied that test scores are supposed to inform instruction: "That's what it's all about. Not to me, but yes, to me…"

Jada copes with her anxiety about the future by revisiting her past experiences. She recalls advice she received from her favorite teacher: "'The pendulum is going to swing. Go in your classroom and do what works because you know what works.' So, I think having heard that

from my favorite teacher, that's always in the back of my mind." Likewise, past rewards keep her grounded and remind her why she came to the profession:

> I think the experiences that I've had that have validated what I think is important, like notes from kids and being somebody's Special Educator for [National Honor Society] … Those kinds of things make me think, *Yes, this is why I do what I do. This is why I keep doing what I'm doing and that's right and good, even if … my scores aren't what they should be*. That validates me.

Each year these psychic rewards (Lortie, 1975) motivate her and remind her why she continues teaching: "I don't do it for the test scores." These glimpses from her past keep her grounded: "[They] make me remember *my* identity as an educator." She attributes her persistence in education to her past rewards: "If it weren't for my past, I wouldn't still be in education."

Following our third conversation, Jada synthesized her analytical moment thoughts in a journal entry:

> Musings on being a public school educator: So much of what I am expected to do is dictated by powers far beyond my control; blown by fickle political winds and profit mongers who care little for children's well-being. Disempowering and demotivating, producing a constant "I don't measure up" hum reverberating in my gut. But when I see the faces – the smiles – of the students I have come to know and love, some of whom I know do not benefit from a balanced diet or an emotionally healthy environment, I am clearly reminded why I do what I do. Just when I am feeling like my morale is being swallowed by The Testing Monster or the dictates of the state, I get an email, a card, a meaningful [Facebook] message from someone, a letter from a former student calling me back to my priorities and why I do what I do. Who will care for the children if all the passionate teachers who are in it for the kids throw in the towel?

Synthetical Moment

From self-doubt, disappointment, and anxiety to a renewed sense of purpose, Jada's synthetical moment illuminated her holistic understanding of her teacher identity in the context of accountability reforms. For Jada, this reflective process has reminded her that teaching is a calling, one that she will not turn from despite the confusion, pressure, and devaluation she feels. To be a teacher today requires setting up defense mechanisms and finding one's worth in

something bigger than test scores. With a better understanding of who she is as a teacher, Jada considers her aspirations, vowing to trust herself as a professional.

Our interviews reaffirmed Jada's notion that teaching is a calling, giving her a renewed sense of commitment to her work in spite of various obstacles (i.e., OTES and testing). She quips that perhaps this reflective process will be what keeps her in public education. Remembering that teaching is a calling has resulted in an improved sense of self-efficacy since our third conversation: "I know that what I do is effective as an educator." Those who believe teaching is a calling are the "people [who] still have a fire [and] are doing more than checking off boxes or finishing their to-do list."

Jada has found it difficult to remember her calling when recent reforms have "emasculated [her] as a professional." To combat the tendency to allow reforms to undermine her calling, Jada discusses the necessity of resisting: "I just need to make some defense mechanisms and go, 'You all think you know what you're doing. No, you don't. You [aren't] motivated by the right thing!'" One way that Jada can resist is to derive her value as a teacher from something other than scores: "I don't have to see *my* effectiveness or my worth as an educator through that lens even if I have sucky test scores." This attitude requires Jada to trust herself as a professional instead of berating herself when her students' scores are lower than she would prefer. She intends to continue being the teacher whom her past students describe in the letters they write her, the kind of teacher who inspires other teachers.

Discussion: Answering the Call to Teach in the Midst of Reforms.

As mentioned numerous times in her narrative, teaching for Jada is a calling, a belief that influences her practice and her attitude toward the challenging aspects of her work. In an attempt to arrive at a deeper understanding of how Jada's view of teaching as a calling impacts her response to my research question (How do veteran elementary teachers narrate what it means to be a teacher in the context of recent reforms?), I devote this discussion to examining how this view both intensifies her emotional reaction to recent reforms and provides comfort and validation. To do so, I draw from Hansen's (1995) work on teaching as a vocation by first connecting Jada's use of "calling" to Hansen's use of "vocation," specifically detailing teaching as a vocation. I then consider the impact of her vocation-oriented view of teaching on her reactions to accountability pressures.

Teaching as vocation. Hansen (1995) distinguished between vocation and various other activities: "job," "work," "career," "occupation," and "profession" (p. 6). This designation is important for the present discussion about Jada's view toward her practice as a teacher because it shows how her view is set apart from other ways of viewing one's practice. Hansen (1995) argued that a vocation-oriented view is expressed at the intersection of an activity's service to others and one's self-fulfillment from engaging in the activity. A "job" refers to an activity that provides a source of income while engaging one in repetitive tasks, lacking the personal significance found in "vocations." In contrast, "work" describes an activity that the one working is able to define but does not imply a service to others. A "career" refers to the temporal, long-term nature of one's engagement in a particular activity, without implying a sense of personal fulfillment. An "occupation" is associated with a particular position in an institution. In other words, teaching is one of a number of occupations found within schools. "Profession," on the other hand, extends the meaning of occupation to emphasizing one's specialized training and expertise in an occupation. Still, however, Hansen (1995) justified the distinction between "profession" and "vocation" for two reasons: 1) Professional conduct does not necessarily result in personal fulfillment, and 2) it does not connote the same sort of inward-looking view of one's practice.

While Hansen (1995) used "vocation" and "calling" interchangeably at various points in his discussion, he argued for a more active view toward one's practice than is implied in being "called" to a practice. The notion that one is impelled from within, or "called," to teach lacks the social language of "vocation" (Hansen, 1995). Jada's narrative reveals her expressed rationale for viewing teaching as a calling: It is where her passion lies; it provides opportunity for growth; it is what she is meant to do; and she feels she does it well. Yet, given our various conversations, I easily observe ways that she upholds Hansen's (1995) view of teaching as a vocation.

First, her view of teaching goes beyond viewing her practice as a mere source of income, though it was an important consideration when she chose to return to work once her three children reached elementary school. Teaching is meaningful to Jada, providing a sense of self and personal identity. Recall the discussion of her identity pie graph that she drew during one of our interviews. She dedicated two-thirds of her pie graph to teaching. Striving to be a person of integrity, Jada's teaching life is integrated with the rest of her life, as opposed to "keeping the

practice at arm's length" (Hansen, 1995, p. 3). She works long hours and takes the work home with her mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Second, Jada expresses an "outward-looking sentiment, a feeling of wanting to engage the world in some substantive way" through her various commitments in teaching (Hansen, 1995, p. 5). She believes in the importance of promoting diversity with her students and has written grants to this end through the BRIDGES council in her district. Through her social studies instruction, she engages students to think critically about history through reflective questioning: How does the past help us make sense of the present? What were causes of events? What were the effects? How did past actions affect future choices? How did people in the past view their world? What has changed, and what has remained the same? Likewise, she desires to inspire a love of reading in all of her students.

Beyond Jada's sense of self-fulfillment and her desire to engage in meaningful service through teaching, other indicators of her vocational view of teaching are apparent from her narrative. Despite her inclination to teach, she often expressed doubts about her efficacy as a teacher. Doubt and commitment go hand in hand, according to Hansen (1995). Jada recognizes that teaching, like other occupations, can be laborious at times: long days, scarce recognition, and little support from parents and the world. The sense of calling helps her persist in spite of teaching's drudgery (Hansen, 1995). Her vocational disposition involves a sense of agency and autonomy, to contribute creatively to her practice, as evidenced through the curriculum she writes to accompany her Museum in a Box units in social studies. For example, during one of my classroom visits, students analyzed various artifacts related to Ohio's Native American tribes (i.e., Shawnee, Miami, Wyandot, Delaware, and Mingo). Students drew their artifact, measured it, described it, considered various uses for it, and compared it to objects from the present. They then read about their artifact and summarized their learning. During a subsequent visit, students reflected on connections they drew between their culture and that of the various Ohio tribes studied.

Vocation and Accountability. The preceding indicators of Jada's vocation-oriented view toward teaching – namely, her sense of self as a teacher and her commitment to meaningful service – contribute to the visceral impact she feels from accountability pressures. When she learns that her students' test scores fell below the state and district average in social studies, she feels like a failure. Her commitment to engage students in deep discussions about social studies

content does not produce the results that she hopes for, and she contemplates whether or not she should move through content more quickly. I found it easy to empathize with Jada during our third conversation when her confidence was shaken after learning of her students' scores. I, too, have experienced the grave disappointment she felt when the hours and creativity spent trying to make learning relevant and meaningful did not yield desired results.

Perhaps if Jada approached teaching less as a vocation and more as a job, as a mere source of income, her students' test scores would not have the same effect on her. This detached view would allow her to separate her sense of self from her students' test scores, an impossible task for one who views teaching as a vocation. In a sense, Jada's commitment to her practice acts as a double-edged sword by driving her to work harder but then punishing her when her students' test scores are lower than she would like. Jada's sense of vocation causes her to be her harshest and final critic (Hansen, 1995). As mentioned in her narrative, words of encouragement and reassurance from her colleagues and administrators do not dissuade Jada from doubting her self-efficacy. I argue that the current accountability system that ties teachers' evaluations to students' test scores takes advantage of Jada's sense of vocation. It capitalizes on her unwavering commitment to help her students succeed, even if she might question the merits of adopted indicators and measures of success: "Those numbers have so much flippin' power!"

The tension Jada feels between what she believes to be effective teaching and the impact of student test scores mirrors Hansen's (1995) contention that "there will always be tensions between the allegiance teachers have to the terms of their practice and to their respective institutions" (p. 140). As a vocation-oriented teacher, Jada is faced with the challenge to balance her philosophical beliefs about teaching and education with institutional expectations and obligations (Hansen, 1995). The increasingly prescriptive nature of teaching evidenced through Ohio's adoption of various standardized tests and OTES undermine Jada's sense of autonomy to act with professional discretion. She feels the tendency to allow test scores to redefine what she believes is effective teaching. Hansen (1995) noted the impact that institutions can have on teachers when their expectations and practices do not harmonize with teacher beliefs:

> [They] face the constant danger of overlooking conditions that may make it hard for people to enact their sense of service – or that may exhaust it without fostering opportunities for personal renewal. Such conditions can make it difficult for persons to do what they believe is right for those whom they want to serve. (p. 142)

In summary, current accountability practices compromise Jada's vocational ethic – that is, her "aims, motives, and standards of moral and intellectual judgment" (Hansen, 1995, p. 142). Yet, as revealed in her narrative, her belief that teaching is a calling gives her a sense of purpose that helps her persist when the temptation to leave the occupation surfaces. Remembering her calling provides a renewed sense of commitment, echoed by Hansen (1995):

> The sense of vocation can buoy an individual as he or she strives to integrate these public and personal dimensions of the work. It can keep at bay both a despairing and a resigned response to the very real difficulties involved in successfully shaping the role of teacher. (p. 143)

Conclusion

Jada's past and present experiences along with her hopes and fears about the future revealed the emotional toll that recent reforms have taken on her sense of identity as a veteran elementary teacher. More specifically, Jada's narrative exposes the feelings of inadequacy that can arise when a teacher's hard work is met with subpar student test scores and "skilled" ratings on evaluations. Additionally, when teaching is intimately enmeshed with one's identity as a person rather than viewed as a separate identity, feelings of inefficacy at work are taken more personally. Further, Jada's narrative surfaces questions about how teaching in the current accountability climate in education uniquely affects those who hold a vocational (Hansen, 1995) view of teaching. As Jada continues teaching, she will need to remind herself that teaching to her is a calling. Viewing teaching in this way will replenish her reserves when feelings of inadequacy creep in. She must trust herself and rely on her definition of an effective teacher.

Chapter 8: Joanie Cunningham

Joanie has been teaching elementary school for 27 years, many of which have been at her current building, Happy Days Elementary. She taught fourth grade during her first year and has remained in third grade since. Teaching third grade for over two decades has provided Joanie with numerous experiences working with eight- and nine-year-olds, which I personally enjoyed hearing about since my teaching background was also in third grade. I would imagine that working with the same age group for an extended period of time gives one a sense of expertise when it comes to the unique characteristics and needs that accompany that age. Perhaps this is why concerns about the developmental appropriateness of recent changes surfaced numerous times during our conversations. Her *currere* moments provide unique insights into the life of one third-grade teacher faced with increasing pressure since Ohio's adoption of the Third Grade Guarantee (TGG). The TGG requires all third graders to meet a certain score on a given standardized assessment before being promoted to fourth grade. Failure to do so results in retention.

Regressive Moment

Joanie's regressive moment elucidates those aspects of her past that she recognizes as contributing to her teacher identity. Her reflection begins with her apprenticeship of observation, recruitment, and training (Lortie, 1975), detailing the road she traveled to become a teacher. She then shifts her discussion to a chronological rendering of impactful moments or turning points over the course of her teaching career. Reflecting back, Joanie recognizes the influence each turning point has had on her evolving identity. Finally, the third and final portion of Joanie's regressive moment examined the past through the lens of the present, revealing numerous changes to her teaching.

Becoming a teacher. Growing up in a small town, Joanie recalls teachers feeling almost like family. During elementary school, teachers sometimes came to Joanie's house for dinner with her family. She remembers forming the closest bond with her first through third-grade teachers. Her first-grade teacher looped with Joanie's class, following them to second grade. She and her third-grade teacher still talk today. These relationships provided Joanie with a positive elementary schooling experience, influencing the way she views school and teachers from an early age.

In college, Joanie initially pursued a degree in English until switching to elementary education midway through her freshman year. Her previous experiences working with children as a babysitter, camp counselor, and swimming instructor convinced her that teaching is a better fit for her. Although teaching secondary English was her original plan, she chose elementary, specifically, because working with young children afforded her the opportunity to focus more on the development of children and on education rather than on a specific content area.

Joanie's experiences in elementary classrooms during her college training partnered her with practicing teachers, influencing the kind of teacher she did and did not want to emulate. During Joanie's junior year in college, she participated in two two-week observations with drastically different cooperating teachers. Joanie's first cooperative teacher lacked compassion with struggling students. She remembers the teacher harping on a student she often had difficulties with but who responded well to Joanie, saying, "Do you see what you can do? Why don't you do this all the time?" In contrast, Joanie's second experience placed her with a teacher she describes as positive, thought provoking, and creative. From this cooperating teacher, whom Joanie later worked with during student teaching, Joanie adopted the mantra she still uses with her students: "You're a star right where you are."

Pivotal moments: Lessons learned along the way. Because Joanie student taught during the spring semester, she lacked the experience of setting up a classroom and establishing a culture and routines necessary at the beginning of the school year. Fortunately, her first job was at the same building where she had student taught, enabling her to receive informal mentoring from her supervising teacher and now colleague. Joanie spent her first nine years teaching at the same building, where she continued developing her teacher identity. During those early years, being a teacher meant being creative, developing students' strengths, and making the classroom safe and comfortable for students. She wanted her students to look forward to coming to school and to feel accepted once they arrived. Joanie gravitated toward academically struggling students and worked to be considerate of their feelings. For instance, she remembers learning that some students are embarrassed when their peers see their grades, prompting Joanie to return graded papers rather than asking a student to do so. Looking back at these formative years at the beginning of her career, Joanie realizes that she spent her time surviving rather than reflecting.

When a new building opened in Joanie's district, her principal and many of the staff left in pursuit of a job there. Joanie lost a leader she enjoyed working for, one whom provided her

with constant praise and positive evaluations. However, Joanie found herself growing professionally under the new principal who had previously served as the assistant principal prior to the opening of the new building. Rather than receiving the highest marks on her evaluations, her new principal identified areas where Joanie could improve, including her classroom management. She reflects on the difficulty of this change at first: "Of course I cried because I'd never been told I was anything but perfect throughout my entire student teaching and first years of teaching for that principal." This period of growth caused Joanie to seek out principals for constructive feedback: "Being told you're wonderful all the time isn't going to make you grow as a person. You can almost become complacent in a way." Despite her initial concerns about the principal's evaluation style, she realizes now how this was the first example of her being drawn to and influenced by a strong female leader.

Joanie not only grew from the guidance of her principal, she also grew through her collaboration with a woman she taught with at the same grade level for several years, in three different buildings. Working with this colleague pushed Joanie to improve and employ creative strategies in her classroom. They reflected about their teaching and even though they no longer teach in the same building, Joanie appreciates the impact of their shared reflections on her growth as a professional.

Another impactful period of her teaching occurred during her time at Happy Days under the tenure of a male principal that she admired greatly. He respected teachers by being thoughtful and caring while providing them with specific, genuine feedback. He led by example by being prepared and working hard. He sought teachers' opinions and earned their respect by being a capable decision maker and leader. Although his example inspired Joanie to work harder, she doubts he would want to be a principal in the current climate of education: "I don't think he would continue to be a principal because he was the principal of the day when they actually were the true leaders of their building."

Looking back: Times are changing. Joanie's comment about an impactful principal points to one of the changes she has observed over her years as a teacher: the changing role of the principal. For the last five or more years, Joanie has witnessed the leadership in the district shift toward a more top-down approach, with an increasing number of decisions made at the central office level. For instance, while serving on the district's math curriculum committee, Joanie watched the district leadership seek teacher input and then choose the curriculum that

parents wanted. This shift has resulted in principals acting as middle managers. Principals exercise less autonomy when it comes to setting agendas for faculty meetings since central office has to approve faculty-meeting agendas while dictating professional development foci. Joanie's principal rarely visits classrooms because she is either dealing with discipline or various district-mandated responsibilities. Joanie does, however, credit her principals for attempting to make recent changes (e.g., OTES) as low-stress for teachers as possible.

A second change that Joanie identifies during her regressive moment deals with changes to time. Joanie feels that she has lost instructional time in the core subject areas since the district's inception of reading and math Tutorial and Enrichment period, two parts of her day where students receive individualized instruction without learning new content. The district she teaches in has also suffered from failed levies, resulting in budget cuts that slashed her specials time three years ago. Prior to the failed levy, Joanie's students attended music and gym twice a week for 30 minutes and one 45-minute art period, totaling two hours and 45 minutes of plan time for non-specialty teachers to collaborate with team members. After specials were cut, teachers were told that their new plan time would occur between 8:00 and 8:30 each morning, when teachers are typically preparing for their day, not collaborating with colleagues. Since the cuts, Joanie and her colleagues had only one 45-minute break per week, when her students attended the same special for 12 weeks. Last year, however, the district added a second special back to the schedule for fourth through sixth grades. Joanie suspects that second and third grades did not receive the second special because of the emphasis on preparing students under the Third Grade Guarantee. Fortunately, second and third graders did receive a second special each week, starting at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year.

Compared to earlier experiences in the profession, recent changes have left Joanie feeling that the district does not trust or value its teachers. Leadership team meetings at Happy Days once provided a space for teachers to share their concerns with the principal. Now, the meetings focus on the professional development opportunities chosen by district-level personnel: "There's really no meetings where teachers get to give any input anymore." In an attempt to find an audience to listen to her concerns, Joanie wrote letters to the superintendent:

> So, I wrote these letters, but of course they didn't do any good. Sometimes you feel like Horton Hears a Who, when you're like, "I'm here! I'm here!" And you also have to be

very careful because then the board also came out with a policy that teachers should not speak negatively toward anything.

The seemingly disregard for teachers' opinions has caused teachers to feel indifferent about serving on district committees: "We don't feel like this is the best use of our time because we don't know that we'll be heard anyway."

Progressive Moment

The progressive moment allowed Joanie to look ahead toward the future, reflecting on her worries, fears, hopes, and dreams (Pinar, 2012; Pinar et al., 1995). Her projections extend from her past and present experiences and illuminate those aspects of the future that influence her teacher identity today. While most of Joanie's progressive reflection dealt with her predictions about the future of education beyond the walls of her classroom, she briefly speculated about her professional future. In light of her conjectures about the future, Joanie considers whether or not she would recommend teaching as a profession to others.

Joanie's past and present experiences influence her concerns about the future, spanning from changes to kindergarten to the downfall of public education. An increasing number of third graders come to her classroom not knowing how to use scissors and glue, and Joanie attributes this deficiency to changes in kindergarten curriculum foci. Whereas kindergartners once learned how to use materials (i.e., glue and scissors) appropriately, now they spend more time learning skills previously taught in first grade. Despite the district's emphasis on rigorous instruction, Joanie feels that more students are coming to third grade underprepared: "It seems like even though we're doing more and more rigor, every year I'm getting kids who are lower and lower and lower and can't read. So what's the disconnect here?" Perhaps the problem is that "education continues to be led by people who don't understand education." Joanie envisions a future that will mirror the present unless the people making decisions include those who "understand education and child development." Those making decisions now seem to be concerned less about the appropriateness of educational decisions for children and more about saving money. Joanie fears that such decision-making practices will eventually result in the demise of public education, as funding continues to be siphoned away from America's public schools.

More personally, Joanie imagines what the future holds for her. With 27 years of experience, she has begun to consider when she will retire, but she does not feel ready to make that decision yet: "Even with the overwhelming feeling and feeling all of this, I don't feel ready to stop." She still enjoys teaching and does not want to exit the profession, but she also wants to retire while she still enjoys it. Considering her fears about the future, she questions whether or not she will witness changes during her time left in the profession. She entertains the idea of becoming involved in activism of some sort after teaching or supervising student teachers while teaching college courses. Maybe after retirement, she will work to bring more arts into schools.

Despite the uncertain nature of her professional future, Joanie reflects on her hopes and dreams for the future of education. In the future, she would like to see tests viewed differently:

> Right now, I feel like they're more of a grade. Well, they are for the students, for the teachers, and for the schools. And it's more of a punitive system than a let's work harder because we need to improve this area.

Joanie acknowledges the necessity of assessing students' mastery of content but argues that currently, tests are not used for the purpose of improving instruction and helping students. As her quote indicates, Joanie feels that tests are being used more as punitive measures rather than diagnostic tools. Instead, Joanie would like to see a transition toward formative measures of mastery.

In addition, Joanie hopes for a future that centers on students' developmental needs. She would like to see more movement in the classroom, which she feels has been undermined by the volume of curriculum teachers are expected to cover. Likewise, she hopes that decisions would be made with students' developmental potential in mind. Students should be able to hold a pencil, cut, and glue prior to coming to third grade.

Joanie also considers what the future of teaching looks like for those who have not yet joined the profession. For instance, reflecting on the impact of the present climate on her student teacher, Joanie realizes that her present is his normal; it is all he knows. He has nothing to compare his present experiences to other than those from his apprenticeship of observation. He will not know what teaching looked and felt like before his evaluation was tied to his students' test scores: "So he has nothing [to compare his experience to]. It is what it is for him, so he won't feel this, 'Oh my gosh! We've got to get back to doing this with the kids' because he hasn't seen that." To Joanie, her student teacher's limited exposure to teaching could be "good

or bad." Unlike her, he will not feel the struggle that she feels while trying to adapt to recent expectations that differ from her past practices. She hopes that the changes he sees throughout his career will involve those that move education in the direction of being centered more on child development.

Despite recent changes that have left Joanie feeling overwhelmed, she would still recommend the job to others: "Yeah, it's not what it was, but you're going to make an impact regardless of what's going on in education. So I would never dream of talking anyone out of becoming an educator." Describing a conversation she had with her niece who has just begun her career as a teacher, Joanie acknowledges that the challenges she has experienced as a teacher are not unique to the profession: "Every job has crap, and you have to decide whether the love of that job outweighs the crap of the job…"

Analytical Moment

During Joanie's analytical moment, her reflection focused on the present and her understanding of what it means to be a teacher now (i.e., fall 2015). She describes the present of teaching as one that leaves teachers feeling overwhelmed and disrespected. To reach a more nuanced understanding of her teacher identity, Joanie reflected on the interrelation of her past, present, and future. Considering the influence of the past on the present, the past on the future, and the future on the present proved to be a difficult reflective exercise for Joanie.

What does it mean to be a teacher today? Being a teacher at the present moment means feeling overwhelmed: "There's more and more demands put upon [teachers] with less and less time to meet those demands." As mentioned previously, failed levies have resulted in less collaborative planning time for teachers to meet with their colleagues. Joanie and her co-teacher, the intervention specialist who teaches with her for part of the day, have a limited amount of time to plan and reflect together. As a result, Joanie finds herself taking more work home with her. She feels overwhelmed by the various roles that she assumes as a wife, mother, teacher, and volunteer. Even though she feels like she constantly gives more to the profession, she receives little respect from the community in return. She attributes this disrespect to the public's lack of understanding about what teaching entails.

Interrelation of the past, present, and future. Joanie reflects on how overwhelming it is when you first begin teaching but argues that now everyone is overwhelmed – not just

beginning teachers. New teachers feel overwhelmed because they lack resources and experiences to inform their decisions about curriculum and instruction. As a veteran teacher, Joanie has a surplus of resources to choose from, but instead, she feels overwhelmed from the pressure to acquiesce to external expectations. When reflecting on the past, she recognizes the time she once had to plan and implement creative activities and projects with her students. Now, however, she feels rushed to cover material in preparation for the spring assessments.

Her past experiences also influence her thoughts about the future. She wonders if perhaps recent changes are part of a pendulum swing in education and that the pendulum will hopefully begin to swing away from the current emphasis on testing. She hopes that principals will be allowed to be the kind of educational leaders they were in the past, who had the autonomy to make decisions that affected their building. Joanie longs for the time she had in the past to be more creative in the classroom: "It's just trying to find that part of me that I feel like I left behind and bringing that into my future."

Joanie considers the impact of her future projections on her present. As she reflects on her hopes for the future, she realizes that she should start working toward her future aspirations today, which includes a renewed focus on developmentally appropriate instruction:

> I guess [it] comes down to trying to make that your way in your classroom regardless of what you're asked to do. The classroom's the safe space, and what can we do to make it as friendly as possible, even though they're having to do all these things?

She intends to find ways to enjoy teaching through retirement instead of being weighed down by the things that currently overwhelm her. Reflecting on the negative perception the public currently holds for teachers, Joanie considers the way her positive impact on students might be able to sway the public's view of teachers: "I guess I feel that if I can make a positive impact on the children that maybe people who maybe had a poor view of public education might say, 'Well, my child is getting a good education.'" She feels a responsibility to her students to remain positive despite fears about the future.

Synthetical Moment

During Joanie's fourth and final moment of *currere*, she reflected on what it means to be a teacher since the passage of *No Child Left Behind*, by considering her regressive, progressive, and analytical reflections. Whereas the analytical moment illuminated how overwhelming

teaching feels currently, Joanie's synthetical moment revealed the balance that she feels she must strike as a teacher. She also recognizes a lessened sense of autonomy, as external entities mandate standardized routines for test administration. Given this understanding of her teacher identity, she considers how her present experiences align with the kind of teacher she aspires to become.

Teaching today: It's about balance. After reviewing her *currere* timeline from her regressive, progressive, and analytical moments, Joanie identified a thread that united each of her *currere* moments: "Regardless of what's happening, just trying to make an impact and stay positive. Otherwise you're going to get bogged down in all of the unhappy stuff." Along with striving to remain positive, Joanie describes teaching today as a balancing act that requires her to balance the demands of external entities (i.e., district leadership) with the kind of teacher she was in the past:

> I guess the word that comes to mind is balance because I'm trying to balance … what I need to do to be successful with what [students are] being asked to do and what I need to do to help them develop where they are. So, because some aren't developmentally ready to perform what they're being asked to perform, … it's that balance of, I guess, marrying the teacher of me of the past who didn't have all those… I could just teach and I knew what I wanted the kids to do, and I knew they were going to grow to now saying, "Ok, I need to get from point A to point B," and how do you balance those two things?

Joanie wants to balance teaching to the standards while also trying to work creatively and thought-provokingly enough to engage students.

Time constraints and the impact of her students' test scores on her evaluations make achieving this balance difficult. Joanie struggles with trying to be creative and engaging while preparing students for the test. Time constrains to plan and implement creative lessons make it difficult to marry the creative side of her with the necessity to prepare students for the test. The tests, therefore, have an immense influence over her teaching decisions, often causing her to question her practices:

> I hate this thought, but ultimately, I'm being judged on those tests; the kids are being judged on these tests; and my school's being judged on those tests… And that's the reality. So, I have to get them to where they need to be for that.

Joanie's job, she feels, is dependent upon her ability to ensure her students' success on the spring tests. However, she questions whether the assessments truly measure what they are intended to measure. Since students now take the assessments online, their success is based, in part, on their proficiency with technology, causing Joanie to wonder whether the tests assess students' technology use rather than their content knowledge. She has also recognized ways that the testing procedures are not reflective of her classroom practices. Students are encouraged to use reference materials on classroom assignments but are forbidden from doing so on standardized assessments. Similarly, Joanie provides support for students when they have questions during her class, but standardized procedures place strict limits on teachers' interactions with students during the assessments. She recounted an instance when her students were confused by their teachers' unwillingness to help during a test: "You make the rules!" She and her co-teacher explained to the students that they were not in charge of the testing procedures, but they had to comply with them. This example illustrates the stripping away of teachers' autonomy and the ensuing confusion this causes for students trying to understand why their teacher as an authority figure loses some of that authority when it comes to testing.

The synthetical moment requires one not only to reflect on his/her holistic understanding of the present but to evaluate the present against one's aspirations, prompting a sense of agency (Pinar, 2012; Pinar & Grumet, 1976). To this end, Joanie's synthetical moment reminded her of the kind of teacher she aspires to be: "I want the kids to still be excited about learning, and I still want to be excited about teaching." She aspires to balance the creative Joanie from the past with her data-informed decision-making practices of the present.

Discussion

Having taught third grade prior to beginning full-time doctoral studies, I felt a fair amount of camaraderie with Joanie. My past experiences enabled me to understand how third grade is a unique year for elementary students and teachers in that it is often thought, among teachers, to be the year when students are expected to be more accountable for their own learning. In the school where I taught, this involved changes to students' report cards from "unsatisfactory," "needs improvement," "satisfactory," and "excellent" in second grade to letter grades in third grade. Third grade was also the first year, at least in the building where I taught, that students were expected to fill out daily assignment books and take them home to be signed by their

parents. Third grade is the first year that students take the state's standardized assessment in English language arts and math. There was also the more subtle expectation that if students could not read proficiently by the end of third grade, then they would have an increasingly more difficult time during the remaining years of their schooling.

During my time as an elementary school teacher, I came to favor the grade that I taught over the other lower and upper grades. I found the age group of students to be interested in learning and increasingly independent. I enjoyed being able to support them when they needed it while also encouraging them to find their own ways. Of course, the frequent hugs and "World's Best Teacher" notes were appreciated, too. Students impressed me with their excitement to learn their multiplication facts and write in cursive. Most of them enjoyed chapter books and participated in lively discussions about their readings. Third grade certainly seems like a time of transition from reading fluency to reading comprehension, from addition and subtraction to multiplication and basic division, and from sentences to multiple paragraphs. At the same time, they were similar to students in other grades, with a range of experiences and abilities, making my job both challenging and rewarding.

Although I particularly enjoyed Joanie's classroom observations, because of my familiarity with third graders and third-grade curriculum, I was surprised by the stark differences between our experiences. While being in Joanie's classroom felt, in a sense, like returning home, it simultaneously felt like visiting a foreign land. My conversations with her illuminated the source of these differences. For Joanie, being a teacher today is overwhelming. She teaches in a district that has suffered numerous failed levies, resulting in cuts to specials, narrowing students' school experiences and shortening teachers' plan time during the day. With increased calls for rigor and Ohio's enactment of the Third Grade Guarantee, Joanie finds herself expected to accomplish more with less time. External controls have limited teacher input, resulting in a climate of fear that deters teachers from speaking negatively about district decisions. The current climate challenges Joanie to balance her desire to be creative with district expectations to help students pass tests, particularly the third-grade reading test that determines whether or not students are promoted to fourth grade or retained in third grade. Her concern about new teachers' limited exposure to anything different from the current data-driven culture surfaces questions about the future of teaching.

While calling for high standards for all students through a more rigorous curriculum, Joanie's district constrains teachers' abilities to provide a high-quality educational experience to its students through changes to teachers' plan time and instructional time. Faced with budgetary decisions after failed levies, Joanie's district made cuts to specials time (i.e., art, music, physical education, etc.), revealing the value it places on core subjects (i.e., math, reading, writing, science, social studies, etc.). Since teachers typically spend time planning and collaborating with colleagues during students' time in specials, lessening the amount of specials students attend each week in turn lessens teachers' opportunities to plan and collaborate during the day. Without these breaks in Joanie's day, she has minimal time for reflection. Likewise, she is forced to do most of her planning and preparation before school when her contract time begins or on her own time.

For students, the schooling experience is narrowed (Gunzenhauser, 2012; Ravitch, 2011; Wood, 2004), with less time for art, music, and gym, and more time devoted to intervention. Tutorial and enrichment (T and E) time cuts into time that Joanie would prefer to spend on what she refers to as the core subjects. Students attend both reading and math tutorial enrichment periods. During the daily 45-minute reading T and E time, English Language Learners, students with reading goals on their Individualized Education Program (IEP), and those qualifying for Title I services are sent out of the general education room to work with teachers on their reading goals. The remaining third-grade students are split between the third-grade teachers, grouped by reading ability. Joanie works with one of the lower reading groups using a literacy intervention kit. Math T and E occurs on the three days that Joanie's students do not attend specials. Similar to reading T and E, students labeled as gifted in math or who have math goals on their IEP are sent out of the classroom to work on their goals. Joanie uses this 45-minute time to work on problem solving with her students since this is an area that she as identified as a weakness for third graders. The remainder of Joanie's day leaves two hours for language arts, 45 minutes for science or social studies, 45 minutes for lunch and recess, and a little over an hour for math. In her building, Joanie is expected to use frequent assessment to differentiate instruction beyond T and E times. At all times, Joanie should know her students' level of mastery within a given content area and provide remediation or enrichment opportunities as necessary. This expectation in addition to her limited time for planning and collaboration undoubtedly contribute to her feeling of being overwhelmed.

Furthermore, as a third-grade teacher in Ohio, Joanie must prepare her students to pass Ohio's high-stakes third-grade reading assessment that determines whether or not students are promoted to fourth grade. The Third Grade Guarantee (TGG) is a program used in kindergarten through second grade to monitor and provide support for students behind in reading (Ohio Department of Education [ODE], 2015a). Under the TGG, schools must provide annual testing, chosen from a state-approved list of tests, in kindergarten through third grade at the beginning of each year (ODE, 2015b). These tests show whether or not students are *on track* in reading based on whether or not they test at the end of the previous grade level according to Ohio's Learning Standards. When a student is identified as *not on track*, schools provide a written notice to parents, which includes, in part, proposed supplemental instructional services and a notice that unless the student is *on track* by the end of third grade, s/he with be retained. The school must provide immediate reading intervention to improve students' identified deficiencies and monitor students' progress. Wood (2004) argued that after the passage of *NCLB*, an increasing number of states adopted policies similar to Ohio's TGG: "Flying in the face of all the clear evidence on how children learn to read at different ages, the test and measure pattern of one-size-test-fits-all puts children who come to reading later in peril of being retained" (p. 37).

The preceding discussions certainly reveal aspects of Joanie's work that leave her feeling overwhelmed. To make matters worse, her district has, in essence, shut off opportunities for teachers to communicate their concerns and frustrations. Meetings focus on professional development passed down from the district to building principals, leaving teachers with little, if any, chance to voice their thoughts. Likewise, as mentioned in her narrative, Joanie's district has discouraged teachers from speaking negatively about district decisions. Such actions, as with Mattie's experiences in her district, stifle opportunities to both challenge the district's premises for its decisions and consider alternative possibilities (McNeil, 2000). Instead, teachers in Joanie's district are treated as workers expected to obey without question (Tienken & Orlich, 2013).

In an accountability era that leaves even veteran teachers, like Joanie, feeling overwhelmed and silenced, how will new teachers, with far less experience, fare? Joanie considered this question during her progressive moment, when she wondered how teaching might look over the course of her student teacher's career as a teacher. Her observation that her present will be his "new normal" should, I argue, give us pause. McNeil (2000) recognized this

issue in reference to the gradual intensification of accountability measures in schools: "Teachers who have taught for fewer than ten years, and who have not come in from another state, assume outcomes testing to be a sad but 'inevitable' feature of schooling" (pp. 268-269). As the current generation of teachers who remember a time prior to high-stakes testing and test-based teacher evaluations retires, what will education look like when teaching positions are filled by individuals who lack that historical insight and the experiential connection to approaches that place the student above the test score?

Conclusion

Joanie's longing for the creative aspects of teaching from her past combined with her concern about students' performance on upcoming spring assessments contribute to a present moment that is characterized by feeling overwhelmed. More specifically, Joanie's narrative reveals the stress that can arise when district expectations call for increased rigor while simultaneously reducing the amount of time teachers have to teach core subjects and plan with colleagues. Additionally, her narrative surfaces ways that district personnel silence teacher voice and therefore imply that teacher input is of little value. Further, her narrative highlights the inordinate pressure placed on third-grade teachers in Ohio whose students must pass their reading proficiency assessment in order to be promoted to fourth grade. As Joanie continues down the last leg of her teaching journey before retirement, she will need to evaluate whether or not she is allowing external expectations and pressures from the Third Grade Guarantee to divert her time and attention away from planning creative lessons with her students.

Chapter 9: Katie Sprunger

Katie Sprunger is a 19-year veteran elementary teacher at Potter Elementary, the same school founded upon a progressive philosophy where Mattie teaches. Katie has taught kindergarten for 11 years at Potter, some of which included both kindergarten *and* first grade in a multi-aged classroom. Prior to teaching kindergarten at Potter, Katie taught for six years in Indiana at the kindergarten and first-grade levels. After moving to Ohio, Katie held positions as a kindergarten/first-, fifth-, and seventh-grade teacher in her current district before returning to her niche in kindergarten. Her years of experience working with kindergarteners have allowed her to witness the myriad ways various policies have trickled down to even the youngest students in America's public schools (Hatch, 2002; Kagan & Kauerz, 2007). In this respect, her narrative provides unique insights into the changing world of kindergarten under policies calling for heightened accountability through high-stakes testing.

Regressive Moment

Katie's reflections on those aspects of her past that have contributed to her identity as a teacher included a discussion of her recruitment to teaching (Lortie, 1975), training, and early teaching experiences. Reflections on these topics illuminate turning points in her career that she sees as directly impacting her evolving identity as a teacher (i.e., moving states, buildings, and grade levels). Finally, she considers the past in light of her present experiences, identifying changes to teaching kindergarten, which have included a greater emphasis on academics and external mandates affecting her time management, compounded by an influx of challenging student behaviors. These topics serve as the organizational framework for Katie's regressive moment.

Recruitment, training, and on-the-job experiences. Katie aspired to become a teacher, whether she realized it or not, from a young age. She remembers playing school as a child, assuming the role of the teacher. Reflecting on her apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975), Katie recalls three teachers who left an indelible mark on her perception of the kind of teacher she hoped to emulate. Attending a Christian school until junior high provided her with small class sizes and familial relationships with some of her teachers, influencing the types of relationships she would later seek to foster with students of her own. Her third-grade teacher demonstrated what it meant to be a teacher who showed an interest in students' lives beyond

academics. She remembers admiring this teacher's ability to remember each student's prayer request during class prayer time. In sixth grade, her class walked to their teacher's house, and Katie remembers feeling like her classmates and her teacher were a family.

In junior high, Katie's family moved out of state and she attended a public school for the first time. There, she felt that relationships with teachers were more difficult to achieve since students attended class with teachers for a limited amount of time compared to the self-contained classrooms of elementary school. This experience would contribute to her decision to pursue a teaching position at the elementary level. She only remembers one high school teacher with whom she formed a close relationship, and that was because she tutored students in the classroom during her senior lunchtime.

Following what she describes as a calling to become an elementary teacher, Katie pursued a bachelor's degree in elementary education at a faith-based university in Ohio where she sought a close-knit, familial atmosphere. While she remembers participating in numerous field experiences at a number of public schools, the months of student teaching served as a more formative experience. She student taught in a first-grade classroom with a teacher who exemplified many of the characteristics that Katie hoped to mirror in her future classroom. She admired the teacher's dedication to her job and engaging presence in her students' lives. Katie describes the teacher with adjectives such as "fun, exciting, and bubbly." She remarks on the teacher's mothering habits in the classroom, attributing this behavior to the teacher not having children of her own. Based on my time observing in Katie's kindergarten classroom, one does not have to spend much time in her room to identify the parallels between her practices and those she described from her student teaching experience.

Katie translated the insights gleaned from student teaching experiences into practice during her first years as a classroom teacher. She remembers those early years teaching as a single woman who had more time to attend students' sporting events outside of school. Initially, she taught first grade for two years and then taught kindergarten for four years. With varying experiences and colleagues, Katie continued to develop her teacher identity. She strived to excite students about learning through hands-on, engaging, and thematic units. When she moved to Ohio and began working in her current district, she taught fifth grade and then seventh-grade language arts before returning to kindergarten at Potter. These years of transition often found her

coping with a personal family situation while enduring the learning curve that accompanies changing grade levels as a teacher.

Once she settled into her kindergarten classroom at Potter, she questioned how to integrate her teaching philosophy and practices with the democratic philosophy of Potter. She wondered how students at such a young age could be given a voice to make decisions about their learning. Some of the practices that she had adopted from her cooperating teacher during student teaching were incongruent with Potter's style. For instance, she used a card flipping behavior management system to handle student :discipline, a practice that was discouraged at her new school. Over her years at Potter, she has taken a more proactive approach to addressing student behavior, has latched on to the school's student-centered philosophy, and has found a home in a building that matches her familial style of teaching.

In the rearview mirror: Changes to teaching kindergarten. Decisions made by central office administrators in Katie's district have resulted in changes to the way she is expected to teach kindergarten. Whereas kindergarteners were once expected to spend their first year of elementary school learning the routines and procedures of school life, practicing using scissors and glue, and developing their social skills, recent changes have increasingly emphasized academics. Once viewed as staples in the kindergarten classroom, practices such as centers, thematic units, and learning through play are nearly nonexistent. Katie laments the transition away from imaginative play through kitchen time and block time toward more paper-pencil activities, with the recent focus on content over other necessary skills. She attributes this trend to legislative decisions that prioritize data-driven decision-making.

According to Katie, these higher expectations come at the expense of what she still views as worthwhile skills. For instance, the shift in focus limits her ability to teach students how to hold a pencil, follow procedures and rules, and share and get along with others. Artistic crafts that students once enjoyed are now frowned upon by her superiors who prefer measurable objectives, homogenizing students' school experiences: "The expectation is for all kindergarten classrooms within the district to be on the same content unit and the same lesson at the same time." Likewise, the turn toward prescriptive curriculum constrains her ability to incorporate student choice. Even snack time deters time and energy away from more academic tasks.

In recent years, personnel at the district level have taken a more top-down approach to school governance and decision-making, mandating the way teachers in Katie's district organize

their daily schedule while drastically limiting collaborative planning time. Whereas Katie and her colleagues once received days off during the week to plan collaboratively, now the expectation is, "You'll figure … out on your own time [how] to plan and meet with your [colleagues]." Teacher-based-team (TBT) meetings have replaced collaborative meetings of the past during which teachers once planned and prepared creative and thematic units. Instead, TBT meetings focus on data analysis and data-informed decision-making. Katie notes that while she could use weekends for collaborative planning with colleagues, she prefers spending her time off with her family even though the district has offered to pay teachers for attending project-based learning (PBL) planning days on the weekend.

Compounded with the changes in focus and time is the changing clientele with whom Katie works, her kindergarten students and their parents. Sprinkled throughout each of our four interviews were stories of Katie's interactions and dealings with behaviorally difficult students. To ignore this part of her narrative would mean omitting a major part of her daily reality as a kindergarten teacher. These behaviors further complicate her work and consume much of her attention, despite the other aforementioned changes beckoning her. Katie feels that students' excitement to attend school has somewhat dwindled in recent years as more defy her authority and "throw tantrums." Students also exhibit more difficulty getting along with their peers, which is interesting to consider in an era that has downplayed the importance of fostering kindergarteners' socialization skills. As the number of severe behaviors increases, teachers' autonomy to respond has been usurped by administrators questioning their ability to respond effectively (e.g., preventing students from being "frequent flyers" in the office).

Progressive Moment

Katie's progressive moment reveals additional changes that she has experienced while teaching kindergarten and how these changes influence her predictions for the future. In an effort to reflect on her future, she spent quite a bit of time talking about the present. Her present experiences contribute to what I refer to as Katie's uncertain persistence as a veteran kindergarten teacher. She questions the feasibility of remaining in the career for an additional 15 to 20 years, drawing on examples from her present to support her thoughts. Outside mandates, surveillance, testing, and a changing school culture exacerbate the uncertainty she feels about staying in teaching through retirement. Despite her rather pessimistic outlook, she finds herself

unable to imagine working in any other profession: "What else would I do? I love teaching, and I can't imagine doing anything else." She remains hopeful for the future by reminding herself of the job's rewards and recent improvements while finding ways to stay true to her philosophy of education.

Uncertain persistence: "It's only going to get worse." Katie's regressive moment revealed the importance of the relational piece to her decision to become an elementary teacher. However, many aspects of her present divert time and attention away from the reason she chose the profession in the first place, causing her to question whether or not this job is still the right choice for her. Recent mandates enacted by district personnel have frustrated and overwhelmed her: "I wish I could just teach my students without all of the extra demands that continue to be put upon us." District decisions that exercise control over teachers' schedules, meetings, and curriculum have undermined her sense of autonomy. The district requires teachers to post a schedule meeting certain requirements outside of their classroom door. The time required for reading and writing instruction has lessened the amount of time left for imaginative play. Each week, teachers at Potter are required to report data to the principal and district. Katie believes the superintendent wants this data in case someone from the state department of education wants to view it since her district is currently being audited by the state. Additionally, teachers are expected to implement the district's newly adopted curriculum, *Engaged New York*, with fidelity.

To ensure compliance with district mandates, a number of surveillance practices have been established, further exacerbating Katie's uncertainties about the future. During classroom walk-throughs, district personnel show up at her classroom door without notice to observe for a few moments. This practice results in a culture of fear and mistrust: "I feel like I'm being questioned, or I'm being judged… The trust isn't there." During these walk-through evaluations, district personnel assess her compliance with the district's requirements for daily schedules and the alignment of her classroom activities with the adopted curriculum. Their evaluation of her will reflect if an area is identified as being misaligned with district requirements, whether or not district personnel fully understand the activities occurring in her classroom due to the brevity of their visit. For instance, during one walk-through students were playing with Play Doh, adhering to the curriculum guide, but the evaluator, unfamiliar with that part of the curriculum, scored her lower on her evaluation. Such practices result in Katie feeling that her district leadership is trying to catch her doing something wrong, and the relative short duration of outsiders'

classroom visits does not provide relevant context for their observations. Katie tries to understand the motivation behind their walk-throughs: "I think they've got pressure from the outside, along with our test scores."

Changes to the frequency and kind of tests administered in kindergarten contribute to Katie's pessimistic outlook for the future: "Everything comes back to test scores." Her discussion of testing changes provides numerous insights about testing at the beginning of elementary school: the kinds of tests expected of kindergarteners, the tensions she feels to help students reach mastery, and the trickle-down effects of Ohio's high-stakes reading assessment for third graders under the Third Grade Guarantee. Katie discussed three assessments that her kindergarteners take: the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment, the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), and the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). One noteworthy aspect of the first two assessments is that each has at least one component that is completed online by kindergarteners. Katie questions whether using a computerized assessment with kindergarteners actually measures their content knowledge or their ability to use a computer. Additionally, assessments that were once observational are now paper-pencil.

Katie feels an "enormous, lonely responsibility" to help students reach mastery. Her students' performance on the tests is factored into her evaluation as a teacher, and she wants to do well: "I want to get my A." To earn an A, as she calls it, she wants her students to meet the district's proficiency rating. However, this rating is difficult to achieve due to students' challenging behaviors, the label of Potter as an "F" school overall, the online nature of the assessment, and the fact that the end-of-year assessment is administered in March, even though the school year ends a few months later. Exacerbating the obligation she feels to perform well, trickle-down effects from the Third Grade Guarantee (TGG) have raised expectations for students in grades prior to third grade while raising questions about which grade is responsible for which skills. Under the TGG, Ohio requires third graders to meet a certain proficiency score in reading prior to being promoted to fourth grade. Those scoring less than proficient will be retained. Katie questions the merit of placing these high expectations on kindergarteners: "They're so little, and yet they're being expected to know so much. This is their first real school experience."

As Katie navigates externally influenced factors such as mandates, increased testing, and the expectation to perform well, she finds the culture inside her school and classroom changing, too. Once a school of choice, Potter now receives students who struggle at the district's other schools as well as overflow students because students who attend Potter can be bused from anywhere in the community. Parents of these students do not understand Potter's student-centered philosophy that requires four parent-teacher conferences compared to other schools requiring one or two. For instance, one of our interviews occurred following a time she scheduled as a makeup conference with a parent, but the parent never showed up for the makeup. Whereas Katie once had parent volunteers easing her workload, she now combats a lack of parental involvement. Without parent support and communication, Katie feels the weight of the responsibility to help students master content falling solely on her shoulders: "If they don't get it, then it's my fault." With increasingly challenging student behaviors and the lack of parental support, Katie struggles to remain positive: "It's just that sometimes the negativity and those rough students that take all of your oomph, they zap it out of you."

Finding hope despite the circumstances. Even though Katie felt that her tone while describing her four moments was often negative, observing her interactions with kindergarteners paints a different picture. My past experiences working with older, more independent children in third grade framed the way I perceived her teaching style. I often found her patience, soft-spoken demeanor, and kindergarten-friendly language impressive. The fast-paced nature of her kindergarten classroom, the way she managed to multi-task the day's agenda while meeting her students' needs, and her calm resolve while dealing with defiant students and temper tantrums revealed a world far different from the one I experienced with students only a few years older.

Her progressive moment, while detailing the way the present inhibits her optimism about the future, illuminates bright spots that give her hope for a future different from her present reality. The year before I met Katie, the district allowed Potter staff to receive training in project-based learning (PBL), possibly hinting at a loosening of the district's stranglehold over school practices and curriculum decisions. She has also found a way to reincorporate block time during the day, despite the district's mandates affecting her daily schedule. Likewise, she has creatively subverted district expectations by allowing time for centers under the new title of "Centers/Intervention." The intervention piece pleases the district, while the centers component aligns with Katie's idea about best practices for teaching kindergarten. Katie still provides snack

time in her daily schedule but does not post it on the schedule outside her door. She has decided to include some crafts during centers time, an area that she feels students enjoy but does not align with the district's call for increased rigor.

Reflecting on her progressive moment, Katie thinks about the prospective teachers joining the career in the future. Given her reflections, she would advise new teachers to consider whether the job, given its recent changes, aligns with their ambitions. She predicts that it will be difficult to find people who want to pursue a job in teaching if present conditions do not improve. Katie hopes education will improve by bringing back the artistic components of the curriculum that students enjoy. Additionally, she hopes that new teachers will have greater parent involvement in the future. Similarly, she hopes that teachers receive more time to plan and develop relationships with colleagues.

Analytical Moment

While Katie's present experiences as a veteran kindergarten teacher framed the way she reflected during her regressive and progressive moments, this third *currere* moment shifts its focus away from the past and future by zooming in on the present (Pinar, 1976). As each moment builds upon her new insights gleaned during the previous moment(s), Katie's analytical reflections revealed the various roles she associates with teaching kindergarten today. To further understand the complexities inherent to her present experiences (Schubert et al., 2002), Katie considers the interrelations of the past, present, and future (Pinar, 1976).

Present realities. To Katie, being a teacher entails more than imparting knowledge: "Teaching is more than just being a teacher." Instead, the title of teacher includes numerous roles related to working with students and responding to recent calls to use data to inform instructional decisions. Katie feels that when it comes to student behaviors, she works as both a psychologist and a counselor to identify and problem solve approaches for addressing student behaviors. To illustrate her point, she detailed the morning's events that transpired the day of our third interview:

> This morning, I had one that was screaming with mom at the door, and mom was looking at me like, "What do I do?" And so, she said, "He wouldn't get on the bus, and he's screaming and yelling, and so the bus driver is saying he can't stay on the bus. So here I

am, but he's still screaming and yelling and he's telling me he doesn't want to come to school."

Katie probes the mother for information, trying to identify the cause of the student's screaming, but the mother responds, "I can't get anything out of him." Meanwhile, a different student's father waits to talk with Katie about changing his son's conference time while the woman's son hides in the corner screaming. Katie manages to assure the mother that she will take care of her son while also rescheduling a conference with a student's father and ushering the screaming student back into the room after he snuck into the hallway. While these events unfold, her classroom of 27 kindergarteners waits on breakfast that has yet to arrive. Katie reflects on the multifaceted nature of her job: "I am trying to teach the content to students, but then there are other outside, family personal things. There are family situations that I cannot control, but I'm trying to give that safe haven for kids when they're here."

Along with the many hats Katie wears when dealing with students and parents, another role she assumes is that of a data analyst. She discusses her Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in writing this year, her students' average beginning-of-year scores, and the requirement to show growth. She wonders how to help them grow enough, while questioning the influence of her evaluation on whether or not she is teaching to the test and treating her students as a number. Since the transition away from proficiency to growth models, she notes the change in teacher attitudes about the beginning-of-year score: The lower a student tests at the beginning of the year, the more room there is for growth. Katie also finds herself questioning the reliability of the grading practices utilized across different buildings in her district. The district's expectation that teachers use data to inform instruction affects Katie's perception of her teacher identity: "I feel like I'm more of an analytical person, not really a teacher…" Simultaneously, Katie sympathizes with the district's implementation of increased accountability measures while questioning the validity of said measures:

> I get it. They have to hold us accountable. They need to see growth. They need to see the progress, but to tie it to teachers? … You need to have some accountability or something that shows growth from grade to grade, but then you do have those instances where they work their buns off and they still don't get it.

Interrelations of the past, present, and future. In order to understand more deeply the intricacies of her present, Katie considers the impact of the future on the present, the past on the

future, and the way her present is evident in her past and future. Katie's personal future impacts her present as she acknowledges the financial obligation of paying for her children's college necessitating her persistence as a teacher. In order to financially support her children's education, Katie must remain in the profession, which requires her to cope with and adapt to recent changes to her job: "Teaching is what it is, and I just have to figure out how to better myself or how to handle the new situations that we keep having … come to us and problem solve." In addition, Katie considers ways that planning for a better future begins with the present: "How can we work now as teachers to promote parent involvement in the future?" She feels a responsibility as a kindergarten teacher to help parents assimilate to the school's expectations of them so that as their children move through elementary school, they understand and comply with the school's expectations.

Katie also considers the impact of her past on her future as a kindergarten teacher, reflecting on the importance of relationship building to her. Numerous factors have made it more difficult for Katie to foster positive relationships with her students and their families. Changing behaviors and a lack of parent involvement have strained relationships, causing her to feel the need to intentionally seek ways to relate to students and families. The impacts of accountability policies have left her with less time for informal teacher-student interactions that once occurred during centers:

> Whereas, now when I'm interacting with students, one-on-one, it's used for assessments. Where I do sometimes tie in personal stuff, but when it's one-on-one, it's more like, "I have to do this; I have to do that." So, there's less time for those informal one-on-one interactions.

She sees the insistence of using data as becoming more intense in the future, which means she will have to be more intentional about finding ways to build relationships. Conferences provide the time to talk with students and families, but parents have to show up for their chosen time, which does not always happen.

Katie's analytical moment further sensitizes her to a more nuanced understanding of her present by reflecting on those present experiences that were part of her past that she also anticipates continuing into her future. The relational aspect of teaching that attracted her to the profession and sustains her today through the form of psychic rewards (Lortie, 1975) will continue to be a major aspect of her identity but may require more intentionality in the future

given the changing culture of her school and the various time constraints that limit her informal interactions with students. She tries to continue past practices that she believes are in the best interest of her kindergarteners (e.g., centers, morning meeting/share time). Although she wishes she could incorporate more craft activities during center time as she did in years past, she still tries to find ways to include art whenever she can, anticipating that it will become more difficult to find ways to include art in the future.

When she first started teaching, she volunteered to sign up for multiple committees each year. Compared to site-based committees of the past, today's committees have district-approved guidelines, teacher members have less voice, and the shift toward district committees ignores the unique characteristics of each building. Katie predicts that it is going to be increasingly more difficult to convince teachers to commit time outside of their building to serve on district committees when they do not feel that their voice is heard or valued. Additionally, she feels that teachers are reluctant to serve on committees that are short-lived. Similarly, the presence of and reaction by teachers to visitors coming to the classroom has changed. In the past, Katie said that teachers were more welcoming of visitors, including parents and within-district and out-of-district teachers who visited Potter to observe their school's progressive philosophy in practice. Today, Katie feels that teachers are fearful of outside visitors, many of whom are central office personnel whom teachers view as trying to catch Potter teachers doing something wrong. While she does not see this practice changing, it will be interesting to see how their data compare to Potter's building leadership team's walkthrough data.

Synthetical Moment

My final conversation with Katie involved a synthesis of her reflections about her past, present, and future as a veteran kindergarten teacher in an attempt to arrive at a more holistic understanding of Katie's identity (Pinar, 1976). During this moment, Katie reflected on what it means to be a teacher since the passage of *No Child Left Behind* and other accountability policies at the state and district levels that have impacted her work as a kindergarten teacher. She reiterated the tensions she feels related to fulfilling one of her new roles as a test administrator. Meanwhile, she acknowledged her tendency to dwell on the negative aspects of recent changes. With a better understanding of her present, the synthetical moment enabled Katie to "choose

what of it to honor, what of it to let go," in that she aspires to move past the negatives by recognizing the positives (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. ix).

Toward a more holistic understanding of one's self. As surfaced during her analytical moment, Katie's recent experiences cause her to assume numerous roles as a kindergarten teacher, but it is the test administrator role that resurfaces during her synthetical moment. Katie has numerous questions and thoughts as she adapts to this new role that is expected of her. She wonders how much emphasis should be placed on test preparation because she wants students to improve, and the state mandates a certain amount of growth. However, she realizes that students respond differently to test taking. When is pushing a student too much? Not enough? How serious should she be when talking about the test? She seems surprised and reassured by students' excitement to see their growth on the test and how eager they are to share their growth with their families during conferences. Her students set a goal and wanted to reach it. While you would expect Katie to be pleased that all of her students improved their score on the middle-of-year test, she worries what will happen and how students will respond if someone regresses on the end-of-year test. This new role not only requires that she prepare students for the test by teaching the content areas, but she must also teach kindergarteners how to use the computer well enough to take the electronic assessment. Despite the district's emphasis placed on the assessment, Katie finds the information provided by the assessment results lacking. The students' score report only disaggregates scores by strand (e.g., algebraic thinking), inhibiting Katie's ability to diagnose specific deficiencies.

Recent district actions that have placed constraints on her time cause Katie to feel bogged down in negativity. As previously noted in her other *currere* moments, Katie feels that she has less time to develop relationships with her students. This feeling cannot be overemphasized since, after all, the relationship piece is the aspect of teaching that drew her to the profession and serves as a psychic reward (Lortie, 1975) that provides her with the greatest on-the-job satisfaction. Challenging student behaviors strain her relationships with students while requiring a substantial amount of her time and energy. To cope with these challenges, Katie finds herself starting each new day with a renewed outlook: "I'm constantly having to tell myself, 'It's a new day.'" She feels frustrated when the day ends and she did not take the time to send a positive note home with a student. She realizes that she makes fewer phone calls home than she once did, which she attributes to the frequency of meetings demanding her time after school.

In an effort to consider how her teaching identity aligns with the kind of teacher she wants to be, Katie reflected on an aspect of her teaching identity that she wants to change. Synthesizing the insights gleaned from revisiting her regressive, progressive, and analytical moments illuminated an area of her identity that Katie finds problematic, as expressed in the following excerpt taken with permission from an email she sent me:

> I think my negativity is what I was/am honestly feeling. I think it is a true picture of the present. However, I don't like feeling that way, nor do I like being seen that way… I DO love my job and I know it's what my calling is. I wouldn't want to do anything else. It's just that a lot of stuff makes it harder to make a difference in my students' lives. That's where my own personal reflection of how to improve on my own attitude and be the light in their not so bright lives comes in.

She identifies areas where she can make improvements, one being the way she interacts with teachers in her building. Sometimes she passes other teachers in the hall, and they joke about counting down the time remaining until the school day ends. Instead, she wants to find a way to "pull the positive out" of situations, possibly by surrounding herself with positive people and constantly reflecting. She also believes that positivity is contagious: "The more positives I give out, I think, the more positives I'm going to get back."

Discussion

Katie's *currere* narrative elucidates her evolving identity as a veteran kindergarten teacher, aligning with Dewey's (1938/1997) theory of experience, specifically his continuity of experience. The purpose of this discussion is to "make sense" (Creswell, 2013) of Katie's narrative by placing her narrated experiences in context (Eisner, 1998). To this end, I draw connections between her narrative, other participants' narratives; classroom observations; and related literature. Specifically, this discussion centers on four themes from Katie's narrative: top-down decision-making, increased focus on academics, changing teacher-student relationships, and lessened morale.

External forms of control. Forty years ago, educational scholars, (Martin et al., 1976), predicted the effects of accountability initiatives in education on teachers, students, and schooling. They concluded that such recent initiatives would exacerbate existing hierarchies, further alienating teachers:

> Although teachers will be given the opportunity to develop and implement goals for students, administrators will do the same for teachers, and so on up the line all the way to state and perhaps to federal levels. Teachers will be given freedom only within very strictly predefined limits. Under such circumstances, school systems will resemble large corporations where each subordinate is held directly accountable to his immediate superior at every rung of the hierarchical ladder. But the locus of real control will remain at the top, the locus of accountability at the bottom. (Martin et al., 1976, p. 77)

More recently, Gunzenhauser (2012), drawing from Foucault's (1977) metaphor of the panopticon to describe disciplinary societies, argued that existing accountability policies enact forms of surveillance by encouraging teachers to discipline themselves. Katie must remain ready at all times for unannounced visitors checking in on her adherence to district and state mandates. Additionally, she is required to share her students' progress in weekly data reports sent to the superintendent. These practices act as forms of surveillance over Katie's work.

In addition to Katie's comments about external forms of control during our four interviews, I visited Katie's classroom on a day when Potter expected a woman from the state to visit classrooms. When I first arrived that morning to observe in her classroom for the first time, Katie told me about the visitor and hoped that she would not stop by Katie's room. Katie had remarked during one of our interviews that due to her classroom's proximity to Potter's main entrance, she often received visitors. Katie's feelings mirror those of Joanie and Mattie, that teaching today involves an increased amount of surveillance from district and state leadership. Likewise, Lasky's (2005) study of secondary teachers' identity, agency, and vulnerability during accountability reforms revealed an increased systematic form of surveillance over teachers' work, exacerbating the ever-present public scrutiny of educators. Constant questioning and check-ins by district and state personnel undermine her autonomy as a professional educator, reiterated by Day's (2002) research on teachers' professionalism and identity in the midst of school reform.

Increased rigor in kindergarten. One way that district personnel have extended their reach into the classroom is by prescribing the amount of time Katie must spend teaching each subject per day. An increased focus on reading, math, and writing has undermined other aspects of kindergarten that Katie views as equally valuable. Katie is not alone in her feeling that kindergarten has become more academically oriented since her first year as a kindergarten teacher. In the midst of claims by teachers, educational leaders, and the media that today's

kindergarten seems more like first grade in years past, researchers have begun examining the potential trickle-down effects of accountability policies on kindergarten. One such study, conducted by Bassok, Latham, and Rorem (2016), utilized two nationally representative data sets to compare kindergarten and first-grade classrooms between 1998 and 2010. Related to Katie's narrative, three of the five dimensions explored dealt with time allocation for academic and non-academic content, pedagogical approaches, and use of assessments (Bassok et al., 2016).

Echoing Wood's (2004) discussion on the narrowing of the school experience since *No Child Left Behind*, Bassok et al. (2016) found that compared to their counterparts in 1998, kindergarten teachers in 2010 devoted more instructional time to literacy and math skills, focusing specifically on more advanced concepts. Conversely, teachers who reported daily music and art instruction fell by 18 and 16 percentage points, respectively. Instruction in several science topics saw significant decreases as well. Likewise, Bassok et al.'s (2016) findings revealed 20 percentage point drops in the inclusion of classroom centers focused on science and art. To Katie, an increased focus on academics stifles students' creativity, standardizing their learning experience.

Katie's discussion about changes to her pedagogical approach aligns with Bassok et al.'s (2016) findings. Prior to her district mandating the amount of time teachers are expected to spend on each section of their day, Katie gave her students a great deal of choice. Now, however, due to an increased focus on academics, she feels that she has to make most decisions for her students to ensure their exposure to content that they will be held accountable for on future assessments. Bassok et al. (2016) found that the percentage of kindergarten teachers engaging students in self-selected activities fell by 40 percent from 1998 to 2010. Relatedly, the percent of teachers reporting that they spent more than three hours on whole-class instruction per day more than doubled to 32 percent in 2010.

A heightened focus on data-driven decision-making in Katie's district has resulted in more paper-pencil activities for kindergarteners. She reminisces about past centers during the fall when she and her colleagues planned integrated units around leaves, during which students utilized magnifying glasses to examine and compare different leaves and counted how many leaves they had of each color. Due to current pressures to document student progress, she spends more time on district-adopted curriculum that consists of didactic forms of instruction (i.e., worksheets, textbooks, and workbooks): "I think it's too worksheety." Bassok et al. (2016)

found that the use of reading and math textbooks in kindergarten more than doubled between 1998 and 2010. Similarly, their findings also yielded increased use of worksheets in reading and math by 17 and 15 percentage points, respectively (Bassok et al., 2016).

Bassok et al.'s (2016) findings on the use of assessments by kindergarten teachers provide additional connections to Katie's feelings about the increased role of assessment in kindergarten: "Everything's test scores." Their findings suggest that kindergarten teachers in 2010 were more concerned with students' performance relative to their peers and to local and state standards than were their 1998 counterparts (Bassok et al., 2016). Likewise, kindergarten classrooms in 2010 devoted significantly more time to standardized assessments than did first-grade teachers in 1999. Relatedly, Katie recognizes the trickle-down effects of the Third Grade Guarantee on her classroom practices, as she and her kindergarten, first-, and second-grade colleagues feel the pressure to prepare students for the high-stakes reading assessment taken in third grade.

Despite being held accountable for teaching her students academics, Katie is "responsible for the overall development of [her] students" (Noddings, 2007, p. 39). In Katie's classroom, this consists of teaching social skills, self-regulation, and school routines; managing materials and time (Jackson, 1968/1990); and providing food, medical attention, and even safety from eight-legged classroom visitors. During my classroom observations I noted numerous occasions on which Katie provided students with opportunities and reminders to improve their social skills, whether by sharing, letting classmates speak without interruption, staying seated when sitting in front of a classmate, or listening to peers talk about their toy or writing during share time. Katie held students accountable for their behaviors by having a group of students write and illustrate apology letters to their gym teacher for behavior during gym class, which required at least 35 minutes of class time during one of my observations. She promoted student responsibility by assigning students to various classroom jobs. During a project-based learning unit, groups of students acted out appropriate and inappropriate behaviors related to various school routines to be videotaped and shared with the school community. Through the use of colored folders and modeling, Katie taught her students organizational skills by instructing them where to place their materials when finished. She utilized timers and gave students verbal countdowns to manage the amount of time spent on various tasks. She saved leftover food and drinks from breakfast to provide students with snacks at the end of the day. Once, during share time, a student walked up

to Katie and showed her pink bumps dotting her legs, and Katie reassured the student that they were probably mosquito bites and instructed her not to itch them. Katie also acted as a hero on one occasion when a group of students were frightened by the appearance of a spider. Teaching the child as a "whole person" requires Katie to wear multiple hats, as mentioned in her narrative. Treating students in this way requires going beyond the promotion of students' intellectual development to include the promotion of students' "social, emotional, physical, ethical, and aesthetic development" (Noddings, 2007, p. 39).

Changing student-teacher relations. One could argue that establishing relations with one's students contributes to students' development as a "whole person." As mentioned previously, increasing demands on Katie's time have made it more difficult to maintain positive relationships with her students, undermining the interpersonal aspect of teaching that attracted her to the profession. Katie's experiences parallel Kelchtermans' (2005) narrative-biographical work with teachers, specifically his discussions about teachers' emotions and vulnerability during accountability reforms. Accountability policies have usurped the interpersonal dimension of teaching with a heightened emphasis on the instrumental dimension, through which technical means are linked to prescribed ends (Kelchtermans, 2005). Likewise, Lasky's (2005) findings revealed that, like Katie, teachers felt pressured to cover content at the expense of establishing relationships with their students. Instead of engaging in informal banter with her students during centers time, Katie now uses that time to assess students' progress to report out in her weekly data meetings.

Morale. The most negative effect of accountability policy, according to Gunzenhauser (2012), is the impact it has on teacher morale. The dissonance between expectations about teachers' work and teachers' beliefs about their practice negatively affects their morale (Gunzenhauser, 2012; Noddings, 2007; Sirotnik, 2004; Tienken & Orlich, 2013). The rewarding aspect of teaching to Katie, building and maintaining relationships with students, is commandeered by demands on her time and an increased focus on academics. The intense micro-management and surveillance of Katie's work result in a decreased sense of self-efficacy: "I feel like I'm not valued as a person as a teacher like I was before." Additionally, challenging student behaviors and the expectation to act as a data analyst interfere with her job satisfaction. These and other aspects of teaching kindergarten in 2016 make it difficult to remain positive at

work. She finds herself putting on a show while she is teaching, masking her emotions until she gets home with her family, where she feels she unleashes her frustrations.

Conclusion

Katie's narrative revealed the nuanced ways her past and present experiences combined with her predictions about the future contribute to her identity as a veteran kindergarten teacher in the context of recent reforms. More specifically, she finds herself acting more as a data analyst and less as a teacher. Her narrative surfaces the changing role of kindergarten teachers in an era that has pushed academic expectations down to even the youngest grades in elementary school. Additionally, for those pursuing a career in teaching because of the interpersonal appeal of the job, Katie's narrative draws attention to the way an increased focus on data-driven decision-making instrumentalizes student-teacher interactions. Further, her narrative illuminates the growing control district personnel exercise over teachers' instructional and time management decisions and the resultant feelings that can arise when district personnel make unannounced visits to teachers' classrooms. As Katie continues teaching, she will need to find creative ways to promote positive interactions with her students despite various demands on her time and the district's emphasis on frequent assessments. Likewise, she will need to continuously interrogate her attitude toward her work and toward her students to ensure that she is not succumbing to the pessimism that the present moment brings.

Chapter 10: Discussion and Implications

Introduction

The distinct purpose of this study was to bring teachers' voices to the fore, to illuminate *their* perspectives on what it means to be a teacher in the current accountability era in education. This final chapter provides an overview of this study's findings and how they both mirror and extend the extant literature. The decision to study veteran elementary teachers' narratives and the use of *currere* as both method and theory makes a unique contribution to the discussion on teachers' experiences during accountability reforms. Finally, I consider the present study's various implications for practice and research.

Summary of the study. In many ways, my findings were consistent with the literature that has examined the various impacts of accountability reforms on teachers and on teachers' identity. Each participant's narrative included references to the lack of time to do what is expected of them while also doing what is important to them, as the two are frequently divergent. These teachers have experienced a narrowing of the curriculum (Berryhill et al., 2009; Noddings, 2007; Ravitch, 2011; Tienken & Orlich, 2013), as districts have mandated the amount of instructional time spent on each subject area, requiring more time for tested areas and, in Joanie's district, the inclusion of intervention periods. For Mattie, increased testing has left less time for tending to students' social, emotional, and physical needs, while Steve bemoaned how testing has usurped other worthwhile curriculum topics such as citizenship traits. A heightened focus on academics has left less time for recess, field trips (Wood, 2004), imaginative play (Bassok et al., 2016), and creative projects (Bracey, 2009; Martin et al., 1976; Tienken & Orlich, 2013). Additionally, expectations to utilize data-driven decision-making have left Katie with less time to engage in informal interactions with her students, impeding her ability to foster positive relations (Kelchtermans, 2005; Lasky, 2005).

Some participants have experienced a decreased sense of autonomy (Day, 2002), as decisions have become more top-down in nature with an increasing number of decisions being made at the district level rather than at the building level. In some cases (i.e., Joanie and Mattie), a culture of fear and anxiety (Amrein-Beardsley & Collins, 2012; Ravitch, 2011) permeates district practices, as teachers fear the negative consequences of voicing their concerns about district decisions.

Ohio's enactment of test-based teacher evaluations under the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) has caused some teachers to question their practices, resulting in a decreased sense of self-efficacy (Berryhill et al., 2009; Lasky, 2005; Noddings, 2007; Tienken & Orlich, 2013). While not affecting these five teachers in the same way, the pressures and inadequacy teachers feel when students' test scores do not reflect teachers' commitment to the work has caused some to question the decision to remain in teaching. As teachers navigate recent changes, they feel the temptation to act unethically (Ravitch, 2011) by "teaching" test-prep materials as curriculum in hopes of raising student test scores. In spite of these pressures, some have found creative ways to align their practices with their deeply held philosophies (Gunzenhauser, 2012) of teaching and learning (e.g., Katie's inclusion of snack time without posting it on the classroom schedule).

Contribution of the Study

While my findings echoed those included in the literature around accountability reforms and teachers, I set out at the beginning of this study to fill a gap in the literature by exploring a specific sample of the teacher population: veteran elementary teachers. Based on my experiences as an early-career elementary teacher, I was drawn to this specific population for a few reasons. First, I felt that with the media and researchers' focus on new teacher turnover, veteran teachers' experiences were being relegated to the margins. What unique insights could this subgroup of teachers provide about accountability trends in education policy and their subsequent impacts on teachers? Second, with the stigma often attached to experienced teachers as being jaded or resistant to change, I questioned the validity of such assumptions. Perhaps these teachers aligned with Ellis' (2005) and Tyack and Cuban's (1995) proposition that veteran teachers possess the wisdom and hindsight of previous reforms and, consequently, resist reforms that do not align with their deeply held beliefs about teaching and learning.

Additionally, I was particularly interested in elementary teacher experiences because of both my experiences as an elementary teacher and because of the unique role these teachers serve in students' transition from home life to school life and eventually work life. Elementary teachers, often viewed as parents in the classroom, have a prolonged engagement with the same group of students. Their relationship, like all teachers with their students, is a moral one (Hansen, 1995). Elementary school experiences, I argue, set the tone for students' overall schooling

experience because in these initial exposures to schooling, students formulate opinions about various subjects, and their successes and failures influence their self-esteem related to school activities. Additionally, whereas secondary school is typically associated with a heightened focus on academics, elementary school students still engage in recess and field trips. Considering the nature of the elementary school experience and its implications for elementary teachers, I set out at the beginning of this study to examine how elementary teachers experience accountability reforms in a unique way.

Finally, my pragmatic adaption of *currere* provided a nuanced understanding of veteran elementary teachers' experiences of teaching in the current accountability era. Rather than asking teachers to narrate their present experiences, reflecting through each of the four *currere* moments placed teachers' present moment in temporal context while also enabling them to draw their own conclusions about their experiences. The temporality of *currere* provided participants with an opportunity to reflect on the interrelations of their past, present, and future experiences, often surfacing aspects of their present that they wished to change. In this way, for most of these teacher-participants, *currere* in general and the synthetical moment in particular resulted in an increased sense of agency.

Veteran teacher perspective. Due to the longevity of my participating teachers' experience in education, each narrative provided a backward-looking perspective. Three of the teachers – Steve, Jada, and Joanie – used the word "pendulum" when describing educational reforms. The experiences over the course of their career with various policy changes and "innovations" have underscored an expectation that change in education is inevitable but not permanent, reiterating Ellis' (2005) contention that "like wandering nomads in search of the next oasis, [educators] move from fad to fad in search of the next wellspring with the vague hope that [they] might find a permanent place to settle. Of course, [they] never do" (p. 12). When reflecting on their projections about teaching in the future, these three teachers expressed hope that the pendulum of educational reform has reached its apex in terms of the inordinate amount of testing and district initiatives and will begin swinging the other direction. Specifically, Jada hoped that Ohio's Department of Education would realize that OTES is not effective and that high-stakes testing will change. Joanie feared that despite what she knows about the brevity of education innovations and reforms maybe current practices are here to stay. Similarly, while Steve acknowledged that the current reform era is probably temporary, he considers the

frightening possibility that it might be permanent. While experienced teachers are often cynical about educational innovations (Ellis, 2005), these teachers' narratives about recent policy changes that demand that teachers be held accountable for student performance are characterized less by cynicism and instead by fear. Whereas veteran teachers might eschew short-lived fads in education, these five experienced teachers hope that the current policy environment *is* a fad. They welcome its departure with open arms but fear that this reform, unlike those in the past, may stick around. What if the metaphor of the pendulum describing accountability reforms in education is faulty, and there is no downhill swing of the pendulum to come? Or, what if reforms are a pendulum but still have not reached the peak of their climb, and the worst is yet to be seen?

In addition to the comparison of educational reforms to the swing of a pendulum, some of the veteran teacher-participants considered what it means to become a teacher today. Joanie, when thinking about the different experiences that her student teacher might have over the course of his career compared to her experiences over the past 27 years, made an interesting point about the present climate being new teachers' "normal." They have nothing to compare their present experiences to other than their perspective as a student about teachers from their apprenticeship of observation. McNeil (2000) recognized this possibility when she detailed the normalization of an accountability system in education: Those with limited experience in education, who enter the profession since the inception of accountability policies may accept them as a "sad but 'inevitable' feature of schooling" (p. 269). Both Mattie and Steve feared what the future of the profession will look like when new teachers, wanting to keep their jobs, are tempted to make unethical decisions in order to boost their test-based evaluations. In other words, Mattie and Steve's narratives reflect a sentiment that new teachers, because they can be fired more easily than teachers with tenure, will be forced to comply with expectations that may not align with their philosophy of education. Conversely, Mattie and Steve, recognizing their seniority as veteran teachers, expressed feeling relatively safe. Steve did not fear the consequences of resisting expectations to implement data-driven decision-making, and Mattie did not fear the consequences of resisting district mandates to standardize the curriculum. How different will the experiences of new teachers be when in addition to trying to survive during their first year on the job, they feel the pressure to boost students' performance on standardized assessments while complying with district directives?

Elementary teacher perspective. Along with their years of experience as veteran teachers, the five participants in this study provided unique perspectives based on their elementary teaching background. Their narratives, particularly those of Katie and Joanie, elucidated how an increased focus on academics and calls for raising standards in favor of a more rigorous curriculum have altered what it means to be an elementary teacher. As Katie's narrative revealed, students are expected to engage in more paper-pencil tasks and take computerized assessments while having less time to develop social skills and participate in imaginative play. She noted the trickle-down effects of Ohio's Third Grade Guarantee on kindergarten, first, and second grades. Teachers in these grades are expected to help students meet certain reading benchmarks that will prepare them to pass the high-stakes reading assessment in third grade that determines students' eligibility for promotion to fourth grade. As a result, Joanie noted the inability of her third grade students to demonstrate basic skills like holding a pencil correctly and using scissors. She attributed this deficiency to a shift in focus in the earlier grades away from learning how to function at school toward passing academic assessments.

Currere. The third unique contribution that this study makes to the literature on teachers' experiences during accountability reforms relates to my use of *currere* as a reflective scaffold during the four interviews conducted with each participant. Using this theoretical framework enabled participants to co-construct their narrated experiences with me, situated temporally. To explicate the unique reflective opportunity afforded to each participant during his/her *currere* moments, I provide a brief discussion of my observations about teachers' revelations during each moment. I then share each participant's reactions to the *currere* process. Finally, I consider the lessons I learned from using *currere* with teachers.

During the first interview, I asked participants to reflect on what it was that attracted them to the teaching profession, to elementary teaching in particular. Some chose to include their apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975), detailing their earliest memories playing school as a child, impactful teachers throughout grade school and college, their involvement working with children, and the decision to pursue an education degree. They detailed their journey to become a teacher, including college courses, field placements, student teaching, and/or substitute teaching experiences. From there, teachers shared, mostly in chronological order, the turning points over the course of their careers, from the time they landed their first job

to the present. In their narrative, some chose to detail their regressive moment by remembering impactful leaders, while others remembered transitional moments (i.e., changing schools or grades or moving out of state). Since I rejected the phenomenological influence inherent in Pinar's (1976) *currere*, teachers' present reactions to their past permeated their regressive moment reflection. I never asked them to think of the past as it was. Instead, they constantly reacted to their past as they storied it during our interview. Additionally, even though the first interview focused on the regressive moment, hints of the past surfaced during each subsequent interview and were included in the regressive moment of their narrative write-up.

Imagining possible futures proved to be a difficult task for each of the participants, aligning with Lortie's (1975) contention that teaching tends to be a present-oriented career. During this moment, I asked teachers to consider what the near and distant future of teaching holds for them personally. Some talked about retirement and how they wanted to spend their remaining years in the profession, while others considered whether they wanted to remain in teaching or pursue different avenues like curriculum development or administration. They shared their fears and hopes for the future, stemming from recent trends they had experienced and/or witnessed in their district. During these conversations, some considered the future of public education more broadly in Ohio or America and how that might affect them personally.

During the third interview, participants reflected on their first two moments by reviewing the *currere* timeline that I generated based on their regressive and progressive moments. They returned to the present, though they never left it entirely in the preceding interviews, to reflect on what it meant to them to be a teacher in the present moment. They then considered the interrelations of the past, present, and future.

During our final interview, participants revisited their *currere* timeline, now including their regressive, progressive, and analytical moments. Considering each of their moments taken together, participants reflected on their present, at the time, understanding of what it meant to be a teacher in the midst of recent reforms. They then considered how this understanding of their teacher identity aligned with the kind of teacher they aspired to be.

After discussing the synthetical moment, I asked each participant to reflect on the process of *currere* itself. The following reflections yielded insights about the impact of *currere* on each participant. During this reflection, for instance, some of the participants shared commitments to a renewed sense of purpose or calling.

Mattie's reflections on currere. When reflecting on the currere process as a whole, Mattie admitted that when I first recruited her to participate in my dissertation research, she consented thinking that she would be helping me out and maybe even education in some way. During our final interview, however, she acknowledged how beneficial the experience was for her, comparing our conversations to professional development sessions: "I really think I've probably gotten more out of it than you have… This definitely made me more mindful of some things I wasn't so mindful of."

For Mattie, the most difficult part of the process was reflecting on the future. Thinking about the present is overwhelming enough, that "you don't always take the time to necessarily think about the future." Plus, the future is full of unknowns. Aligning with Lortie's (1975) discussion on the problem with presentism in teaching, Mattie acknowledged the necessity of reflecting on the future: "If you don't think about the future, then to me, you're almost thinking, *Well, things are always going to be this way*." Change requires a vision of a different future before one can work toward achieving that desired future. Mattie wondered whether or not she was thinking enough about the ways the future impacted her present, thus preventing her from initiating change for the future.

Using currere as a reflective framework impacted Mattie in numerous ways. The experience provided her with time to consider the impact of her past and future on her present, while prompting her to consider various aspirations: "So what a way… your project is impacting teachers! Just to make us step back and think about these things that are in our subconscious, many of which we don't think about … that can change." Reflecting on the past illuminated feelings that she had been harboring and wanted to let go of:

> It really has made me think about things that I don't think I would have… well, I know I wouldn't have thought about. I don't have time to think about them. And so, when you're forced to… you've kind of made me carve out that time to just be more thoughtful about these things, and they truly still impact me.

Rather than admiring problems and allowing the negativity of recent circumstances to control her interactions with her students and classroom practices, her *currere* reflections resulted in a sense of agency:

> So then you think, *Really? You have held on to all this frustration and negativity and given*…ugh…*that much attention and let it control you that much?* So as a future self, I

have to get that in check. I have to reign that in, and I do have to thank you for helping me get to that point because I try very hard not to admire problems, but I think I've discovered that admiring problems isn't just talking about them. If you're still feeling so much about them, you're still admiring them; you're just not doing it verbally or consciously.

Steve's reflections on currere. Similar to Mattie, Steve appreciated the opportunity to reflect during his four moments of *currere* more than he thought he would when first consenting to participate in my research. Having been approached by his principal, Steve felt somewhat obligated to participate as a favor to his superior. Yet, during our final interview, he expressed feeling that he "got a lot more out of this than [he] ever thought [he] would." Having the time to reflect allowed him to identify the way his purpose for becoming a teacher remained a thread throughout his tenure. To Steve, "successful people self-reflect," which he felt he did often about the day-to-day aspects of his job (i.e., reflecting on the efficacy of a lesson). However, reflecting on his career in teaching was novel to him.

Reflecting beyond his daily decisions to his journey as a teacher had its benefits. Steve experienced a sense of pride in the consistency of his ideals throughout his time in the profession: "I'm kind of proud to hang my hat on the fact that I didn't lose my ideals. The stuff that was important to me that I thought mattered in working with kids? I didn't lose that." Additionally, this process motivated Steve to commit to finishing out his career in teaching on a strong note by reminding himself why he became a teacher in the first place:

> I think it's been a very healthy one for me. And I think it's been something that kind of lets me think, *All right, [that] five to ten I keep talking about. If I keep digging back, dipping back into that well, and then pushing, toting it forward, I think I can finish strong*. And that means a lot to me to do. So I would say the whole process has been very beneficial to me.

Finally, the opportunity to share with someone about his experiences gave him a voice since it is a rare occasion when people want to hear from teachers about their teaching lives.

Jada's reflections on currere. During my conversations with Jada, she often compared *currere* to therapy. She appreciated having the opportunity to take the time to reflect on her teaching identity, noting, in particular, how the process grew her as a more whole person, a person of integrity, as she stated it:

> I appreciate this. I feel like this is making me grow as a human being. Notice, I didn't say as an educator. I feel like I should pay you for therapy sessions because it's so, I don't know, I feel more validated in who I am and what I do, and I'm articulating struggles that I wouldn't articulate otherwise.

She partially attributed the healthier stance she took toward her test scores after our first three interviews to having the time in our conversations to process her feelings, rather than continuing to allow her scores to consume her: "Talking with you is really, like I said, kind of fortuitous. It lets me debrief and make sense of it and know where to go. Do I become an activist against testing?" Her reflections revealed an increased sense of agency: "I think I could say, too, that the present here [in our interviews] will affect my future because I could be a lot more intentional, and I have to thank you for that." Finally, she credited *currere* for her renewed sense of passion toward teaching: "If I can look at *my* life and see who *I* am, then I can move forward with some purpose and passion. Or, I already had passion, *renewed* passion."

Joanie's reflections on currere. As with the other participants, Joanie appreciated having the time to reflect during her *currere* moments: "[It] gave me a chance to reflect and think because pretty much I'm just going day by day, just kind of getting [the job] done." Like Jada, *currere* not only impacted her as a professional, but it also grew her as a person:

> How many of us take time to reflect? And that helps you grow as a person. It might not totally change … what I'm going to do in the classroom day to day, but it helps me to grow as a person, to remember, to think about who I was, where do I want to go, and where I am now.

Katie's reflections on currere. Katie expressed an appreciation for having the opportunity to reflect through her *currere* moments, referring to the experience as both "insightful" and "challenging." During our final interview, when thinking about her daily practices in the classroom, she found herself focused on the tasks and events that each day brings, rarely taking the time to think intentionally about her journey as a teacher:

> I do feel like probably doing this has made me more intentional or reminding myself why I wanted to be a teacher and how I can [make an] impact even in [difficult] situations… whether it's coping or figuring out [how] to handle things differently now. … I think this has been a good thing… just to reflect … to think about things that I'm doing and why I'm doing them. … I think sometimes you get caught up in just what you're doing and

> forget what things used to be like or why you did the things that you used to do or why things are changing now.

Katie reflected on the necessity of remembering and learning from past practices and experiences instead of being enraptured by the novelty of change as often seems the case with those promoting educational reform.

Lessons learned from currere. As the preceding paragraphs show, each teacher-participant appreciated the opportunity to reflect on his/her teaching identity and experiences, noting specific benefits of the process for him/her personally. Considering the demands on participants' time, as mentioned previously in this chapter, their reactions to *currere* highlighted the illuminating and empowering potential that arises when teachers have the time to engage in thoughtful reflection. Unfortunately, they all expressed not having the time to do so outside of the forced reflection required by participating in my study.

While the impacts of the process varied between each participant, *currere* resulted in a renewed sense of purpose for some while surfacing areas for improvement and a way forward for others. Interestingly, when discussing the kind of teacher they aspired to be, participants either alluded to or explicitly indicated a desire to be the kind of teacher that they once were, when they were not jaded by the waves of recent reform pressures. Reflecting on their regressive moment provided this insight. Arguably one of the most noteworthy and unexpected findings related to the use of *currere* in research about teachers' experiences relates to the autobiographical nature of the process. Because teachers authored their *currere* narratives while also providing feedback on my restorying of their narrative, they were able to draw their own conclusions, or findings, from the research. *Currere* provided them with a reflective tool for thoughtfully interrogating their identity, a tool that I hope they refer to after the conclusion of this study.

Implications for Practice and Research

The aforementioned findings from this study have the potential to inform the work of teachers, administrators, policymakers, and researchers as they attempt to understand teacher perspectives on and experiences with recent accountability reforms. Preservice and practicing teachers can learn from the perspectives of five veteran teachers. Despite the uncertainties of the future of the profession, the necessity for teachers to practice vulnerable self-reflection and ethical decision-making while holding their leaders accountable for the same at a time when

teachers are tempted to forgo their philosophy of education (Gunzenhauser, 2012) is paramount. It would also behoove administrators and policymakers to take heed of the insights gleaned from these five teachers' perspectives so that in the future they might consider learning from and collaborating with teachers rather than dismissing the potential contributions of their personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Furthermore, this work highlights the importance of researching teachers' narratives and the potential of *currere* as both theoretical framework[15] and reflective scaffold.

For preservice and practicing teachers. Preservice teachers possess a relatively narrow perspective of teaching that widens with each lesson taught until finally they assume responsibility for a group or groups of students during their first teaching job. Prior to that time, they have limited exposure to and understanding of practicing teachers' experiences, notably the trickle-down effects of policies on teachers' identities and practice. This study and those like it that highlight teachers' stories provide preservice teachers with a broadened understanding of teachers' lives. Understandably, this exposure, in turn, may cause preservice teachers to realize that their image of teaching is incongruent with the storied experiences of practicing teachers. As some participants' narratives revealed, exposure to the challenging aspects of the job may deter prospective teachers from joining the profession. At the same time, however, I hope that these five teachers' stories prepare teacher-hopefuls for the potential realities of the work, which in turn empowers beginning teachers to recognize that the present outcomes-based infatuation in educational policy does not and should not be accepted as a "sad but 'inevitable' feature of schooling" (McNeil, 2000, p. 269). Maybe if preservice teachers have more exposure to teachers' honest reactions to their present circumstances, the sentiment of conservatism (Lortie, 1975) that pervades the teaching profession would be disrupted. Perhaps this enlightenment would encourage new teachers to advocate for change rather than accept reforms whole cloth.

These five veteran elementary teacher narratives may resonate with the experiences of practicing teachers, potentially contributing to a shared sense of experience. Since teaching has

[15] To Pinar (2012), curriculum theory is synonymous with *currere*: "A scholarly effort to understand the curriculum" as "complicated conversation" (p. 1). Through complicated conversations, one's subjective experience is woven through one's academic knowledge (Pinar, 2012).

been characterized as an individualistic profession (Hargreaves, 2010; Lortie, 1975), this study has the potential to enable teachers to recognize that their experiences are not entirely unique – that there are other teachers feeling overwhelmed, inadequate, confused, frustrated, and exhausted. Additionally, these stories challenge practicing teachers to reflect on their own teaching identity in light of their past and present experiences and their hopes and fears about the future. Pausing from the hurried and busy nature of the present moment – that demands teachers to implement data-driven decision-making, cover more rigorous curriculum, and prepare students to perform well on standardized assessments – pushes back against the presentism that characterizes teaching (Hargreaves, 2010; Lortie, 1975). Considering the future enables one to imagine an alternative future and to identify necessary actions in the present which move one toward seeing these desired changes come to fruition. Looking toward the future, in other words, rejects the conservative tendency inherent in teaching (Lortie, 1975), opening up the possibility for change to occur (Hargreaves, 2010).

Hargreaves (2010) referred to the adaptive presentism that characterizes teaching under a system of increasing standardization that results from an "increasing intensification in teachers' work, where teachers [are] expected to respond to increasing pressures and comply with multiple innovations…" (p. 149). As the five teachers' narratives in this study showed, present circumstances have made it easy to lose sight of one's purpose for becoming a teacher in the first place. Likewise, they all expressed having less time to reflect on their present experiences. In a reform environment that promotes an obsession with "meeting targets, raising performance standards, and adjusting strategies right down to continuous, just-in-time interventions with every child" (Hargreaves, 2010, p. 150), I argue that teacher reflection is imperative. Teachers must continue to find time to reflect during and after their lessons to interrogate, in the words of Mattie, which master they are serving. Are they narrowing the curriculum? Are they unknowingly robbing students of high-quality, educative experiences (Dewey, 1938/1997)? Further, they must regularly reflect on themselves, how the pressures of the present moment are affecting them personally and professionally. Are they allowing present pressures to alter their interactions with students, as in Katie and Mattie's narratives? Are they forgoing what they believe about teaching and learning in order to boost student performance on standardized assessments and/or their teacher evaluation rating? Without taking the time to honestly reflect

on these considerations, teachers are destined to perpetuate existing practices that may be miseducative (Dewey, 1938/1997) for students.

The high-stakes nature of the present moment in teaching incentivizes and rewards unethical behavior. When test-based evaluations are utilized to make decisions about teacher tenure and dismissal, the temptation arises to find any means possible (i.e., teaching to the test) to boost test scores. As a beginning teacher, I was not immune to this temptation and neither were the participants in this study. Teachers are in a position of power to decide how students will experience schooling (Gunzenhauser, 2012). This power beckons teachers to act responsibly in their relations with students, to value students as people rather than as test takers. As ethical professionals, teachers must reflectively question their decisions with students. As Ayers (2010) reminded teachers: "The essential and urgent thing is not to let our teaching lives make a mockery of our deepest teaching values" (p. 12).

Additionally, I hope that teachers like Mattie and Joanie continue to make their voices heard. In both cases, they wrote letters to district personnel calling attention to concerning decisions that did not align with their beliefs about teaching and learning. While Joanie did not feel that her letter made a difference, Mattie's superintendent requested a meeting to talk with her about her concerns. She brought many of Potter's teachers with her, and together, they advocated for change. As a result, positive changes have transpired in the last year, as Mattie's district supported Potter teachers to receive training to implement project-based learning initiatives rather than continuing to expect them to adhere to district curricular mandates. Although Mattie's experience may illustrate a best-case scenario, the change would not have occurred had she and her colleagues kept silent. Teachers must continue to find mediums to rally for their students' learning experiences. After all, they are the ones most intimately acquainted with students and therefore possess the greatest deal of knowledge about teaching and learning.

Finally, as Mattie and Katie's narratives illustrated, the current climate in education promotes an ethos of pessimism. While these teachers vowed to no longer allow the frustrations of the present moment to steal their joy in the classroom, I imagine that there are teachers who, like them, feel at a loss when considering how to remain positive and effect change in a policy environment that has discounted their professional judgment and undermined their autonomy. A sense of hopelessness may even pervade their thoughts about education today. Hansen (1995)

cautioned against such an attitude, arguing that "teaching is bound to fail when conducted in a spirit of pessimism – and, certainly, of hopelessness" (p. 160). "Teaching," according to Hansen (1995), "presupposes hope" (p. 160). More specifically, "teaching is at its heart an act of hope for a better future" (Ayers, 2010, p. 37). The temporal nature of *currere* has the potential to enhance teachers' sense of hope by reminding them of where they have been while concurrently presenting different paths into the future:

> [Being hopeful] means that as a teacher, one can perceive one's work against a broader historical backdrop. One can keep the results of past human effort in view, and see that they were sometimes achieved in conditions far more difficult than those one faces today. One can see that teaching is an act that, when done well, fully occupies the present moment, but also always with an eye on the future. (Hansen, 1995, p. 161)

I remain hopeful that teachers will not allow present circumstances to usurp their sense of purpose, passion, commitment, and hope.

For administrators and policymakers. The five veteran elementary teacher narratives presented in this study have various implications for both administrators (i.e., building principals and district personnel) and policymakers. First, while principals and district leaders did not create the policies that they are expected to enforce (e.g., Ohio's Teacher Evaluation System [OTES]), they do exercise power over policy implementation in their district. In other words, while principals in Ohio, for instance, cannot change the fact that they are mandated to hold teachers accountable for student test scores, comprising up to half of teachers' evaluations, they do have power over the remaining portion of teachers' evaluations and over teachers' understanding of their evaluation rating. For both Joanie and Jada, they lacked understanding about their evaluation ratings, wondering if principals felt pressured to identify teachers as less than "accomplished" so as to leave room for growth. Similarly, Mattie did not understand how even though her students met expected gains in various subjects, she was still rated as "skilled" on the student data portion of her evaluation. Therefore, principals and district personnel should strive to alleviate the ambiguities surrounding teachers' evaluations by providing teachers with resources to understand how their ratings are calculated.

Additionally, teachers' attitudes toward test-based evaluations seemed to vary based, in part, on the level of trust they felt with district and building leadership. Whereas Steve hardly discussed the impact of OTES on his work, it was a major portion of Mattie's narrative. While

Steve felt a great deal of trust with his administrators, Mattie, on the other hand, felt constantly surveilled when district personnel frequently stopped by her classroom for unannounced observations. Consequently, Mattie felt that the teachers and leadership in her district were not on the same team. Rather than promoting collaboration, district personnel promoted a culture of fear and anxiety. This type of atmosphere damages collaborative relations and prevents educators from considering alternative and perhaps better ways of serving students (McNeil, 2000). I am hopeful that building and district leadership will interrogate their practices and reflect on the ways that they could partner with teachers, rather than imposing demands from above, to provide students with high-quality educative experiences.

Second, while some participants were cynical about the possibility of policymakers enacting reforms that actually improve students' educational experiences, they each clung to the hope that someday policymakers will realize the deleterious effects of their enacted policies. I, too, am hopeful. I am hopeful that this work and works like it that showcase teachers' stories of experience give policymakers pause to consider the impacts of their decisions on students who will grow up and contribute to society, for better or worse. Do these five teachers' experiences align with policymakers' expectations when writing and enacting various accountability policies? Did they anticipate the ways that such policies would pressure teachers to act unethically toward students? Did they want schooling experiences to be narrowed by focusing more on passing tests rather than fostering critical thought and creativity? I am hopeful that policymakers will take note of teachers' experiences, reconsider their assumptions about teaching and learning, and continually question how their policies align with their espoused values about students' educational experiences.

For research. The present study joins other studies that have utilized *currere* with preservice and practicing teachers (e.g., Chehayl, 2007 and Milam, 2008), demonstrating how the process of *currere* leads teachers into "complicated conversations" (Pinar, 2012) about themselves, which result in a nuanced understanding of their experiences and perspectives. While *currere*, as mentioned previously, has implications for practice, I propose that it also has implications for future research. For those interested in partnering *with* teachers to understand a given issue, *currere* somewhat levels the power imbalance inherent to the researcher-researched relationship because of its autobiographical nature. It recognizes teachers as knowers. Additionally, engaging in critical reflection through *currere* has emancipatory potential by

working to free individuals from the "constraints of unwarranted convention, ideology, and psychological unidemensionality" (Schubert, 1986, p. 33). Through reconceptualization, the purpose of *currere* is to "explore other provinces of meaning, to envision possibilities, and to fashion new directions for oneself, others, and the world" (Schubert, 1986, p. 33). By disrupting the present-oriented sentiment that pervades teaching (Hargreaves, 2010; Lortie, 1975), *currere* presents research participants with opportunities to reconstruct their present situation:

> Without the lived, that is, subjectively structured temporality the method of currere encourages, we are consigned to the social surface, to the never-ending present, and what we see is what we get. When we listen to the past we become attuned to the future. From the past we can understand the present, which we *can* reconstruct. (Pinar, 2012, p. 236)

Beyond *currere*, this dissertation research surfaced multiple avenues for future research. While this study highlighted teacher narratives in Ohio, examining veteran elementary teachers' experiences in other states may provide an additional area for future research. How do teachers' experiences vary between districts and states that do not have test-based evaluations? Or in those districts that utilize merit pay? Additionally, though hints of teacher resistance and compliance surfaced through these five teachers' narratives, it was not the sole focus of this dissertation. How then might this particular subgroup of teachers add to the literature on teacher resistance (Weeda, 2014)? Further, on a number of occasions, these five participants referred to their building principals and the pressure they must feel to enact various district- and state-mandated policies. I would be interested in repeating the same study with a focus, instead, on what it means to be a principal during the recent reform era. Finally, how will teachers narrate their experiences under the recently passed *Every Student Succeeds Act* (*ESSA*) (USDOE, 2015)?

Conclusion

At the beginning of this dissertation research, I set out to understand veteran elementary teacher perspectives on teaching in a climate that holds teachers accountable for student test scores. While these five teachers' narratives presented numerous insights *about* their teaching identity related to my research question, they also provided me with opportunities to learn *from* them. Over the course of my interactions with these five teachers, I was challenged to consider my own teacher identity. Sharing in these often deeply personal and sometimes emotional

conversations linked our identities. Their stories changed my perceptions about what it means to be a teacher and gave me pause to consider the kind of teacher I aspire to be when I return to the classroom. Mattie's narrative reminds me to consider the masters that I serve and to consider the authority I possess as a teacher charged to care for students' academic progress while also caring for their social and emotional wellbeing. Steve's concerns about the instrumentalization of teaching cause me to interrogate how I engage students as ends-in-themselves rather than as a means-to-an-end. Jada challenges me to remember my reason for choosing to pursue teaching as a profession and to view it as a calling or vocation (Hansen, 1995). Her sentiments reiterate Pinar's (2012):

> Despite the satisfaction of working with the young through ideas, we teachers must mobilize ourselves if we are to remain focused in the maelstrom of the present. Somehow, each evening we must replenish our reserves and hear anew the calling of our profession. (p. 42)

Joanie's experiences under Ohio's Third Grade Guarantee broadened my perspective as a former third-grade teacher, revealing the resultant pressures teachers feel under high-stakes assessments. Last, Katie's commitment to providing kindergarteners with arts-based activities through subversive means challenges me to find ways to enact my philosophy of education under a system that promotes a default philosophy of education (Gunzenhauser, 2012).

Despite the frustrations of the present moment, we must cling to the hope presented by envisioning a different future:

> We are not optimists because we cannot predict a bright and beautiful future, but we are not pessimists either, because the future is unknown and unknowable. We are, rather, active participants in possibility, willing workers in the fields of what could be, but is not yet. We are compelled by love – love of children and youth, love of a world in need of repair – and powered by hope. (Ayers, 2010, p. 4)

I argue that the preceding narratives spur us on to reflect and focus on a philosophy of education, which includes teachers and students in the decision-making processes about schools, teaching, and learning. This necessitates a philosophy of education that refocuses attention on the kind of educational experiences with which we, together as a society, wish to provide students rather than using students as a means to prove the system's efficacy. We are compelled by our concern

about the future of teaching and students' education to teach and advocate in a way that moves toward that ideal.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Email

Dear [prospective participant]:

I am a doctoral student at Miami University, and I will begin my dissertation work in the fall on *teacher narratives on teaching in the context of accountability reforms*. I am looking for 4-5 teachers who are veteran elementary teachers (15+ years of experience).

Having been an elementary teacher in the public school system (Springfield Public Schools in Missouri), I completely understand a teacher's desire to know what all is required prior to agreeing to add another thing to his/her busy schedule. First of all, let me preface the following by saying that I view my research as partnering *with* teachers, rather than studying *on* teachers, which means that I will be seeking participants' voices instead of evaluating their work/words. Hopefully that makes sense. Here's what you may be interested in knowing prior to making a decision about committing:

- I will collect "data" from November through February, which means that we would be in touch during that time.
- I will invite you to participate in three (potentially four) one-on-one interviews that will be scheduled around your schedule. They could even occur on the phone or online.
- I will also ask to observe in your classroom (after receiving building and district approval), for the sake of coming up with questions for the interviews. The total number of observations will include no more than 10 days, and may be scheduled as you wish.
- I may ask you to participate in one focus group interview.

A few additional notes about the ethical aspects of this research: Should you desire, when I begin analyzing the data, I will share my analysis and write-up with you to verify the accuracy of my descriptions about your narrative. Second, your responses will be anonymous and confidential, and you may withdraw at anytime during the study.

Please let me know if you are interested and/or if you would like additional information. We could even set up a phone date to talk through your questions/concerns if that would be easier for you.

Thank you for considering participating in this work.

Respectfully,

Chloé Bolyard
Doctoral Student
Department of Educational Leadership
Miami University, Oxford, Ohio

Appendix B

Informed Consent for Building Principals

[Date]

Dear [principal]:

I am a doctoral student at Miami University in the Department of Educational Leadership, and I will begin my dissertation work in the fall supervised by my faculty advisor, Dr. Tom Poetter.

A teacher in your building, [teacher's name], is invited to participate in a study on teacher narratives on teaching in the context of accountability reforms. I will observe in [his/her] classroom for up to ten days. During these observations, the teacher's actions are the sole focus of the study. I will not be recording anything about individual students. The participating teacher's identifying information will not be kept with [his/her] responses. [His/Her] participation in these observations is voluntary, and [he/she] may withdraw from the study at any time. [He/She] will not be asked to do anything that exposes [him/her] to risks beyond those of everyday life. The benefit of the study is to help us understand more about teachers' lives generally and during accountability reforms in particular.

If you have further questions about the study, please contact Chloé Bolyard at bolyarcs@miamioh.edu or Tom Poetter at poettets@miamioh.edu. If you have questions about your teacher's rights as a research participant, please call the Office of Advancement of Research and Scholarship at 529-3600 or email: humansubjects@miamioh.edu.

Thank you for consenting your teacher's participation. I am grateful for your help and hope that this will be an interesting experience for [him/her]. You may keep this portion of the page.

Cut at the line, keep the top section and return the bottom section

I agree to [teacher's] participation in the study of teacher narratives on teaching and accountability. I understand that [his/her] participation is voluntary and that [his/her] name and the school's name will not be associated with [his/her] responses in a data report.

Principal's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

Informed Consent for Participating Teachers

[Date]

Dear [teacher]:

I am a doctoral student at Miami University in the Department of Educational Leadership, and I will begin my dissertation work in the fall supervised by my faculty advisor, Dr. Tom Poetter.

You are invited to participate in a study on teacher narratives on teaching in the context of accountability reforms. I will ask you to participate in four one-on-one interviews with me about your experiences as an elementary classroom teacher. These interviews will last between one and two hours. Your tape-recorded answers will be kept confidential in that your identifying information will not be kept with your responses. I will also observe in your classroom for up to ten days. During these observations, I will be taking notes on your teaching practices and the general atmosphere of the classroom. I will not be recording any information about individual students. In addition, I will provide a journal in which you may record your reflections between interviews. Finally, I will ask you to participate in one group interview with other veteran elementary teachers. Again, your identifying information will not be kept with your responses. Your participation in these tasks is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the sessions at any time and/or decline to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. You will not be asked to do anything that exposes you to risks beyond those of everyday life. The benefit of the study is to help us understand more about teachers' lives generally and during accountability reforms in particular.

If you have further questions about the study, please contact Chloé Bolyard at bolyarcs@miamioh.edu or Tom Poetter at poettets@miamioh.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please call the Office of Advancement of Research and Scholarship at 529-3600 or email humansubjects@miamioh.edu.

Thank you for your participation. I am grateful for your help and hope that this will be an interesting experience for you. You may keep this portion of the page.

Cut at the line, keep the top section and return the bottom section

I agree to participate in the study of teacher narratives on teaching and accountability. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that my name will not be associated with my responses in a data report.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D

Initial Meeting Agenda

Initial Meeting
Date: _____
Teacher-Participant: _____
Position: _____

1. Thank you for coming!
2. Introductions
    a. Current school:
    b. Grades taught:
    c. Years of experience:
3. Description of the research
    a. Research question
        i. How do veteran elementary school teachers narrate what it means to be a teacher in the recent reform era?
    b. Ethics
        i. Anonymity
        ii. Confidentiality
            1. Pseudonym
        iii. Recording devices
        iv. Documentation
        v. Option to withdraw at any time
    c. Interviews
        i. Four, one-two hours long, reflecting on teaching (past, future, present, synthesis)
            1. *Currere* Information
        ii. Journal (optional only – for reflection between interviews)
        iii. Any interest in a focus-group interview?
    d. Classroom observations
        i. Purpose: spur conversations during interviews
        ii. Non-purpose: record information about individual students, evaluate teacher
        iii. Schedule?
        iv. Frequency and duration?
        v. Permission from principal/district?
        vi. My role
            1. Participant's expectations for me
4. Questions about the research?
5. Best form of contact
6. Scheduling the first interview/all interviews and classroom observations
7. Informed Consent
    a. Sign
    b. Chloé will copy and return at next meeting
8. Thank you!

Appendix E

Interview Protocols

Interview 1: The Regressive Moment

Time of interview: _____
Date: _____
Place: _____ (pseudonym)
Interviewer: Chloé Bolyard
Interviewee: _____(pseudonym)
Position of interviewee: ____ grade teacher

Research Question:

How do veteran elementary school teachers narrate what it means to be a teacher in the recent reform era?

Protocol:

Prior to starting the interview, discuss the following:

- Purpose of the interview
- Confidentiality
- Anonymity of responses
- Option to withdraw at any time
- Permission to record

Interview Questions

Each question will be the sole focus of four separate interviews: question 1 asked during the first interview, question 2 during the second interview, etc. Each question will be based on one of the four stages of Pinar's (1976) method of curriculum theorizing, *currere*: the regressive, the progressive, the analytical, the synthetical.

The goal of the **regressive** moment is to observe and record one's functioning in the past, while also recording one's present responses to these observations (Pinar, 1976).

1. What caused you to choose teaching as a profession?

2. What has being a teacher looked like for you from the time you first landed a job until now?

3. Situated in the present, how do you feel about your past experiences as a teacher?

Interview 2: The Progressive Moment

Time of interview: _____
Date: _____
Place: _____ (pseudonym)
Interviewer: Chloé Bolyard
Interviewee: _____(pseudonym)
Position of interviewee: ____ grade teacher

Research Question:

How do veteran elementary school teachers narrate what it means to be a teacher in the recent reform era?

Protocol:

Prior to starting the interview, discuss the following:

- Purpose of the interview
- Confidentiality
- Anonymity of responses
- Option to withdraw at any time
- Permission to record

Interview Questions

Revisit the first interview. (The goal of the **regressive** moment is to observe and record one's functioning in the past, while also recording one's present responses to these observations (Pinar, 1976)).

1. Questions based on first interview.

2. Questions based on classroom observations in light of the regressive moment conversation during the first interview.

The **progressive** moment allows one to imagine possible futures (Pinar et al., 1995; Pinar, 2012) by considering aspirations and where one is moving; exploring one's fears and fantasies; and anticipating where one's intellectual interests are going. During this moment, an individual looks toward "what is not yet the case, what is not yet present" (Pinar, 2012, p. 5)—the projection of the future self. In the progressive stage, the individual should think of the future—the upcoming days, weeks, months, and years—and record his/her thoughts.

3. Think about what it will look like to be a teacher in the upcoming days, weeks, months, and years. What will teaching for you look like? (Consider, particularly, the changing nature of teaching that you described during our first interview and other changes to assessment, curriculum, accountability, teacher evaluations, etc.)

Interview 3: The Analytical Moment

Time of interview: _____
Date: _____
Place: _____ (pseudonym)
Interviewer: Chloé Bolyard
Interviewee: _____(pseudonym)
Position of interviewee: ____ grade teacher

Research Question:

How do veteran elementary school teachers narrate what it means to be a teacher in the recent reform era?

Protocol:

Prior to starting the interview, discuss the following:

- Purpose of the interview
- Confidentiality
- Anonymity of responses
- Option to withdraw at any time
- Permission to record

Interview Questions

During the **analytical** moment one is sensitized to the intricacies of one's present (Schubert et al., 2002) through the examination of both the past and the present (Pinar et al., 1995; Pinar, 2012). Then, one should consider how the past, present, and future are interrelated, asking: "How is the future present in the past, the past in the future, and the present in both?" (Pinar, 1976, p. 60).

1. Consider what it means today to be a teacher, and describe your thoughts.

2. How does the future impact teaching today?

3. How does your past impact your future of teaching?

4. Finally, how are your present experiences as a teacher evident in the past and the future?

5. Additional question(s) based on classroom observations.

Interview 4: The Synthetical Moment

Time of interview: _____
Date: _____
Place: _____ (pseudonym)
Interviewer: Chloé Bolyard
Interviewee: _____(pseudonym)
Position of interviewee: ____ grade teacher

Research Question:

How do veteran elementary school teachers narrate what it means to be a teacher in the recent reform era?

Protocol:

Prior to starting the interview, discuss the following:

- Purpose of the interview
- Confidentiality
- Anonymity of responses
- Option to withdraw at any time
- Permission to record

Interview Questions

1. Review the timeline. Is everything correct? Are there any gaps? Should items be moved?

2. What do you want the name of your school to be?

In the fourth and final moment of *currere*, one reenters the lived presence to make it whole (Pinar et al., 1995; Pinar, 2012). In this moment, one reflects on his/her new understanding of who he/she is (your teacher identity as you now understand it). This reflection permits one to reconsider who s/he wants to be and what s/he wants her/his aspirations to be (Pinar & Grumet, 1976).

3. Given your reflection over the last three interviews, where are you now in your understanding of what it means to you to be a teacher? (Consider this question in light of accountability policies and the effects of these policies on you as a teacher, as discussed during interviews 1-3)

4. How does this understanding align with the kind of teacher you aspire to be?

5. What are your general reflections on the *currere* process as a whole?

6. Additional question(s) based on classroom observations.