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Practitioner Research in Schools:
Revealing the Efficacy Agency Cycle

A Dissertation by
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Chapman University
Orange, CA

College of Educational Studies

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Leadership Studies

April 2018

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Jenifer Golden Ed.D.

April 2018

Practitioner Research in Schools: Revealing
the Efficacy Agency Cycle

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to teachers. I believe we are all teachers when we participate in society. However, it is those whom endeavor to enter the classroom for the purpose of helping another engage more fully in democratic society that I dedicate this work. It is those whom I hope to inspire to engage and act so we may all realize their place as critical intellectuals who truly transform society.

I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or de-humanized. (Ginott, 1972, p.13)

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ABSTRACT

Practitioner Research in Schools: Revealing the Efficacy Agency Cycle

by Edward Jay Brent Resnick

Years of high stakes testing and managerial directives to improve student test scores created a trend of teachers' declining sense of efficacy and agency. Researchers have yet to examine the perceptions of teachers following requirements to improve student engagement and school climate in an effort to improve academic performance following the authorization of local and national educational accountability reforms. The purpose of this study is to examine how teachers perceive their efficacy and agency in response to the addition of nonacademic measures and the requirement of documented input from teachers and other stakeholders into educational policy planning procedures. Veteran K-12 teachers' responses to survey and interview questions were coded, analyzed, and organized into themes to generate an educational theory. Grounded Theory Methodologies (GTM), Culturally Responsive Methodologies (CRM) and Critical Pedagogy (CP) informed data collection methods and theoretical foundations for this study. The creation of a safe dialogical space between the practitioner researcher and participants developed a relationship for both to engage as co-researchers. Teachers discovered renewed senses of efficacy and agency while acknowledging their leadership potential in schools and the community. This study and further practitioner research with

teachers in schools will inform pre-service education training programs and confirm teachers' role as critical intellectuals in American society.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

John Dewey (1938) theorized a progressive education was fundamental to a constantly evolving democratic society. At the nexus of an ever-increasing heterogeneous society, American public educators disagree on the best methods to educate the populace with diverse moral, ethical, and intellectual expectations. The monumental task of educating America's youth is exacerbated by the complexity of measuring such an endeavor. Federal policy makers initiated mechanisms to assess student progress across the nation and publicly report the results of those standardized tests (U. S. Department of Education, 2001). Researchers theorized that improved academic achievement ensured a competitive international workforce in the United States (Hanushek & Raymond, 2005; Mehta, 2015). However, the most effective ways to measure and evaluate schools and the impact of those programs remains debatable (Fagioli, 2014). Educational scholars identified broad negative implications for students and a gradual erosion of the teacher's role as a result of national focus on standardized testing and reporting (Haladyna, Nolen, & Haas, 1991; Sloan, 2000; Smith, 1991; Sunderman, Tracey, Kim, & Orfield, 2004). Furthermore, policy makers and scholars recognized the potential of nonacademic measures into the school accountability equation in addition to locally controlled decision-making to effectively assess the progress of students and schools (Menefee-Libey, & Kerchner, 2015; U. S. Department of Education, 2014). Recent school accountability reforms highlight the need to examine the influence of public school teachers who continue to discover their role in the educational milieu and American society.

Background of Educational Accountability

The American public has often been critical of the lack of academic achievement but school safety soon overshadowed those concerns. Near the end of the twentieth century student discipline and school violence topped the list of public concerns about American schools (Rose & Gallup, 1998). Incidents of violent acts in schools across the country inspired a United States Department of Education task force to analyze the surge in school violence and offer solutions (Dwyer, Osher, & Hoffman, 2000). The task force's report, "Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools", acknowledged harbingers of disruptive or violent behavior and recommended strategies to create safe campuses. The federally sponsored report emphasized prevention and correction of school violence to be the responsibility of schools and educators (Dwyer, Osher, & Warger, 1998). Accountability programs continued to focus on academic achievement while measures of school safety remained absent from educational policy. Schools were not officially required nor legally bound to increase student engagement or improve school safety. However, it was clearly a public expectation. Public scrutiny over school safety was matched by a growing criticism of American schools' lack of academic progress. Subsequently, the role of educators became more complex while their influence and performance came into question.

The close of the twentieth century revealed great complexities and blame confronting educators. The United States Department of Education's publication of *A Nation at Risk* (Gardner, 1983) criticized public schools for the country's economic decline, social plight, and lack of international competitiveness. "We conclude that declines in educational performance are in large part the result of disturbing inadequacies

in the way the educational process itself is often conducted” (Gardner, 1983, p. 18). The report proposed the ideal that a child’s academic progress was the determining factor of future social and economic success. However, public enquiry remained focused on the classroom rather than policies. The culpability for school safety and academic progress remained on the teacher. Teachers were responsible for designing academic programs to prepare students for economic success, international competitiveness, and social development necessary to participate in society. American legislatures responded by implementing academic standards and measures of the nation’s students and schools in the form of educational accountability plans (U. S. Department of Education, 2014; Fagioli, 2014; Hout & Elliott, 2011). Teachers were forced to navigate state and federal accountability programs therefore held responsible for guiding students toward academic progress while addressing public concerns about school safety.

Accountability systems relied solely on student test scores based on legislated educational standards to measure academic progress and determine the effectiveness of public education. Policy makers focused on academic accountability to address student achievement assuming school safety would follow. Legislatures held schools accountable for academic progress, not school safety (Dwyer, Osher, & Hoffman, 2000). Academic achievement was still considered the key to an individual’s social progress and the determining factor of student success in school and beyond. However, “research and educators seem to struggle to come up with definitions of a good education” (Fagioli, 2014, p. 205). Moreover, teachers were responsible for meeting high accountability standards not setting them. State and federal accountability programs relied on often-complex weighted calculations to measure annual progress of student groups as their

scores were compared to each other and the general population. Ethnicity, class, and the need for support services were used to categorize student groups. However, test scores remained the determining factor of school and student success.

The absence of greater stakeholder input and narrow focus on standardized tests forced the reevaluation of school accountability programs. Initially lauded for their comprehensive evaluation of student academic achievement, federal and state accountability programs came under scrutiny for their narrow evaluation of student progress and stratification of student groups (Carnoy & Loeb, 2003; Amrein & Berliner, 2003). Following twenty years of school accountability programs, recent reforms in California signaled a transition to locally controlled education policy and multiple measures of educational progress beyond student performance on standardized tests (California Education Code § 52074, 2013; Warren, 2014). The requirement of local control insisted on cooperation and collaboration to implement accountability programs with teachers, parents, and members of the community. Policy makers and educators finally broadened the measures of school and student success beyond test scores by eliciting multiple perspectives and analyzing schools as complex institutions.

Conceptual Underpinnings of the Study

American public school teachers were traditionally associated with a burgeoning democratic society. Dewey idealistically viewed teachers as public intellectuals who contribute to democratic society (Dewey, 1926). Systems theory reinforced by transformational leadership theory defined an educator's role as a leader and the school's role as transformer of society (Argyris, 1976; Burns, 1978; Senge, 1990; Wheatley, 2006). In addition to improved test scores, school safety, ethical behavior, and the

promotion of productive and moral citizens were seen as the responsibility of classroom teachers (Anderson, 1982; Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-Dealessandro, 2013). Decades of school accountability programs held teachers responsible for the lack of student progress rather than engaging them to determine solutions. Teachers were held legally accountable for student progress and publicly blamed for any lack of school safety. Public acceptance of the merit of high stakes testing quickly overshadowed an assumed trust in teachers and their influence on youth. Educational research revealed a shift from the teachers' high moral purpose in the classroom to "results-driven teaching" (Day, 2002, p. 677). School accountability programs unintentionally influenced how teachers perceived and performed their professional duties (Sloan, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to understand the influence of recent educational accountability reforms on teachers' perceived role in public education. This study examined how teachers perceived the shift to broader accountability measures in terms of how they define their role and navigate administrative directives following educational reform. The timing of this study is relevant because many teachers are not aware of the immediate or long-term impact of California's new legislation. This study aimed to understand how teachers perceived their role in the classroom, the school, and the community during these reforms. Specifically, this study analyzed how teachers make meaning of the shift from a system reliant on testing and reporting to one that embraces communal participation and determines school and student success based on multiple academic and social measures.

Significance of the Study

This examination of how K-12 teachers perceived their efficacy and agency following recent educational reform initiatives informs the academy and educational practitioners in several ways. First, this study provides insight into how educational reforms influence the efficacy and agency of teachers. This research study expands on academic literature about teacher leadership across the educational ecology. The methods and methodologies employed here act as models for future educational research to understand how teachers perceive their role in varying contexts. This study supplements higher education teacher preparation programs to better prepare future educators for the ever-changing contexts of public education. Second, school practitioners will benefit from this investigation of teachers' perceptions about the inclusion of nonacademic and engagement requirements into school policies. Conclusions made from this study will inform professional development plans to support the recent legislation and future reforms. Finally, this study will provide another example of practitioner research in schools. Based on the theoretical foundations of American education and action research in schools, this study will provide a template for future insider research in schools as a critical examination of the imbalances of power and potential remedy for social injustices in public education.

Research Questions

This study proposes to answer the following research questions.

- How do teachers perceive their efficacy and agency following recent educational policy reforms?
- How do teachers perceive their role following the implementation of LCAP?

- What are the implications on teacher efficacy and agency of practitioner research in schools?

Definitions

School accountability programs are systematic structures that hold public school officials, teachers, and students accountable to specific academic outcomes. For the sake of this study, California's accountability programs are the primary source of investigation. However it is important to note the federal law, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and California's, Public School Accountability Act (PSAA) have been reauthorized and reformed into Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), respectively.

The term stakeholders refers to all individuals who may benefit from an effective school program including, but not limited to students, parents, teachers, other school staff, and members of the local community. Local control of educational policies suggests the ability of stakeholders to influence and engage in the decision-making process at the district or community level. Nonacademic measures refer to those elements of the accountability plan that do not directly measure student academic achievement based on standardized test scores. California's LCAP specifically requires the equal measure of "student achievement, school climate, basic services, implementation of Common Core State Standards, course access, parental involvement, student engagement, and other students outcomes" (California Department of Education, 2013) as detailed in the Appendix A.

The term teacher describes classroom teachers who work in classrooms in K-12 public schools. However, teacher and participant may be used interchangeably

throughout this study. Teacher efficacy and agency are complex concepts that help to define teacher behavior throughout this study. Both terms will be defined in detail in Chapter Two. Teacher efficacy refers to a teacher's perceived ability to succeed, or help students succeed, despite adverse personal circumstances like poverty or neglect (Bandura, 2006). Teacher agency is the action taken (Priestley, Biesta, Philippou, & Robinson, 2015). Teachers exercise agency by acting on their own volition in spite of contrasting guidelines.

Summary

This study examined the perceptions of teachers before and after newly reauthorized educational accountability programs. Chapter Two includes a literature review that describes the effects of testing and reporting on teachers, the relationship between teacher efficacy and agency, the theoretical and empirical role of teachers in democratic society, an introduction of behavior support programs into school accountability systems, and the potentialities for teacher leadership in public schools. Chapter Three restates the research questions and explains how culturally responsive methodologies and critical pedagogy provide a relevant theoretical foundation for this grounded theory study in schools. Chapter Four details the findings from the data collected throughout this study. Chapter Five provides an analysis of the data. Data analysis is followed by an explanation of the limitations and recommendations gleaned from this study. The literature review below reveals the importance of practitioner research in schools, the relevance of grounded theory methodologies, and reiterates the timing and importance of such a study following the implementation of LCAP in California. The inclusion of nonacademic measures into the school accountability

equation provides an opportune time in public education to analyze the perceptions and potential role of educators following a dramatic reform.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Following the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983), American public schools were blamed for the country's social plight, economic decline, and lack of international competitiveness (Mehta, 2015). This chapter examines the slow decline of the real and perceived role of public school teachers in society. Academic literature highlighted how classroom teachers were scrutinized for student outcomes and charged with improving test scores. Educational researchers posited the teacher's role diminished over the last four decades (Darder, 2015; Sleeter & Stillman, 2005). Still, scholars highlighted the importance of teachers as a critical element at the center of the educational ecology contributing to democratic society (Bandura, 2006; Darling- Hammond, 1997; Dewey, 1909; Giroux & McLaren, 1986).

Educational Reforms Inspire Research

Educational scholars theorized both positive and negative impacts of school accountability programs on the American education system (Scheurich, Skrla, & Johnson, 2000; Valencia, Valenzuela, Sloan, & Foley, 2001). Within this literature review, accountability initially refers to high stakes testing and the reporting of test scores then relies on the description of California's LCAP. Attention to student test scores overshadowed the trend of teachers' declining sense of efficacy and agency in their classrooms. Therefore, scholars proposed more qualitative research in schools to better understand the impact of accountability programs on teachers and schooling (Anderson & Jones, 2000; Herr & Anderson, 2008). This review of literature references recent education accountability reforms (Appendix A) as the impetus for an examination of their influence on teacher efficacy and agency in public schools.

Recent legislation required deliberate stakeholder input into the development “of a local control and accountability plan,” and included the evaluation of nonacademic measures into the accountability equation (California Education Code § 52060, 2013). California’s Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) expanded the evaluation of schools beyond test scores to address eight priorities: student achievement, school climate, basic services, implementation of Common Core State Standards, course access, parental involvement, student engagement, and other student outcomes (California Department of Education, 2013). The assessments of school climate and student engagement in addition to the contribution of practitioner research in schools provided rationale for this grounded theory study.

The following review of academic literature is presented in four sections. The first section describes educational accountability programs in the United States and California over the past two decades. Accountability programs had profound effects on educational equity and the professional power imbalance in schools. Therefore, the second section presents both positive and negative effects of high stakes testing and reporting on students and teachers. The third section presents teacher efficacy and agency scholarship to explain the influence of accountability programs on teaching and schooling. The relationship between teacher performance and academic achievement has been examined extensively in educational literature. What remains to be explored is how an analysis of nonacademic measures impacts teachers and teaching. The fourth section of this review examines the influence of teacher leadership in schools to introduce the concept of teacher voice and its impact on education systems. Educational researchers have yet to analyze the impact on teachers of administrative directives to improve student

engagement and school climate. Newly adopted accountability programs provide an opportunity to investigate how the inclusion of nonacademic measures influences teacher efficacy and agency and subsequently the teacher's role in society.

Educational Accountability Programs

Before 2001, state departments of education in the United States relied primarily on the results of annual assessments of English Language Arts and Mathematics to determine the success of public schools. Publicized test scores prompted scholars and the media to hold schools and teachers responsible for progress and regressions in academic achievement (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1992). The publication of *A Nation at Risk* (Gardner, 1983) encouraged departments of education to adopt education accountability programs to monitor curriculum and measure learning by publicly reporting standardized test results of students in grades 2-12 (Warren, 2014). However, the latest legislation shifted culpability away from school sites by requiring broader local control of accountability plans and complex metrics to measure school success (Affeldt, 2015).

Recently reformed public school accountability plans shifted bureaucratic decision making to Local Education Agencies (LEA) and adopted multiple measures to evaluate schools' success. President Obama signed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015) in response to critics of the previous fifteen years of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) signed into law by President G. W. Bush in 2001 (Jones et al., 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The recent authorization of the ESSA (U.S. Department of Education, 2015) and the implementation of the (LCAP) (California Education Code § 52060, 2013) in California shifted educational decision making to school districts and county offices of education (Affeldt, 2015; Menefee-Libey

& Kerchner, 2015). Legislatures mandated public input from parents, teachers, and students in response to requests for equity and involvement (California Education Code § 52060, g, 2013; U. S. Department of Education, 2015). First, NCLB and later ESSA reauthorized the 1965 United States accountability program, Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). In 2013, Governor Brown approved the adoption of LCAP. The new accountability program reformed California's 1999 Public School Accountability Act (PSAA) by including the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) to continue the implementation of rigorous standards and annual assessment reporting. Both the old and newly reformed legislations required high academic standards, annual assessments, and public reporting of the academic progress of the nation's public schools (Kim, 2016). Moreover, reformed accountability programs marked a transition to locally controlled policy decisions and the inclusion of nonacademic measures into the final analysis of schools' success or decline.

Outcomes of High Stakes Testing and Reporting

Accountability programs appeared to successfully improve academic achievement for students before scholars identified unintended consequences (Darling-Hammond, 2007; U. S. Department of Education, 2015). Academic literature provided disparate interpretations of high stakes testing and reporting on the public education system. Quantitative analyses revealed improved student achievement based on higher test scores while qualitative scholarship highlighted the challenges attributed to early accountability programs (Sleeter & Stillman, 2005).

Madaus (1988) defined "high stakes tests" as any test "whose results are seen – rightly or wrongly – by students, teachers, administrators, parents, or the general public,

as being used to make important decisions that immediately and directly affect them” (p. 87). The ideals of Madaus’ definition were operationalized in new legislations that require increased stakeholder input into educational policy decisions (California Education Code § 52060, g, 2013). Publicized test scores were viewed as tangible motivators for school officials and teachers to work toward continual improvement and serve as a measure of academic achievement for all students. Less publicized were the potential rewards or sanctions tied to test scores (Darling-Hammond, 1991). Underperforming schools faced federal mandates including potential replacement of staff and organizational restructuring by the state (Ravitch, 2010). Consequently, positive test results of publically reported national test data were used to highlight the benefits of state and federal accountability programs (Hanushek & Raymond, 2005; Yeh, 2005). Increased student performance on high stakes tests over time proved to be the most relevant evidence of the success of accountability programs (Carnoy & Loeb, 2002; Loeb & Strunk, 2007). However, accountability program advocates admitted more research was necessary as it was not clear which rewards and sanctions were most effective (Hanushek & Raymond, 2005).

Scholars referred to national data to investigate the impact of high stakes testing. Carnoy, Loeb, and Smith (2001) compared data from the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to report the success of accountability programs through the 1990’s. The NAEP test is still administered to a random national sample of fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade students in reading and math in four-year cycles. Carnoy, Loeb, and Smith (2001) found that students in Texas out-performed students nationally between 1994 and 1999. Their

research validated the successes of accountability programs but instigated further investigation into the effects of testing on all members of the school community (Valencia, Valenzuela, Sloan, & Foley, 2001). Scholars highlighted gains in student test scores, but other academics agreed more research was necessary to understand the complex implications of testing and reporting on students and teachers.

Scholars posited “significant” and “historic possibilities” were created by accountability systems in the United States (Scheurich, Skrla, & Johnson, 2000). Most notably, their research identified “substantial” academic progress of students of color and those from low income homes in some schools and districts across the country (Scheurich, Skrla, & Johnson, 2000, p. 295). Notwithstanding critical challenges to this report in corresponding issues of the Phi Delta Kappan, the authors admitted to a common theme found in accountability research, that testing revealed both positive and negative effects on individuals within the education system (Scheurich, Skrla, & Johnson, 2000; Valencia et al., 2001). Local control initiatives in Minnesota contributed to the success and further support of high stakes testing.

Test Scores Improved. Minnesota educators lauded standards and accountability programs following longitudinal increases in student test score. Teachers stated that their contributions to the design of minimized standards and skills based curriculum produced improved tests scores (Yeh, 2005). Prioritizing test taking strategies and test preparation led teachers to overwhelmingly support accountability programs in Minnesota (Yeh, 2005). Yeh’s (2005) conclusions were drawn from comparative data collected from interviews with sixty-one teachers and administrators from four Minnesota school districts. Qualitative research with teachers emphasized the power of locally controlled

curriculum and test selection when examining the impact of testing. Local educators were brought together to write a curriculum designed to prepare students for a “minimum competency test” (Yeh, 2005, p. 15) near the end of each school year. However, the narrowed curriculum and less rigorous assessment identified in the Minnesota study challenged early scholarship that posited public education stimulated and produced an educated and moral electorate (Dewey, 1909; Simpson, 1971).

In sum, quantitative data is presented here not as a faulty method, rather one element in what became complex weighted accountability analyses. NAEP data was frequently referred to as a variable to track positive results in states that attached consequences to accountability results (Hanushek & Raymond, 2005). Loeb and Strunk (2005) tracked NAEP data to determine the influence of state departments of education on accountability plans. Their research relied on complex quantitative models that aggregated longitudinal student data, parent influence, and state implementation policies to analyze the impact of high stakes testing. “The most important result is that accountability is important for students in the United States. Despite design flaws in most existing systems (Hanushek, 2003), we [found] that they have a positive impact on achievement” (Hanushek & Raymond, 2005). The emphasis on academic achievement will be addressed in more detail later in this review.

Loeb and Strunk (2007) noted significant gains by states with stronger local control over testing and curriculum. Yeh (2005) and the implementation of ESSA and LCAP astutely acknowledged the role of teachers in the implementation of accountability programs. However, scholars continued to recommend research in schools to better understand the influence of teachers and testing on students and schooling (Cimbricz,

2002; Loeb & Strunk, 2007). Subsequently, former accountability programs operationalized unintended social consequences for teachers and their students.

Unintended Consequences. Educational scholars identified adverse effects of accountability plans on students well before the implementation NCLB in 2002. Early accountability systems marginalized students, thereby challenging the promotion of democratic ideals in schools (Sleeter, 2007). In a collection of essays, Sleeter (2007) challenged the validity of accountability programs as a tool to promote equity in the education system. Standardized test results revealed growing achievement gaps for students based on demographic variables like race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Cimbricz, 2002; Rosenshine, 2003).

Darling-Hammond (2007) reported that “low income” schools were also most often low performing schools. Her research stated low performing schools were often under-staffed, under-funded, offered fewer advanced courses, and provided fewer extra-curricular activities. Individual student test scores limited their access to high quality teachers and courses (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Students were reclassified into special education programs or retained at the end of a school year in attempts to isolate their scores and misrepresent improved school-wide results (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Sleeter, 2007).

The achievement gap between subgroups and the general student population was maintained or widened over time (Valencia et al., 2001). Further analysis of NAEP data found, “Over half of poor and minority students have reading and math skills far below grade level, whether measured by the tough performance standards of the NAEP or by the standards of the various states” (Ravitch & Chubb, 2009, p. 50). Accountability

programs inadvertently stratified students and highlighted the marginalization of minority student groups (Amrein & Berliner, 2003; Valencia et al., 2001).

Empirical evidence of student marginalization subsequently influenced teacher engagement and performance. Even before NCLB was implemented, teachers in North Carolina reported reduced morale, increased stress, and seventy-six percent stated their state's "accountability program would not improve the quality of education in their schools" (Jones, et. al, 1999, p. 202). Social responsibility and an often-subconscious desire for self-efficacy induced teachers to raise tests scores as a remedy for the injustices of high stakes testing. Following years of educational culpability, teachers responded to administrative directives by narrowing the curriculum and challenging instructions to improve student performance on standardized tests (McNeil, 2000; Yeh, 2000). Teachers admitted to presenting to students only those parts of the curriculum that corresponded to test questions.

These conditions took an emotional toll on educators and resulted in changes in classroom practice (Ravitch & Chubb, 2009; Smith, 1991). Years of blame for poor student academic performance forced teachers to modify teaching strategies in response to the widening achievement gap. However, test score manipulation influenced teachers' sense of authority in the educational milieu. Before NCLB became the national accountability system, teachers in states with programs already in place felt like receivers of education reforms expected to deliver instruction rather than design and implement curriculum (Darling- Hammond, 1997; Jones et al, 1999).

Administrative maneuvering and pressure to improve test scores reduced teacher decision-making. Mahen (1992) called the manipulation of curriculum and instruction to

raise test scores “institutional machinery” (p. 12). The “institutional machinery” (ibid.) impacted students and influenced teacher voice. Teachers were called on to follow policy as part of a hierarchical structure rather than act as critical intellectuals at the center of the educational ecology. Teachers were advised to deliver curriculum and engage in instructional practices to improve student outcomes (Jones et al., 1999; McNeill & Valenzuela, 2000; Ravitch & Chubb, 2009). They became paid practitioners as opposed to educational consultants. The role of the teacher shifted from influential intellectual to employee directed to raise test scores. Sloan (2000) highlighted the concept of teachers as receivers of reform and technicians rather than professionals.

As a result of the arrangement of the structural elements at these four schools, teachers at these schools were constrained from formulating the purposes and ends of their teaching practices; they were constrained from examining their own values and assumptions in relation to their practice; and they were constrained from playing substantive leadership roles in curriculum development and school reforms. (Sloan, 2000, p. 21)

High stakes testing and reporting left teachers doubting their abilities to successfully work with students at all levels and diminished their decision-making capabilities in schools and classrooms (Kinsey, 2006). Therefore, it is important next to present academic literature that defined and determined the measurement of teacher efficacy and agency.

Following the signing of NCLB in 2002, educational scholars expanded their research to report on the emotional impact of school accountability programs on teachers. In addition to improving test scores, Kinsey (2006) evaluated the impact of the NCLB

requirement for teachers to attain “highly qualified” status, which forced veterans to become recertified even after they had successfully served for a number of years in public schools. Teachers reported forced recertification and pressure to adjust their instruction or “teach to the test” diminished trust and made them feel “dishonest” (Kinsey, 2006; Smith, 1991). Administrator directives and media critiques following test score reporting resulted in unethical teaching practices and subsequently low teacher efficacy (Haladyna, Nolan, & Haas, 1991; Kinsey, 2006; Popham, 2001).

External pressure to raise test scores resulted in administrative directives, adjustments to the curriculum, and consequently ethical conflicts for teachers. Teachers faced curriculum mandates that limited their creativity and replaced critical thinking exercises with rote memorization and skill drills to ensure improved test results regardless of the needs of individual students. Teachers reportedly questioned their own ethics after engaging in “test score pollution” or attempting to artificially improve student test scores (Haladyna, Nolan, & Haas, 1991). Publicized test scores and performance pressures negatively impacted teacher attrition rates. Between 2008-2012, nearly 38% fewer teachers went on to attain a teaching credential after successfully completing their teacher preparation programs (Affeldt, 2015). Inefficacious teachers manipulated the curriculum and succumbed to stress and external pressure.

Teacher Efficacy, Agency, and Leadership

The juxtaposition of teacher efficacy and agency is presented here to highlight the importance of teacher voice and action in classrooms, schools, and democratic society. Educational scholars defined the constructs of teacher efficacy and agency based on social science research on human perceptions and behaviors (Bandura, 2000; Ravitch &

Chubb, 2009). “Among the mechanisms of human agency, none is more focal or pervading than the belief of personal efficacy” (Bandura, 2000, p. 75). Teacher efficacy focused on perceptions and was defined as what the teacher “can do” while agency addressed behavior, described by teachers’ ability to “act otherwise” (Bandura, 1982; Giddens, 1979). The teacher’s perception of their ability to succeed in the educational process must precede their intent to act amid complex conditions. Most educational scholarship presented efficacy and agency in isolation. However, scholars theorized past experiences influenced highly efficacious teachers, who subsequently exercised agency in the educational setting (Bandura, 1982; Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2012). Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson’s (2013) research highlighted the importance of efficacy and its impact on agency as a progressive social phenomenon based on teachers’ espoused values and professional relationships in schools.

Teacher Efficacy. Social scientists initially disagreed on how individuals established feelings of efficacy (Rotter, 1966; Bandura, 1977). It is important to clarify that this literature review refers to teacher efficacy as a particular phrase to represent research terms like: efficacy, self-efficacy, and teacher self-efficacy. Social learning theory emphasized the individual as the locus of control when measuring efficacy (Rotter, 1966). During the mid nineteenth century, social scientists defined and measured teacher efficacy based on Rotter ‘s (1966) social learning theory and a RAND research study (Guskey, 1981). Rotter’s (1966) description of highly efficacious teachers who believed their abilities to successfully teach difficult students “lies within the teacher’s control, or is internal” (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 204).

The federally funded multi-year study by the RAND Corporation defined “The teacher’s sense of efficacy [as] a belief that the teacher can help even the most difficult or unmotivated students” (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellerman, 1977, p. 136). RAND researchers asked teachers if they believed whether or not it was (1) the amount of personal effort they exerted or (2) the student’s home environment that impacted their learning (Armor et al., 1976; Berman et al., 1977). The RAND study expanded the locus of control beyond the individual to include context as a relevant factor in the examination of the efficacy. The study measured teacher efficacy by analyzing the variables of a student’s living conditions in addition to an examination of the teacher’s perceived ability to successfully help all students show academic progress (Bandura, 1982; Rotter, 1966; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Analyses of those two questions highlighted the importance of the teachers’ perception of their role as change agent in the classroom. Rotter’s work and the RAND study laid the foundation for future studies of teachers’ perceptions as a relevant variable in the analysis of academic progress.

Social cognitive theory expounded on social learning theory (Rotter, 1966) by examining the influence of professional relationships in addition to educational contexts to define efficacy (Bandura, 1989). Following social experiments with human subjects, Bandura (1977) posited efficacy was influenced by four distinct sources: “performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states” (p. 191). His research defined teacher efficacy as what the teacher “can do” rather than what the teacher “will do” (Bandura, 2006).

What the teacher “can do” is relative to the shift from their early attention to curriculum design. The transition to test-centered pedagogy following administrative

directives reduced verbal persuasion and influenced teachers' physiological state. The results of test scores challenged teachers' perceptions of their ability to influence student achievement. Furthermore, teachers internalized the impact of their curriculum delivery as measured by student test scores rather than informal teacher observations of student growth. The examination of professional relationships and the influence of the school setting on teachers' physiological state suggested a relationship between school climate initiatives and teacher efficacy.

Measures of teacher efficacy were influenced by real and perceived impacts on school climate. Ashton and Webb (1986) examined context to determine levels of efficacy by designing a mixed methods study based on Bandura's theory of self-efficacy and the two questions from the RAND study (Bandura, 1977; Berman et al., 1977). The Webb Efficacy Scale referred to Bronfenbrenner's (1976) ecological model as a framework for the dynamic contexts that influence teacher efficacy and student achievement. Ashton and Webb (1986) analyzed quantitative and qualitative data to determine teacher efficacy. A teacher's physiology influenced their sense of efficacy. They examined how school climate influenced a teachers physiological state; therefore their sense of efficacy (Ashton & Webb, 1986). The Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale, now referred to as the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) was later developed and evaluated to analyze the dynamic contexts of teaching to more deeply assess wider influences on teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). These studies examined the impact of teacher coaching and context variables like grade level, content, and teacher collegiality.

Teacher surveys revealed a positive relationship between highly efficacious teachers and student achievement, however researchers failed to identify how teachers came to achieve efficacy (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006; Moore & Esselman, 1994). Social science research suggested a connection between efficacious teacher performance and the school setting. When teachers engaged in transformational change exercises and contributed to school-wide behavior support strategies, they reported better job satisfaction (Richter et al., 2012). School climate research identified values, visions, and the behaviors of school leaders promoted proactive teacher behaviors, ethical student behaviors, and successful student achievement (Anderson, 1982; Astor, Benbenishty, & Estrada, 2009; Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-Dealessandro, 2013). However, educational literature has yet to identify a relationship between the implementation of school climate programs on teacher efficacy.

Not until practitioner researchers explored accountability programs in schools did the academy examine the influence of teacher efficacy. Published dissertations identified bureaucratic and self-induced pressures to improve student test scores in addition to publicized test results induced adverse affects on teacher efficacy (Bandura, 1997, Gantt, 2012). Published doctoral dissertations identified teachers' feelings of frustration, anxiety, distrust, and disappointment following periods of testing and reporting (Gantt, 2012, Mason, 2010, Minett, 2015). Mason (2010) investigated the impact of accountability measures on teacher identity by analyzing teacher efficacy as a variable. Mason's (2010) interviews and coded transcripts revealed feelings of validation based on students test scores. However, a majority of her participants reported they felt judged and believed they failed their students, colleagues, and community. While the academy has

yet to embrace the potential benefits of qualitative research in schools, doctoral candidates highlighted the importance of teacher interviews and recommended more research with larger sample sizes (Mason, 2010; Minett, 2015). However, these researchers highlighted the impact of curriculum mandates and academic progress on teacher efficacy revealing a gap in the research to analyze the influence of school climate initiatives.

Teacher Agency. Teacher agency research was founded on sociological attempts to define the phenomenon. Scholars defined agency as a “continuous flow of conduct” (Giddens, 1979, p. 55) and the “ability to shape one’s responsiveness to problematic situations” (Biesta & Tedder, 2006, p. 11). Giddens’s (1979) theory of structuration asserted a duality of social structures and agency as mutually dependent concepts. The concept of duality was based on the ability of the subject to “have acted otherwise” (p. 56). “Action only exists when an agent has the capability of intervening, or refraining from intervening, in a series of events so as to be able to influence their course” (Giddens, 1979, p. 256). Giddens’ (1979) scholarship built a theoretical foundation for future teacher agency research and provided a framework for analyzing contextual influences on teaching practice.

Agency theory differed from efficacy theory in that it analyzed actions not perceptions. Pignatelli (1993) examined how Foucault’s scholarship on freedom informed how teachers’ “self normalizing practice” (self-efficacy) induced them to “act upon our own projects of freedom” (agency) amid the stresses of society. He referred to Foucault’s definition of freedom as “an ongoing individual and collective challenge to fabricate alternatives” (Pignatelli, 1993, p. 419). Pignatelli (1993) posited a dichotomy

between self and context to emphasize a need to better know one's self in order to act regardless of context. Critical pedagogues suggest reflection and dialogue induce critical consciousness. Freire called the attainment of critical consciousness "conscientizacao". Scholars portend the necessity of "conscientizacao" followed by action will disrupt hierarchical structures that perpetuate the imbalance between knowledge and power (Freire, 1977, p. 36; Darder, 2015).

More recent educational literature referred to the scholarship of Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and their ecological conceptualizations of teacher agency (Biesta & Tedder, 2006, Charteris & Smardon, 2015; Priestley, Biesta, Philippou, & Robinson, 2015). A "chordal triad" employed by individuals to both engage with and change social situations over time were developed by "interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 970). Researchers expanded on previous scholarship to provide a contemporary definition of teacher agency.

This concept of agency highlights that actors always act by means of their environment rather than simply in their environment [so that] the achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always-unique situations. (Priestley, Biesta, Philippou, & Robinson, 2015, p. 6)

Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson (2013) described the complexities of teacher agency. Their research identified how iterational and projective elements influenced by material and cultural contexts of the school setting determined how teachers achieved agency. Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson (2013) defined two recurring themes in their

research. They posited the junction of teachers' espoused beliefs, aspirations, and professional relationships determined their exercise of agency. The juxtaposition of a teacher's past and projected professional future are influenced by their axiology, location within a hierarchy, and the context of the school setting. Therefore, the collaborative design and implementation of school-wide behavior support programs can play a significant role in the exercise of teacher agency. Researchers theorized reflection, inquiry, and collaboration with teachers could transform the school setting and therefore, educational programs for young people (Ogawa, Goldring, & Conley, 2000). However, there is no evidence of scholarly research to examine the influence of behavior support programs or school climate initiatives on teacher efficacy and agency research.

A dearth of theoretical and empirical evidence suggested the need for further research about teacher efficacy, agency, and the complex contexts of public education. A review of literature suggested a progression that teachers follow from their perceived efficacy and agency to purveyors of social justice in schools and then society (Giroux & McLaren, 1986; Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2013; Darder, 2015). "Embedded in this conception of agency is the recognition that teachers are socioculturally located professionals with the potential to enhance their work to address social justice agendas" (Charteris & Smardon, 2015, p. 116). Pignatelli's (1993) "challenge to fabricate alternatives" in relation to the exercise of agency is better understood with respect to teacher leadership and critical pedagogy. Educational scholarship highlighted the potential influence of teachers in society.

Teachers' Role in Schools and Society

Efficacy and agency research emphasized the critical role of teachers in society. Their successful influence and participation in the educational process was founded on real and espoused beliefs that they can help all students succeed in school and their communities. Throughout the twentieth century scholars posited teachers are “critical intellectuals” who transform society through their work in schools (Dewey, 1909; Giroux & McLaren, 1986). Alternatively, educational programs and policies relied on transactional leadership strategies to coerce educators to improve test performance theoretically improving education (Harris, 2011; Meyer, 2006). The end of the twentieth century marked the introduction of curriculum standards and testing based accountability plans. The implementation of high stakes testing and reporting followed by the curriculum requirements provide examples of the transactions that guided education over the past two decades. In contrast, many educational scholars posited the need for distributive and transformational models of leadership in schools (Fullan, 2008; Spillane & Mertz, 2015; Waters, & Marzano, 2007). Scholars recognized such models would have far-reaching academic and social results for public schools and teachers (Datnow, 2009, Leithwood, 2005).

Local Control. California’s LCAP requires an LEA or school board to consider input from local stakeholders (California Education Code § 52062, 1, 2, 3; Menefee-Libey & Kerchner, 2015). Accepting input from the local populace was deliberately included in LCAP. The inclusion of teachers and community members in decision making was not a new concept. Two examples of local control in schools stood in academic literature as alternatives to bureaucratic accountability systems years before the

implementation of NCLB. The small schools movement in New York and the School Development Program in Connecticut stand as products of Dewey's ideal for public education (Comer 1987; Meier, 1995). Strong community relations and local control were matched with a belief in teacher leadership to transform democratic society to develop effective school reform. The aforementioned programs were based on school site structures focused on problem solving rather than accusatory responses to low test scores. A review of literature revealed more than two hundred citations referring to Meier's and Comer's work collectively. These references supported contributions to academic literature by highlighting the importance of teacher voice, shared decision-making, and local control at the school level that created school cultures of inclusion and supported academic and social success.

“Real World Knowledge” at Central Park East. In 1974, Deborah Meier introduced democratic ideals into Central Park East Elementary School (CPE). As an administrator with support from local district office officials, Meier set out to build the capacity of teachers, parents, and students so the school could emulate democratic society. Curriculum was pared down to provide more time for social interactions and critical thinking as problem solving devices. The program's objective was to educate youth by connecting “school” knowledge with “real world” knowledge (Meier, 1995). Parent choice, a small school setting, and the balance of power relations at the school site level contributed to the success of CPE. Newfound trust in local government, high graduation rates, and increased college acceptance rates proved the programs success (Marschall, 2004; Meier, 1995). Meier (1995) critiqued high stakes testing, “They capture neither essential intellectual competence nor the demonstrated capacity of our

students to use their knowledge, to care for others, to imagine how others think and feel, and to be prepared to speak up and be heard” (p. 371).

Teachers, students, and parents referenced test scores to evaluate progress, hold each other accountable, and plan for improvement. However, test scores’ growth was not the goal of CPE. Meier and her colleagues operationalized experiential learning in a small school setting to prepare students to become active participants in democratic society. The school looked to democratic systems to emulate how diverse communities could work together to educate youth and address social ills. A decade later, the broader community was engaged to transform schooling in Connecticut.

Yale Child Study Center School Development Program. In an experiment to transform failing schools in New Haven, Connecticut, Yale psychologist James Comer (1987) collaborated with community leaders to improve learning opportunities for all students in schools. This team introduced diverse training and community collaboration to improve social conditions both inside and outside the school. Comer (1987) identified the gap between hierarchical management and the specific academic and development needs of the students in New Haven’s schools. Scholarship informed innovative pre-service and in-service training for teachers in academics as well as mental health interventions; teachers were better equipped to address the social-emotional and academic needs of the their students (Comer, 1987; Kytte & Bogotch, 2000).

Educators and civil servants became more invested in their work and with the families in their community. The Yale Child Study Center School Development Program brought together parents, teachers, and mental health professionals to side step the traditional district hierarchy of governance by making the school site the center of the

social and academic change. Local control and engagement informed transformational growth. The program relied on democratic ideals of participation in problem solving events to address the challenges students faced at home and in school. Parents and school staffs valued their roles within the building level governance system. Comer's (1987) New Haven program provided empirical evidence for teacher leadership, collaborative school level management, and local control to improve the social and academic circumstances of students, the community, and society.

District leadership and support proved necessary for Meier, Comer, and other educators to develop and operationalize plans for democratic schools (Honig, 2012; Park & Datnow, 2009). Needs based collaboration informed school officials in New York and Connecticut. However, growing pressure to meet national accountability standards made the reality of democratic school models more difficult to introduce and maintain (Darder, 2015, Sleeter & Stillman, 2007; Valencia et al., 2001). Nonetheless, examples of distributed leadership and democratic schooling highlighted the potential of teacher leadership.

The inclusion of teachers in educational decision-making served to challenge them as critical intellectuals at the heart of the educational ecology. Efficacy and agency research described the potential benefits of teachers acting as intellectual social reformers in the classroom (Charteris & Smarden, 2015; Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015). Furthermore, inducing teachers to engage in decision-making might reduce reluctance and resistance to policy reform initiatives. Therefore, the past twenty years of research suggests practitioner research in schools with teachers may help us evaluate and modify

the latest accountability plans so they can inform practice and subsequently improve student achievement.

Teacher Leadership in Schools

Future research must contribute to academic literature about the role and contributions of teachers to the educational system. A review of leadership literature highlighted the potential benefits of educator and policy maker collaboration in anticipation of future educational reforms. Ross (2004) posited transformational leadership could positively influence academic achievement in different school contexts. “There is considerable evidence that each of these individual and organizational-level variables makes a significant contribution to student learning” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005, p. 190).

To prove the importance of the teacher’s role in the educational program, scholars pursued an extensive investigation of transformational leadership in schools. In 2002, Dumdum, Lowe, and Avolio, conducted a large quantitative meta-analysis of transformational leadership scholarship and posited the need for more research about the role of teachers in schools. Similarly, Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) recommended more research in schools rather than about them.

When it comes to maintaining a research focus long enough to actually learn something with a reasonable degree of confidence, the field of educational leadership studies is a notoriously unstable one. So celebrating the persistent line of work evident in our review and encouraging others to pursue it is clearly warranted. The field does not need yet another adjective in front of the term leadership. It needs the firm empirical footing only a substantial accumulation of

theoretically informed evidence can provide (p. 177).

Teachers' leadership skills and capacity were recognized as determining factors that improved school reform efforts. The inclusion of teachers in educational planning and evaluation are required by LCAP (California Education Code § 52060, g).

Transformational teacher leadership strategies could provide a relevant framework for the successful implementation of ESSA and LCAP. However, the dynamic nature of school climate as a relevant factor of school accountability has yet to be examined by academics.

Educational researchers examined the relationship between teacher leadership and school climate. Leadership was identified as a contributing factor to create positive school cultures and effective learning environments (Silins, Mulford, Zarins, & Bishop, 2000). Silins and Mulford (2002) measured "teachers' perceptions of occupational prestige, self-esteem, autonomy at work, and professional self-development" to quantify the impact of transformational leadership at the school site (p. 432). Save the use of the terms efficacy and agency, educational leadership literature addressed both concepts to highlight the importance of the teacher's role in school climate. However, California's LCAP requires an analysis of climate to evaluate a school's success. Future research is still necessary to determine the relationship between teacher leadership and school climate. Therefore, research with teachers provided no empirical evidence about the implementation and evaluation of newly adopted educational reforms.

Collaboration and Leadership. Educational researchers emphasized the importance of teacher leadership based on Dewey's (1909) scholarship about education as the path to a moral democratic society (Lieberman & Miller, 2011; Sergiovanni, 2013). Theoretical frameworks that supported democratic schooling perpetuated Dewey's

educational ideals. Critical pedagogues induced teachers to disrupt institutional hierarchies and exercise agency to confront the imbalances of knowledge and power in education (Darder, 2015). Administrative mandates and curricular manipulation inflated test scores but ignored the ethical work at the theoretical foundation of education. Early twenty-first century educational literature challenged public education's narrow focus on academic achievement as the sole objective of the endeavor.

In the *Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership* (Fullan, 2013) researchers placed an emphasis on moral and ethical approaches to schooling. Similarly, theorists posited teachers are intellectuals who guide youth based on firm moral and ethical foundations (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Fullan, 1993; SooHoo et al., 2004). Sergiovanni (2013) called for a moral focus on personal and professional development so teachers and administrators can work as efficient and effective teams to realize true school reform. He called on administrators to act as “leaders of leaders” to support “shared decision making and striving to establish the value of collegiality” (Sergiovanni, 2013, p. 376). Academics highlighted teacher leadership and collaboration as critical elements necessary for sustained and successful reforms.

Educational researchers theorized the importance of professional relationships in schools (Park & Datnow, 2009; Honig, 2012; Lieberman & Miller, 2011). Furthermore, efficacy research identified the importance of administrator leadership to create and preserve a dialogical space that could ultimately transform the work of educators and subsequently the educational experience for students (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-Dealessandro, 2013). An examination of the potential collaborative learning relationships that could exist across the educational ecology “helps us envision a future in

which teachers lead toward more democratic and enlightened schooling” (Lieberman & Miller, 2011, p. 421). Priestly, Biesta, & Robinson (2013) highlighted the importance of professional relationships that induced the maintenance of safe dialogical spaces where teachers operationalized their leadership capacity and contribute across the educational ecology as an exercise of agency.

Bogotch (2011) traced the history of educational leadership to recount the moral and ethical will of school leaders to create and maintain a space for teachers “to grow, to learn, and ultimately to teach” (p. 21). He posited teacher dialogue and collaboration precluded an environment for students to practice participation in society. “They fought against supervisory practices that promoted a single method of teaching or a test-driven or standardized curriculum” (Bogotch, 2011, p. 21). He acknowledged diminished teacher agency following the advancement of the standards and accountability era of the twenty first century.

Educational literature from the past decade affirmed empirical evidence to highlight the importance of collaborative leadership practices in schools. “Data from observations, self-reports, and interviews of democratic principles revealed themes related to mutual learning through free-flowing information, conflict, and risk taking” (Brooks & Kensler, 2011, p. 62). Academics highlighted positive influences of teacher leadership and collaboration at all levels of the school system to emulate and improve the practice and constant redevelopment of democracy in society. “Unearthing these fundamental assumptions of democracy presents an ideal standard by which we can measure the practice of democracy at any level, including organizations and, more specifically, schools” (Brooks & Kensler, 2011, p. 61). Researchers found that the

exercise of teacher agency resulted in reciprocal learning opportunities for students. Engagement and challenges to the educational status quo ensured teachers' commitment to improvement and emulated democratic practices that could be reflected in classrooms. Teacher participation and voice begat student participation and voice; democratic principles bridged the spheres of the educational ecology.

Teachers as Agents in Democratic Society

Before 2000, policy makers were encouraged to increase teacher involvement at the administrative level and embrace the intellectual capacity of teachers as change agents. Academic literature highlighted policy recommendations to embrace distributed leadership and teacher voice in the management of schools (McLaughlin, 1989). However, later research discovered both concepts failed to materialize amid the growing reliance on testing and reporting as the sole measurement of student achievement (Elmore, 2000; Park & Datnow, 2009). Educational advocates induced teachers to resist the “institutional machinery” (Mahan, 1992, p. 12) of test preparation and curriculum manipulation while reformers recognized the potential of teachers in education and society (Affeldt, 2015; Sloan, 2000).

Researchers theorized how responses to administrative directives diminished teacher agency. Sloan (2000) and Smith (1991) referenced, Giroux (1988) and Schon (1983) to highlight the importance of reflection and discourse in response to the bureaucratic controls of testing and accountability. “Yet in order for the broader, socio-political context of agency to emerge teachers need to see their work as part of a larger project of democratic culture-building” (Pignatelli, 1993, p. 423). Critical theorists and social scientists inspired researchers to examine sources of teacher agency and

recommend future research and practice.

Administrative policies historically advised teachers to improve student test scores. However, current educational reforms added the evaluation of nonacademic measures to the educational accountability equation, thereby, inviting investigation into the influence of school climate programs on teacher efficacy and agency. Priestley, Robinson, and Biesta, (2012) conducted ethnographies with teachers to investigate how they perceive their own agency with the school setting. Researchers focused on the impact of testing and reporting on teacher perceptions and performance, but have yet to exam how school climate programs and student engagement policies influence efficacy and agency.

The signing of ESSA and the implementation of California's LCAP, come as responses to researchers' proposals to engage teacher voice and examine the concept of local control of schools (Berman et al., 1977; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Elmore, 1997; Menefee-Libey, & Kerchner, 2015; Sloan, 2006). The results of Pedulla's (2003) national survey, corroborated by recent ethnographic studies, emphasized the importance of teacher voice for successful school reform (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Priestley, Robinson, & Biesta, 2012, 2013). Recent qualitative research studies identified how teacher professional learning communities in addition to formal and informal teacher social networks influenced teacher efficacy and agency with regard to student achievement (Datnow, 2012; Masuda, 2010).

Teacher collaboration and networking provided empirical evidence to show how the presence of teacher agency influenced student learning and social justice reforms (Charteris & Snardon, 2015; Masuda, 2010). Researchers found that policy measures

were more clearly articulated and successfully implemented when teachers were engaged with their planning and implementation (Datnow, 2012). Teacher engagement and empowerment improved student engagement, theoretically improving student performance. However, research has not addressed the relationship between school climate and teacher efficacy and agency. If teachers do not feel they can “act otherwise” (Giddens, 1979) and if they do not reflect upon and recognize their leadership potential, education may continue to endure failed accountability reforms.

Conscientization / Conscientizacao. The fear of exploring one’s “epistemological curiosity” (Freire, 1998, p. 32) emphasizes the potentiality that practitioners may have been wrong in their current practice. For teachers to reverse years of “banking” to develop new ways of learning is a frightening concept. However, this journey toward critical consciousness promises to lead them and their students to transformations otherwise unrealized. Critical consciousness and conscientization/conscientizacao are used interchangeably to explain Freire’s theory of self-discovery and identification of oppression within a social hierarchy (Freire, 1970, p. 36). hooks (1994) addressed the importance of conscientization for educators by admitting the fear invoked by self reflection. “I feel that one of the things blocking a lot of professors from interrogating their own pedagogical practices is that fear that ‘this is my identity and I can’t question that identity’” (hooks, 1994, p. 135). A leap of faith in humanity and a belief in the self as the learner with another is critical to engage in conscientization. With exercises that question and confirm core beliefs and authenticity, leadership theory can inform critical pedagogy by revealing critical consciousness. As hooks proposed higher education professors confront their fears, so can K-12 teachers

reflect and question their performance (hooks, 1994). However, to challenge one's identity could have detrimental effects on their confidence; thus efficacy.

One must assume the role of radical – even to a small degree – to fight the fear of uncertainty and doubt and discover their authentic self. “Rather, teacher preparation should go beyond the technical preparation of teachers and be rooted in the ethical formation both of selves and of history” (Freire, 1970, p. 23). The better teachers know themselves the better they can place themselves in society and the better they can work with students to begin the same work. Absence of teacher independence begins, “to erode teachers’ autonomy and challenge teachers’ individual and collective professional and personal identities” (Day, 2002, p. 678).

Teachers’ creativity and decision-making are compromised by Freire’s concept of ‘banking’ or depositing knowledge into students merely to increase test scores. Decreased agency limits teachers’ transformative competence in the classroom and ultimately compromises their capacity “to educate students to be active, critical citizens” (Giroux, 1988). “This process alters the way teachers understand themselves and their success” (Buchanan, 2015, p. 715). Buchanan (2015) identified a shift in teacher identity and loss of “practical consciousness” due to their response to the dominant structure and because of a lack of their own self-reflection as a response to that model (p. 712).

Identity and authenticity are discoveries that remain untapped for many educators. The journey toward critical consciousness relies on courage and deep reflection. The act of dialogue suggests that epistemological clarity might not be found alone, but more importantly that such clarity is not equivalent to finality.

The Potential for Teacher Leadership with ESSA and LCAP

Educational scholars recommend qualitative research with teachers in schools to examine the impact of recently reformed educational accountability programs (Menefee-Libey, & Kerchner, 2015). Dewey's (1938) idealistic view of teachers as public intellectuals who contribute to a democratic society seemed further out of reach following public scrutiny of state test scores. However, scholars continue to call upon teachers to reflect on their efficacy and exercise agency by standing on firm moral and ethical foundations (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Pedulla et al., 2003; Simpson, 1971; SooHoo et al., 2004). The implementation of ESSA and LCAP invites teachers to regain their role as "critical intellectuals" (Affeldt, 2015; Giroux & McLaren, 1986).

Teachers influence school climate measures as a means to improve social engagement and academic achievement. The inclusion of nonacademic measures into school accountability evaluations in California provided an opportunity for all educators to engage with policy and confirm their essential role in the educational ecology (Park & Datnow, 2009). "This may be more feasible in schools with a tradition of site-based management, since their leadership teams may experience greater authority, a sense of efficacy and self-determination" (Fuller & Tobben, 2014, p.17).

ESSA and LCAP provide an opportunity for school leaders to transform teaching, learning, and school culture. "We argue that it is possible for the project of democratic and transformative education to succeed despite the tyranny of compliance that characterizes contemporary education" (Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015). This review of literature highlights the need for further qualitative research in schools to

determine if educators have an opportunity to operationalize Dewey's (1938) theoretic foundation of education at the center American democracy.

Conclusion

Teacher efficacy and agency were diminished by bureaucratic mechanisms implemented as public educational accountability programs (Darder, 2015, Gardner, 1983, Mehta, 2015). Scholars therefore focused on the influence of academic reforms. Consequently, educational scholarship identified negative affects of testing and reporting on student equity and the subsequent impact on teachers. Social scientists developed tools to measure teacher efficacy and agency and therefore defined the concepts to better understand teachers' self-perceptions and decision-making abilities to impact student achievement (Bandura, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001).

Educational literature was dominated by quantitative analyses and ethnographies to analyze teacher perceptions and behaviors in context. What was lacking was an examination of the influence of school accountability programs on teacher efficacy and agency from the perspective of the teacher. Reforms like ESSA and LCAP provide an opportunity for scholars to examine how teachers exercise their leadership potential to influence nonacademic measures. Educational scholars theorized the significance of teachers and the success of local control in the educational milieu.

Therefore, qualitative practitioner research in schools has potential benefits to enhance academic literature, inform policy makers, and improve professional development programs in schools. Conducting a grounded theory study of teacher efficacy and agency generated theory about the influence of nonacademic measures on teacher efficacy and agency. An analysis of newly reformed accountability programs

viewed through the lens of critical theoretical frameworks provided an opportunity and challenged educators across the educational ecology to engage their leadership capacities so teachers could operationalize a larger role at the center of democratic society. The novelty of recently passed legislation and the absence of research about how nonacademic measures influenced teachers and teaching provided relevance for this study. Therefore, insider positionality of the researcher in this study provides significant support for the research methods detailed below. The theoretical framework of this study is further supported by the researchers engagement with teachers in the school setting.

Chapter 3: Methodologies

A Nation at Risk (Gardner, 1983) and NCLB requirements (U.S. Department of Education, 2001) placed teachers under public scrutiny. Moreover, the past three decades of educational literature revealed the impact of high stakes testing and reporting on the efficacy and agency of teachers in public schools (Elmore, 1997; McLaughlin, 1990; Sloan, 2006). Low test scores and media reports of failing schools predicated the diminished role of teachers in the educational system (Gardner, 1983; Pedulla et al., 2003; Smith, 1991). Subsequently, reauthorized educational policies require wider stakeholder input into educational programs and accountability plans to evaluate school progress. California's Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) requires input from educators and the public to develop and analyze school accountability programs (California Education Code § 52074, 2013). This chapter introduces theoretical foundations and relevant research methods for qualitative research in schools with teachers to better understand how teachers perceive their role in school and society.

Educational Reforms Inspired Practitioner Research

The signing of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) by President Obama and the LCAP by Governor Brown in California, introduced the most influential reforms to public education in the past four decades (Affeldt, 2015; Menefee, 2015). Public schools will be evaluated based on social elements, like school climate, parent engagement, and student engagement in addition to traditional academic assessments (California Education Code § 52074, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Most recent educational research examined the impact on teachers of external pressures to improve test scores (Pedulla et al., 2003; Sleeter, 2007). Alternatively, the introduction of student

engagement into the evaluation of school progress prompted an analysis of how educators perceive and respond to the implementation of multiple nonacademic measures. LCAP in particular induced investigation into educators' perceived role in the development and implementation of new accountability programs in addition to administrative demands to ensure their implementation in schools and classrooms. This study addressed a gap in the literature and endeavors to contribute new knowledge to the field of teacher efficacy, agency, and practitioner research in schools.

Research Questions

Reauthorized educational accountability programs expanded the scope of school success by including measures of school climate and student engagement into the student outcomes equation. The past two decades of teacher efficacy and agency research identified a positive relationship between teacher performance and student academic achievement (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006; Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2013). Similarly, the implementation of school-wide positive behavior supports has proven to improve school climate and advance student academic performance (Caldarella, Shatzer, Gray, Young, & Young, 2011; Sugai & Horner, 2002). Educational research traditionally examined influences on academic achievement. However, the inclusion of student engagement into the accountability equation expands the scope of inquiry for researchers and practitioners.

Absent from scholarly literature is an analysis of how the assessment of nonacademic measures influences teacher efficacy and agency. Researchers have yet to examine how the implementation of revised accountability plans will influence teacher performance and ensuing student performance. Furthermore, educational literature is

void of an analysis of teachers' perceptions and responses to administrative directives to improve student engagement and school climate. The inclusion of nonacademic measures into the school accountability calculation stimulates an examination of teachers' perceptions of administrative directives to improve school climate and student engagement as antecedents of academic achievement. This study focused on the influence of nonacademic measures and administrative directives on teacher efficacy and agency as prerequisites of student success.

This study contributes to academic literature and the field of education by investigating the experiences of teachers amid the implementation of newly adopted student engagement measures into school accountability programs. It examined how the implementation of nonacademic accountability measures influences teachers' perceptions of their own decision-making and performance in the school setting. This study answered the following research questions and sub-questions:

- How do teachers perceive their efficacy and agency following recent educational policy reforms?
 - How do teachers describe their ability to work with unmotivated / underperforming students?
 - How do teachers describe their ability to work with students who exhibit defiant or disruptive behavior in your classroom?
- How do teachers perceive their (individual / collective) role in the implementation of the LCAP in California?
 - How do teachers describe their knowledge of LCAP?
 - How do teachers define their role in the development of LCAP objectives?

- What are the implications on teacher efficacy and agency of practitioner research in schools?
 - How do teachers perceive their potential for leadership amid educational reforms?

Answers to these questions help educators and scholars understand how the assessment of school climate and student engagement influences teacher efficacy and agency. Furthermore, this study expanded educational scholarship regarding the relationship between administrative directives and teacher leadership at the site level.

Qualitative Research Methodologies

Qualitative research methods, which include techniques such as interviews and observations, help researchers examine the social constructs of teacher efficacy and agency (Priestly, Robinson, & Biesta, 2011). “Social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the work in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). Therefore, investigations about and within schools prove to be appropriate qualitative research methods.

Constructivism informs educational research in schools. More specifically, Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) provides a framework that informs data collection and interpretation by researchers and participants to generate theory about the lived experience of individuals in context. Methodology advises methods. In this study, GTM refers to the method rather than the methodology that initiates the work of generating theory. This study examined the lived experience of teachers as they responded to reformed educational accountability plans. The implementation of LCAP initiated the need for research with teachers to illuminate a transformational vision of the

classroom as the center of a democratic society. GTM provided a valid research framework to investigate how reformed accountability programs influence teachers' perceptions and behaviors following the past forty years of diminished teacher efficacy and agency.

GTM as a Relevant Method

Constructivist grounded theory specified an inductive process of meaning making and interpretation based on the researcher's worldview (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2014). "In this view, we construct research processes and products, but these constructions occur under pre-existing structural conditions, arise in emergent situations, and are influenced by the researchers' perspectives, privileges, positions, interactions, and geographical locations" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 240). My insider status in schools and this study played an important role in this project. The social endeavor of GTM in schools provided a progressive opportunity for practitioner researcher to generate theory and inform the field of education. This study endeavored to more fully understand the contextual realities of teachers and their overwhelming influence on learning and society.

Simply stated, GTM is the generation, not just, the verification of theory based on empirical data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). GTM pursues the generation of theory rather than "turn to scholarship and the mastery of others' works, particularly earlier 'great man' theories" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 7). Bryant and Charmaz (2007) posited the "grounded theory mantra" to be "theory emerges from the data" (p. 32). There is no data to determine the influence of student engagement policies on teacher efficacy and agency.

The adoption of LCAP and the evaluation of nonacademic measures instigated the need for research and theory generation to better understand and inform future policy implementations and professional development programs. Biesta, Priestley, and Robinson (2015) posited, “Teacher agency, that is, agency that is theorised specifically in respect of the activities of teachers in schools, has been subject to little explicit research or theory development” (p. 625). This GTM study highlights the importance of research in schools where theory emerges from data collected amid the relationship between researcher and participants.

Defining Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM)

GTM is based on comparative analyses following precise processes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). “We believe that the discovery of theory from data – which we call grounded theory – is a major task confronting sociology today, for, we shall try to show, such a theory fits empirical situations, and is understandable to sociologists and layman alike” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 1). They posited the relationship between researcher and participants provided a foundation for the iterative process of data collection and analysis.

My positionality as a practitioner researcher in schools supported the utilization of GTM as both method and methodology. GTM informed the data collection and analysis throughout this study. Bryant and Charmaz (2007) credited Glaser and Strauss for significant contributions to qualitative research and GTM. “We not only show that Glaser and Strauss articulated and developed important trends in social research, but also that they brought innovative methodological strategies to these trends that inspired generations of new scholars to pursue qualitative research” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p.

31). Data collection during this study was guided by GTM and relied on the relationship between researcher and participants.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) promoted rigorous data collection followed by progressive analyses and the immersion of the researcher and participants in the field. “Theory as process, we believe, renders quite well the reality of social interaction and its structural context” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 32). Constant comparative analysis aids the identification of diverse indicators that influence theory generation. GTM guides the development of conceptual categories, allowing researchers to make connection between categories, therefore generating theory about a phenomenon. The progressive nature of the development of a constructivist grounded theory depends on the relationship between the researcher, participants, and data to form a triad. The triad of researcher, teacher, and empirical evidence revealed in a dialogical space provided a relevant context for the iterative process of GTM in schools.

Strauss and Corbin (2008) conducted research to show the constructivist nature of GTM. They theorized the importance of GTM’s inductive nature. Later, Charmaz (2014) introduced an expanded analysis of constructivist GTM. She proposed explicit instructions for the inductive meaning-making process by including the researcher as a relevant participant in the generation of theory. She detailed the progression from initial to focused codes to identify categories and more explicit themes that subsequently generate theory. The generation of theory became possible because of the progressive epistemological discoveries of researcher and participants. Subsequent theories would be defined in a final examination of the methodology contained in the culminating product. It is precisely the inductive exploration into that intersection between the epistemology

and ontology of both the researcher and participants that qualified GTM as a relevant method for teacher efficacy and agency research.

Two Theoretical Frameworks for a GTM Study

Two theoretical frameworks provided methodological structures for this GTM study in schools. Culturally Responsive Methodologies (CRM) presents a postmodern view of data collection and meaning-making to embrace the lived experiences of social participation. Critical Pedagogy (CP) guides an individual's pursuit of their own critical consciousness and social justice as the inductive results of dialogue and reflection. The importance of dialogue and relationships required to practice CRM and the pursuit of reflection and action, or praxis, as informed by CP, help define a theoretical objective of public education and its presumed benefit to democratic society. Moreover, CRM and CP concurrently stress the importance of dialogue, reflection, and action as a means to engage with and contribute to society. The importance of relationships in schools and reflection by teachers is relevant due to their proximity to other educators, parents, and students.

GTM influenced by CRM and CP contributes to trustworthy research in schools. The dialectical nature of CRM necessitates a relationship between researcher and participant to reveal the complexities of teacher efficacy. "A stance such as this challenges traditional research notions of objectivity and neutrality, opening up a space for research that calls for engagement through the establishment of relational discourses" (Berryman, SooHoo, & Nevin, 2013, p. 1). The relational nature of practitioner research in schools lends itself well to the CRM framework. Furthermore, CP emphasizes dialogue matched with deep reflection and action, or praxis, to create intentionality for

the researcher and participant. This relationship creates a space to examine how teacher agency can acknowledge and confront imbalances of power in pursuit of equity and social justice in schools. “Knowledge emerges on through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (Freire, 1970, p. 72). Recently adopted accountability reforms highlighted the absence of theories about teacher efficacy and agency and their influence on students, schools, and society. What follows is an explanation of how this study of teacher efficacy was enriched by CRM.

CRM Informs GTM Study of Teacher Efficacy. When methodologies become culturally responsive they assume and accept the presence and relationship of the researcher and participants within a particular social setting. CRM insists on the intent of researcher and participant to glean meaning from discourse. Together they embrace a verbal and experiential dialogue that protects a theoretical space of inquiry where knowledge can be gleaned and meaning made. This study reflects research within a Southern California LEA that employs both the researcher and participants determined to work as co-researchers.

The intent of CRM in this GTM project was to disrupt the administrator-teacher hierarchy by bringing educators together in a safe dialogical space. The pursuit of CRM in schools encouraged the confrontation of hierarchical structures that define social relations so a true collective social reality could be visualized and realized beyond the research context. “Constructive grounded theorists assume that both data and analyses are social constructions that reflect the conditions of their production” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 240). Such conditions invite the discoveries of a new social truth in schools. Classic

authoritative structures dictated decisions in and about schools. Accountability programs like No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Public School Accountability Act (PSAA) resulted in clear hierarchical management structures by emphasizing the importance of high stakes testing and teacher compliance (U.S. Department of Education, 2001; California Department of Education, 1999). Hierarchical bureaucracies diminished teacher efficacy over the past twenty years of educational accountability (Darder, 2015, Mehta, 2015).

The requirements of LCAP introduced opportunities for researchers and educators to pursue their roles as critical intellectuals who influence children in schools and society at large. Nodelman (2013) recognized the power of relationships and collaboration as change agents. “The goal is to work with a community to enact change rather than imposing change on a community” (p. 154). The introduction of local control and the examination of multiple measures within new accountability structures created an opportunity for teachers to engage each other and policy-makers with renewed confidence. Further, CRM highlights the amalgam that was or could be developed through practitioner research so the knowledge gleaned may better inform current and future teacher preparation and educational professional development programs.

By investing in reciprocal relationships and including all parties, the researcher more accurately theorizes within the research context and therefore, encourages the potential for deeper analysis in comparative contexts. Commitments of time, listening, and the development of relational trust support Harrison, MacGibbon, and Morton’s (2001) description of reciprocity as described by Lather, “through collaborative theorizing with participants, it is possible to ‘both advance emancipatory theory and

empower the researched” (p. 324). Empowerment and collaboration theoretically influence teachers’ sense of efficacy based on Bandura’s (2006) measurements of social persuasion and an enhanced emotional state. Therefore, the researcher’s subjectivity must be explored to show a relationship between researcher, participants, and data in the research setting (Charmaz, 2014).

Fullan (2003) recommended collegial discourse and dialogical relationships to create a new space to challenge the status quo and initiate relevant educational and social change. The relational aspects of CRM complement GTM procedures in teacher efficacy research. Academic literature identified distributed leadership and democratic schooling as means to improve social justice, increase equity, and contribute to student achievement in school and society (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Park & Datnow, 2009).

CRM extends the scope of research into a newly created space occupied by researcher and participant. The power of relationships and collaboration fostered by CRM allows researchers and participants to establish a sense of efficacy and make meaning of newly understood realities. Morris (2013) emphasized the social responsibility of CRM by stating, “I will also be mindful that the power of the conversation belongs to the participants, and not to me as a researcher” (p. 66). CRM transforms the qualitative research interview into a conversation. Meaning made between the researcher and participant paints a broader picture of education based on the interaction and relationship of the two within a local setting. Berryman, SooHoo, and Nevin (2013) referred to Freire to explain the importance of the relationship between the researcher and participants.

Applying Freire's work to the relationship between the researcher and the researched, culturally responsive methodology reframes the researcher's stance as expert to one of learner where the people 'who come from [another world] to the world of people who do so not as invaders. They do not come to teach or to transmit or to give anything, but rather to learn, with the people, about the people's world' (Freire, 1998, p. 180) (Berryman, SooHoo, & Nevin, 2013, p. 5).

The researcher takes on the role of learner. In the context of research in schools, CRM informs reflective practice by insisting on the identification of the researcher's positionality and engagement with participants as co-creators.

The success and challenges of LCAP can be more quickly understood through qualitative research in schools. The dialogical work of GTM through the CRM lens stands to break down barriers and disrupt the hierarchical structure of earlier educational legislation. "To build a sustainable future we need intellectual tools to help us expose duplicity, forestall betrayal, and demystify the presumption and arrogance of an inevitably persistent managerialism" (Fielding, 2004, p. 296). The disruption of the managerial structure of decision-making in schools relies on what Fielding refers to as "radical collegiality" (p. 296). Data collection relies on a strong relationship in a safe dialogical space. "For a number of writers the central hope and justification of dialogic encounters lie more in the act of dialogue itself than the content of what is said" (Fielding, 2004, p. 305). Research with educators in the midst of California's LCAP implementation will benefit from the creation of such a space in schools if scholars and educators are to understand how accountability reforms impact teacher efficacy.

Recent legislation insists on local control and the inclusion of multiple voices during the planning and implementation process. Subsequently, GTM structures guide researchers to investigate how current policies impact teacher agency. Within the CP framework, teachers are induced to engage praxis to operationalize their transforming epistemologies. Amidst dialogue and reflection about the influence of educational reforms, educators engage CP to identify an imbalance and exercise agency as models of critical citizenry in society.

CP Informs GTM Study of Teacher Agency. The connection between teachers' efficacy and their exercise of agency can be better understood through the lens of CP. Academic literature highlighted the impact of educational accountability programs on teachers (Scheurich, Skrla, & Johnson, 2000; Valencia, Valenzuela, Sloan, & Foley, 2001). CP informed researchers and participants committed to the pursuit of social justice by disrupting imbalances of knowledge and power. When teachers and researchers engage in the pursuit of "critical consciousness" they confront their "unfinishedness" and perpetuate the meaning making process (Freire, 1970). "The person who is open to the world or to others inaugurates thus a dialogical relationship with which restlessness, curiosity and unfinishedness are confirmed as key moments within the ongoing current of history" (Freire, 1998, p. 121). This ideal stems from constructivist theory that explains learning and growing from experience and reflection. CP suggests a cycle of reflecting and confronting critical consciousness through praxis.

Local control is required by LCAP. The new accountability plan prompts teachers to engage critical consciousness by contributing to the policy conversation. The role of teachers was reduced to technician controlled by bureaucratic mandates amid the

era of high stakes testing and reporting. California's recently adopted LCAP mandates stakeholder involvement in educational decision-making. California Education Code 56062 requires all school district superintendents and governing boards to ensure that teachers, students, parents, and parent advisory committees across the district be involved in developing, reviewing, and supporting implementation of the LCAP (California Department of Education, 2016). The call for input from all stakeholders created an opportunity and responsibility for teachers to engage CP with "epistemological curiosity" (Freire, 1998, p. 32).

LCAP invites teachers to reexamine their role across the educational ecology. It encourages praxis and the examination of their capacity to influence education at multiple levels. LCAP's requirements reinvigorate a culture of reflection and critical action in classrooms and schools. When teachers embrace their values and acknowledge their role in schools they became relevant players in the educational milieu. In pursuit of a democratic society, Dewey (1926) theorized the active role of the teacher.

But, until the public school system is organized in such a way that every teacher has some regular and representative way in which he or she can register judgment upon matters of educational importance, with the assurance that this judgment will somehow affect the school system, the assertion that the present system is not, from the internal standpoint, democratic seems to be justified. (Dewey, 1926, p. 64)

GTM informed by CP induces the researcher and participants to examine power structures, reflect on their role in the educational ecology, and transform how they react in schools. Freire (1970) posited education could "bring about conformity" or provide,

“the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” (p. 34). CP enlightens the study of teacher agency by inviting teachers to acknowledge their status and confront a new way of learning and thinking by engaging their own “critical consciousness” (Freire, 1970). The iterative nature of GTM reveals the influence of dialogue and reflection during data collection and analysis. “Thus it moves back and forth between theoretical interpretation and empirical evidence” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 287). GTM requires researchers and participants to cycle through the reflection and dialogue process to unwrap the teacher’s perceived ability to “act otherwise” in myriad contexts of teaching and learning (Giddens, 1979).

CP guides the researcher and participants to examine their epistemology to better understand how and why teachers behave as they do in myriad contexts. GTM guides the researcher to generate theory. This GTM study induced the pursuit of critical consciousness by opening a dialogical space for co-researchers to examine their experience with reflection and praxis. Educators must engage in critical self-evaluation to participate in the educational endeavor. CP encourages co-researchers’ engagement in critical conversations based on reflections from their practice in context. “Therefore, proposing an alternative way of thinking about teacher agency involves teachers finding alternative ways of knowing the truth about themselves” (Pignatelli, 1993, p. 420). Realization of one’s “unfinishedness” in pursuit of “critical consciousness” provides a new way of understanding one’s self and how one responds to difficult situations (Freire, 1970). Newly authorized assessments of nonacademic measures in California present a change to the educational status quo and therefore the potential for an imbalance of

power. CP informed this GTM study by initiating dialogue and reflection followed by data interpretation and theory generation.

Relationships, reflection, and action transform how researchers theorize the work of educators. If teachers acknowledge their “unfinishedness” on the road to “critical consciousness” they can continue to transform themselves and the educational system (Freire, 1970). The transformation of teachers is therefore important for the transformation of teaching and learning in schools. Critically conscious educators who embrace their role in the educational milieu must also renew their responsibility to engage their democratic values in pursuit of social justice in schools.

This study is grounded in the importance of the educator’s responsibility to disrupt the imbalance of power and act to address social injustice. The meaning of teacher efficacy and agency have been addressed in scholarly literature, but have yet to be examined through the lens of CRM and CP with regard to nonacademic measures (Bandura, 2006; Giddens, 1979; Priestley, Robinson, & Biesta, 2012; Tschannen-Moran, Wolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). This GTM study informed by CRM and CP requires an honest and realistic presentation of the researcher as an unfinished co-participant prepared to “challenge preconceived notions of what is already known” (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001, p. 325). Therefore, the intersection of teachers’ responsibility and the researcher’s positionality will be addressed below.

Researcher Positionality

The researcher’s positionality as both insider and outsider is an important element of this study. This study removed titles and roles to create a safe and productive dialogical space and promote theory construction. I am an educator, a life-long learner, a

public servant, a mentor, a colleague, an employee, and a doctoral student. I work with other educators to promote and support learning for all students. My insider status as a school employee is dependent on the lexicon and agency to navigate a school building with a level of cultural capital that outsiders do not possess. As a public school educator of twenty-years, I bring an insider's perspective to the context of public schools. "True resistance begins with the people confronting pain, whether it's theirs or somebody else's, and wanting to do something to change it' (hooks, 1990, p. 215)" (p. 240). CRM demands we confront the "pain" and "one's own feelings and the issue at hand (their actions)" (p. 240). More than a decade of teaching experience helped me realize the frustration of the educational "institutional machinery" (Mahan, 1992, p. 12). I experienced administrative directives to raise test scores, disagreed with discipline policies that challenged my value of equity, and questioned my own efficacy when students did not perform at or above proficiency. However, before I embraced the theoretical foundations of CP as a researcher, I embraced praxis as a practitioner. The importance of my own reflexivity was paramount while collecting and analyzing data for this study. It was critically important to genuinely address my own subjectivities while analyzing data and generating theory. Alternatively, my more recent role as a middle school administrator highlighted my role as an outsider, forced me to engage my subjectivities, and induced me to disrupt hierarchical inequities among educators and students.

I am a school principal. My role is perceived as a power position within the school site. Daily, I make decisions that impact students, staff, and parents. In this context, I am intent on helping others engage in similar decision-making. I have

attempted to distribute this leadership and decision-making across all levels of the school site. My engagement in this study influenced my role as my role influenced this study.

This study removed titles and broadened roles so a safe and productive dialogical space may be preserved for theory construction. My espoused values as a school leader were challenged by this work. Furthermore, I intend to challenge other school leaders with the results. I am an insider who works at a school. I am an educator, a life-long learner, a public servant, a mentor, a colleague, an employee, and a member of the staff. I work with other educators to promote and support learning for all students. My insider status is dependent on a lexicon and agency necessary to navigate a school building with a level of cultural capital that outsiders do not possess. I take my insider status for granted. Presumably a grand assumption, I believe that all of the adults whom I work share my core values of kindness, authenticity, peace, and justice. However, I am a realist and understand my outsider station as the site administrator juxtaposes my insider status as an educator.

I am the manager, the boss. When I am helpful and empathetic I am accepted as an insider, another member of the staff. However, when I hold adults accountable for questionable behavior, set policy, or say 'no' I shift to the outside! On the outside I am the principal, the site administrator, the discipline desk, a supervisor, and evaluator. I have further emphasized my outsider status because of my work as a doctoral student. My research brought me to a place where I attempt to blur the lines between these stations. I believe I must challenge my understanding of my insider status and confront my role as an outsider within the educational ecology to improve my practice, induce

others to grow personally, and perpetuate our democratic society. It is from this location that I approach this practitioner research project.

As a public school administrator, I am constantly confronted with the challenge of being an outsider to teachers. I was forced come to terms with this outsider assumption to gain access to the field of research, attempt to break from hierarchical relationships, and adopt the CRM paradigm to engage in research intent to contribute to the ontological investigation of educators so they may improve their practice and contribute to a just society. I embraced the concept of researcher/educator overcoming the perpetuation of marginalization or binary of self and other to invite the realities that co-construction and theorizing may reveal. These confrontations and realizations induced this practitioner researcher to capitalize on the role of disruptor of educational bureaucratic oppression.

Methods

With respect to GTM research, this study relied on open-ended survey questions and a semi-structured interview with teachers (Charmaz, 2014; Merriam, 2002). The interview protocol followed hierarchical ordered questions from general to more specific. A survey administered prior to each interview supported the act of reflection inspired by CP. The interviews provided participants an opportunity to reflect more deeply on perceptions of their efficacy and agency pursuant to their role in the implementation of student engagement and school climate programs. The researcher took notes during each interview. Attempts to stay culturally responsive the researcher remained fully engaged as a listener and a participant. The researcher made every attempt to maintain the conversational nature of the interviews. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. The researcher, on an encrypted, password-protected computer maintained all

audio files and transcribed documents. Each interview consisted of a series of open-ended questions and was recorded on two independent recording devices.

Sample

A purposive sampling approach was used to provide the most relevant data and patterns of meaning generated from analysis (Merriam, 2002). The researcher recruited thirteen participants who currently work in a California public school, teaching between grades three and eight, inclusively. Participants were selected based on their public school experience of seven or more years. This purposive sample (Merriam, 2002) is important because participants have administered state mandated standardized tests and worked during the transition from NCLB to ESSA and PSAA to LCAP. Working with teachers with extensive teaching experience provided a diverse sample of expertise spanning the time period before and after the signing new legislation. This study targeted teachers within a Southern California LEA undergoing the LCAP implementation. The selection of individuals from different schools supported an examination of a variety of experiences with administrative directives and student engagement programs within the same LEA. Participants were selected based on their willingness to share experiences with testing, reporting, and school-wide behavior support systems. Adhering to CRM, conversations were held at the location of each participant's choice. Their choice was important to enhance the comfort level and improve the contextual relevance of each conversation.

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 show the ages and years of service of each participant. Nine of the thirteen participants were older than 42 years of age. Six were older than 50 (Table 3.1). Eight participants had nineteen or more years of service at public schools (Table

3.2).

Table 3.1

Table 3.2

Teachers were recruited via email, phone, or personal invitation. The researcher referred to social and professional contacts to expedite the recruitment process. Personal relationship with colleagues of the participants supported the establishment of trust. Participant names were protected by the use of pseudonyms. The researcher's relationships with other administrators expedited the selection of this sample by identifying participants who were willing to share experiences or desired the opportunity to engage in intellectual discourse. The researcher is a school administrator, so took care to assure that participation was voluntary and not shared with participants' colleagues or supervisors. The ability to engage in dialogue and reflect on personal experiences in schools supported elements of CP intent to induce participants to explore their own critical consciousness.

Survey

Each participant agreed to complete an online survey following their consent. The use of an online survey served multiple purposes. An online survey provided participants with an introduction to the research topic. The researcher designed the survey instrument to include digital links to relevant documents that define past and present accountability programs (Appendix A). The researcher maintained all survey documents on an encrypted, password-protected computer. The use of open ended survey questions helped to begin the participants' reflection process intentionally attempting to prepare them for deeper analysis during the interview process (Charmaz, 2014). The survey responses provided the researcher an opportunity to begin line by line coding, focused coding, concurrent memo writing as detailed below in the data analysis

plan (Charmaz, 2014). Finally, the use of an online survey proved cost effective and timely for this research project.

Interviews

The interview protocol allowed for flexibility when identifying themes and offered interpretations of the data to generate inductive inquiry (Jenkins & Cutchens, 2011). Interview questions addressed past and current experiences with testing, reporting, school-wide behavior support systems, and the presence or absence of administrative directives. Based on the foundations of CRM and CP, questions evoked critical reflection about teachers' location and role on the educational ecology and the influence of nonacademic measures into their current and future practice. During the interview process, the researcher agreed to include an open dialogic process to uncover deeper meaning from participants and researcher.

Data Analysis

Inductive reasoning supported data collection as part of an iterative process. Each interview was transcribed by a professional transcription service. Keeping with GTM's structure, initial and focused codes were constructed to determine emerging themes and categories. Line by line coding was employed during the initial coding phase of data collection (Charmaz, 2014). Researcher's memos collected during each interview and each phase of analysis provided rich descriptions of the interactions with each participant and informed the iterative process. Following multiple reviews of codes and memos, the researcher began to design diagrams and conceptual maps to facilitate analyses as themes and categories emerged. "The advantage of diagrams is that they provide a visual representation of categories and their relationships" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 218).

Subsequently, theoretical sampling and continual reviews of academic literature supported data analysis and mapping the construction of theory. Theory formation followed coding, memo writing, and analysis based on the development and multiple iterations of diagrams and conceptual maps. Data analysis consisted of a constant comparative method that occurred during the review of survey responses and each interview.

Data Analysis Informed by GTM. Grounded theorists make inferences beyond initial categories ensuring the validity of their research and subsequent theory (Creswell, 2014). They refer to theoretical sampling to “saturate” the data and “distinguish” between categories in GTM projects (Merriam, 2002). GTM relies on validity and trustworthiness to move back and forth between participants and data amid frequent checks outside of the data to solidify theory generation. This work involves triangulation by reviewing relevant documents and conducting observations with regard to data and context. The researcher may also conduct second or third interviews as a form of member checking to clarify and elaborate on categories (Charmaz, 2014). It is theoretical sampling and saturation that allow the grounded theorist to make inferences and verify connections between categories. Theoretical sampling allows the researcher to interpret gaps between categories and “gives your work analytic depth and precision” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 213). The researcher must determine when they attain precision between core theoretical categories to reach saturation. The generation of new theory might occur when the researcher has saturated theoretical categories and samples by revealing no “new properties” between the core categories.

As a former teacher and current school administrator, I cautiously examined sensitizing concepts and insights into theoretical sampling throughout this study. In Chapter 5, I present an analysis of my reflexivity with regard to my location on the educational hierarchy and how that influenced this work and theory generation. My belief in the principles of equitable engagement and leadership in schools introduced “certain guiding empirical interests” that “provide a plan to start inquiry, not end it” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 31). As a practitioner researcher, I espouse research and education be grounded in the foundations of CRM and CP toward the vision of equitable schooling in a democratic society. Charmaz (2014) cautioned researchers to refer to sensitizing concepts as “tentative tools for developing their ideas about processes” (p. 30). The inclusion of local controls and nonacademic measures informed by the aforementioned sensitizing concepts provided an opportunity to design questions that challenged teachers to make meaning amid educational reforms. Sensitizing concepts acted as foundations of interest with strict adherence to the inductive nature of this study (Charmaz, 2014). Furthermore, my insider status in education supported theoretical sampling throughout the processes of data collection and analysis. Following the emergence of categories, theoretical sampling was employed to determine which data were necessary to close gaps and strengthen categories to generate theory (Merriam, 2002). My position as co-researcher was kept in constant check with inductive reasoning to maintain the rigor and validity of this study. In order to collect data in a timely manner, surveys were completed and interviews conducted over a three-month period.

The Validity of a GTM Study

The end of the twentieth century marked a period when scholars increasingly induced the academy to better understand the trustworthiness of postmodernism and the validity of qualitative research (Anderson & Herr, 1999; Ferguson & Ferguson, 2000). Understanding how teachers respond and make meaning from testing and reporting systems required research in schools. The experiences of teachers, beyond quantitative assessment analyses, provided valuable insights into the challenges and shortcomings that present themselves following the implementation of educational reform. “Moreover, when qualitative researchers use a theoretical lens, they can form interpretations that call for action agendas for reform and change” (Creswell, 2014, p. 200). GTM research conducted through the theoretical lens of CRM and CP was supported by Merriam’s (2002) reference to Kvale (1996), who suggested,

validity as (1) craftsmanship in which the researcher adopts a critical outlook during data analysis, (2) communication where validity is determined in dialogue with others, and (3) pragmatic validity, which goes beyond an argument’s persuasiveness to assessing validity in terms of real-world changes brought about as a result of the research. (Merriam, 2002, p. 24)

Qualitative research induces participatory inquiry as an act of social justice that induces the co-construction of knowledge by researcher and participants (Moss, 2004). The aforementioned local control instituted by LCAP may therefore be deemed valid by the mere fact that it breaks the bonds of marginalization by hearing many voices as one. This study exercised research methods that adhered to the high validity standards of the academy.

Conducting research in schools with educators, regardless of their role in the organization, can be more powerful, and more valid, than observations by visiting scholars. Anderson and Jones (2000) posited, “action research by administrators may have a greater impact on future administrators and practice than the higher ed. researcher...practitioners trust the experienced teacher/administrators before the out of touch higher ed. professor” (p. 454). The positionality of the researcher in a GTM study provides depth and relevance to the data and subsequent generation of theory. “To be self-reflexive is equated with ‘coming clean’ as a researcher about how race, class, gender, religion, and personal/social values influence the researcher’s understanding of the power dynamics of the research setting, the phenomenon under study, and the researcher-respondent relationship” (Merriam, 2002, p. 290). The introduction of positionality by the researcher increased the validity of the study because the co-researchers worked together to make meaning.

Scholars described qualitative methods to provide broad but legitimate criteria to prove the necessity and worth of practitioner research in schools (Anderson & Herr, 1999). “Unless both university academics and school practitioners are willing to take intellectual risks and push their comfort zones, we will end up with non-rigorous programs that shortchange us all” (Anderson & Herr, 1999, p. 20). This study engaged the protection of a dialogical space to construct knowledge with educators in schools. “...we use trustworthiness to mean the ways we work to meet the criteria of validity, credibility, and believability of our research—as assessed by the academy, our communities, and our participants” (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001, p. 324). The

importance of efficacy and agency research to both schools and the academy is assured with adherence to the tenets of CRM.

GTM studies about accountability programs and their influence on teacher efficacy and agency received limited exposure in scholarly literature. The foundations of CRM and CP provided a relevant theoretical lens to observe work in schools and generate new theories about how teachers act and make meaning amid the latest educational reforms. Furthermore, CP induced the researcher and participants to engage in research to inform policy, practice, and social justice agendas. Practitioner research and appropriate validity measures are necessary for the grounded theorist to conduct credible and trustworthy qualitative research to reform education beyond policy and transform society beyond theoretical ideals.

Conclusion

The recent implementation of new educational legislation signifies a potential shift in the role of teachers and their impact on student achievement in the American educational system. A review of educational literature from the last two decades revealed that testing and reporting accountability programs diminished the efficacy and agency of classroom teachers. The requirement of local control and the inclusion of multiple measures into the educational accountability equation created a reform environment that has the potential to influence every sphere of the educational ecology.

This GTM study founded in the theories of CRM and CP offers a glimpse into the perceptions and actions of teachers amid these timely reforms. The current capacity for teacher leadership may be disrupted by the implementation and response to new education legislation. This examination of teacher efficacy and agency within the new

educational accountability framework contributes to academic literature, informs educational practice in schools, and induces teacher training programs to address the new role of educators.

Chapter 4: Findings

The inclusion of non-academic measures into California's new accountability plan induced this practitioner research project to examine teachers' perceptions of their efficacy and agency. School accountability measures formerly relied solely on academic assessment to evaluate school and student progress. Of the eight elements detailed in LCAP, the inclusion of parent engagement, student engagement, and school climate served as catalysts for this study. Therefore the addition of non-academic measures into the school accountability equation and the influence of a co-constructed dialogical space shared by researcher and participants helped generate a critical teacher theory, described in the next chapter. Three themes emerged as progressive stages of the meaning making process following data collection and analysis. Participants' words showed their succession of thoughts and understandings. Pseudonyms are used in place of participant's names to ensure anonymity.

From Efficacy to Agency

The dialogical spaces created and shared between researcher and participants helped us work collaboratively as co-researchers. Our conversations revealed incidents and emotions related to self-efficacy, previously dismissed. We discovered previously undisclosed realizations about the increasing complexities of teaching and contemplated their abilities to transform the educational program. Our reflection and discourse revealed three themes; **efficacy**, **catharsis**, and **agency**. Each theme influenced the development of the other two. Therefore, it is this progression that helped develop a critical teacher theory.

This practitioner research project stimulated conversations about teacher efficacy and agency after the implementation of California's LCAP. Participants expressed pride in their performance. They willingly shared incidents of gratification that revealed a sense of efficacy previously dismissed. Disclosures of pride ignited expressions of blame as conversations progressed. Participants progressively recognized and articulated their perceptions of the shortcomings of public education. After expressing cathartic revelations, they acknowledged previously ignored opportunities to exercise agency. Discourse helped teachers recognize their own leadership potential in classrooms, schools, and society. After acknowledging the importance of professional compliance and collaboration as relevant values in public education, teachers came to articulate a sense of efficacy previously unidentified.

Efficacy

Collegial discourse revealed teachers' previously overlooked acknowledgment of their abilities to positively impact student achievement within difficult contexts. Prior to the adoption of LCAP, academic literature highlighted teachers' diminished sense of efficacy following years of high stakes testing, reporting, and administrative directives. This study induced teachers to reflect on their present location within the educational hierarchy. Reflection helped teachers rediscover a sense of efficacy they may have not recognized or articulated before our conversations. Their statements revealed a humble recognition of their perceived ability to persevere despite difficult circumstances.

This section highlights the influence of reflection and discourse so teachers could acknowledge their accomplishments beyond improving student test scores. The sections that follow reveal how they acknowledged solidarity with colleagues in addition to

positive intentions to serve students and community with subtle humility. Humble descriptions of the complexity of their work, helped reveal previously undiscovered teacher efficacy.

A sense of diminished efficacy was evident early in our conversations. Teachers questioned their capacity to support this study and make relevant decision in schools. Their responses highlighted their uncertainty. Susan (personal communication, April 10, 2017) described working with teachers to modify the curriculum based on recent classroom test scores.

We got a form where we were supposed to write some sort of goal, but there were very limited directions on what we were supposed to do. We had no idea of what we were supposed to do, so we spent an hour looking at that and texting our admin saying, ‘What do you want us to do with this?’ (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017)

Susan and her teaching colleagues waited for direction rather than determining best next steps for their test score analysis. Susan’s response was indicative of her intent to succeed, but underscored her limited confidence in her ability to do so. However, as discourse progressed, so did revelations of efficacy unnoticed.

Efficacy Revealed by Teachers’ Intent to Please

Teachers’ interviews revealed an understated humility and a commitment to serve the educational community. Their desire to please, protect, and meet high expectations was evident in our conversations. Transcripts provided evidence of teachers’ desires to please by “do[ing] the right work” (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). Susan was one of five participants who reiterated concerns about providing the

appropriate responses to this study's questions. Similarly, Steven, a middle school teacher, declared his intent to meet the objectives of this study. "I don't know if my answers were what you wanted or if that's what you were looking for" (Steven, personal communication, April 14, 2017). They wanted to support the research process and me as a colleague in education. The data presented below provides empirical evidence to show their intent to please students, colleagues, parents, supervisors, and me (the co-researcher).

Contributing to the Academy. Participants displayed humility and minimal intimidation at the onset of each interview. Their desire to answer my questions correctly and provide me with acceptable data revealed an innocuous acceptance of the research process. Only Esther recalled previous interactions with university researchers (Esther, personal communication, April 23, 2017). She worked with professors from a Southern California university to develop and analyze Mathematics lesson plans. All participants appeared intrigued and eager to engage in this study. With that, they wanted to provide the right answers in an attempt to support my efforts and educational scholarship in general. Alice, an elementary school teacher, expressed her concern about getting it right. "I think originally I knew the answer. But then I stopped. But again, what are you looking for? Is this what he is wanting or looking for" (Alice, personal communication, April 13, 2017). Codes about participants' aspirations to please those whom they serve introduced their determination to satisfy my requests.

Responses highlighted participants' desires to contribute to the academy by providing relevant insights into the teacher's role. Their aspirations to be helpful and knowledgeable were evident. Veteran teachers with more than twenty years of

experience, Ralph and Corey, appeared to foster self-confidence as our conversations ensued. Ralph displayed a sense of satisfaction as he attempted to support the study's intent. "I was looking forward to helping you in whatever way you needed. I didn't really know the context for what your need was, but I knew that I wanted to fill it if I possibly could" (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017). Corey corroborated Ralph's willingness by expressing his belief that research in schools is a necessary endeavor. "But we need eye-opening things like what you're talking about" (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). This camaraderie was evident throughout the interviews. An analysis of the influence of this practitioner research study is addressed in the next chapter.

Attempting to Please Supervisors. Participants expressed pride in their contributions. Their eagerness to support educational research was further displayed by their intent to display what they believed to be relevant work. As a special education teacher working with students in the general education setting, Cole (personal communication, May 8, 2017) argued teachers are engaging in relevant and acceptable work. "We have a lot of experienced teachers who know what works, and our test scores are proving it, but nobody's comes to ask us about it" (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017). His comments elucidated the intent and expertise of himself and his colleagues.

Sixth grade teacher, Susan, explicitly indicated her belief that teachers are addressing student needs. She explained how teachers do the best they can amid adverse circumstances. "I feel like we're doing the right work, but not all the steps are put in place yet to really make it successful" (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017).

Her comments assume that teachers are not one of the problems in education. She continued by noting her perseverance despite the absence of observation and acknowledgment. “I almost feel like being given that opportunity, part of it was having the right people visiting my classroom and trusting me that, ‘Hey, she knows what she's doing’” (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). Susan suggested that better collaboration would result in better performance.

Protecting Students. Attempts to do the right work were revealed in teachers’ intentions to protect students from educational policies. As a special education teacher, Alice worked to protect her students from test score reports. “It really, doesn’t matter. Just do your best. I know how you guys perform. I know your levels, so don’t worry about it” (Alice, personal communication, April 13, 2017). Her responses diminished the magnitude of standardized tests while attempting to preserve the emotional well being of her students.

Teachers’ perceived contribution to educational research and their articulation of service to kids and adults reinvigorated thoughts of efficacy historically diminished by decades of testing, reporting, and managerial commands. Conversations helped them recognize their subconscious intentions to serve the academy, please their supervisors, and protect their students. These revelations helped them appreciate a sense of efficacy previously understated. Recalling their willingness to comply with administrators’ demands influenced their perceptions of their role in schools and society. Further recognition of efficacy was exposed by unassuming commitments to colleagues.

Recognizing Trust as a Source of Efficacy

Expressions of pride and support aided teachers' recognition of efficacy in different contexts. Participants revealed the importance of trust when describing relationships in schools. They admitted relying on colleagues for affirmation and support. The desire to please others and a commitment to do the right work suggested teachers' belief that their school relationships resembled a family. "We truly have always had a family feel among the staff" (Alice, survey, March 26, 2017). Teachers stressed their pride in familial relations on campus. "It seemed more like a family. It was weird like when you have a family meeting at the dinner table, you know?" (Judy, personal communication, April 5, 2017). She referred to colleagues as if they were family members. Her comments reflected the trust one would expect from a close family bond. They appeared to cheer up when I asked about relationships with colleagues. "We really do have a family atmosphere" (Alice, personal communication, April 13, 2017). Our conversations stressed their reliance on the importance of trust in school relations. Teachers came to recognize their commitment to student, parents, and colleagues revealed a hidden source of worth. Admissions of trust and the power of relationships further exposed teachers' once lost sense of efficacy.

The School Family. As a special education teacher in an elementary school, Alice played the role of protector with her students as well as the staff. Perhaps because they are addressing students with special needs, special education teachers expressed more intense feelings of protection for their students. Seventeen times throughout our conversation, special education teacher, Alice referred to her students as "my kiddos" to describe her students past and present. She spoke of them as she would her family.

When we discussed curriculum and testing she emphatically spoke of protecting her students emotionally and psychologically.

You think it's so difficult; this general education stuff. But I have to take care of my kids. That's not okay for them to be frustrated and have no idea what to do; yet we're forcing them to do it. I just don't agree with that. (Alice, personal communication, April 13, 2017)

Kevin is also a special education teacher who admitted possession and deep responsibility for defending his students. "I have to really fight hard to do my best for my kids" (Kevin, personal communication, April 11, 2017). He explained how his students trust him to take care of them like family.

Teachers Supporting Teachers. Teachers highlighted the importance of supporting colleagues for the benefit of the school family. Feelings of camaraderie helped to solidify teachers' newfound sources of efficacy. During our conversations they expressed pride when defending other teachers and their work. Alice offered empathy for coworkers who often appeared to be overwhelmed by their own intent to meet expectations. "I feel so bad for them because I don't feel like I have someone looking over me" (Alice, personal communication, April 13, 2017). She recounted mounting pressure and increased expectations placed on general education teachers in her school.

The teachers that I work with, I feel like they are really overwhelmed. I mean I always say you can do what you can do. You're doing the best you can. I don't feel I offer solutions to them. I think they truly feel like they have to reach these expectations they are supposed to. I just feel they are really overwhelmed because of that. (Alice, personal communication, April 13, 2017)

As a Special Education teacher, Alice had smaller class sizes and the ability to modify the curriculum for her students. Special Education teachers were not held to the specific requirements of following a prescribed curriculum designed to prepare students for standardized tests, as were general education teachers. Alice (personal communication, April 13, 2017) empathized with the plight of general education teachers. Large class sizes, new state standards, and pressure to help students perform at high levels proved to be an insurmountable task for her general education colleagues.

Ralph (personal communication, April 22, 2017) recounted an incident when a teacher's test scores were compared with others in front of his entire staff during a meeting. The principal claimed to share the information as an attempt for the teacher to go to colleagues for help. Rather, he recalled the individual was embarrassed and humiliated.

I heard the rest of the team talking about her behind her back, she was seen as less than each time. And I know her to be a great teacher. She works hard, I see her in the classroom at six o'clock at night. She's not lazy, but she has lost a lot of credibility through the process. (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017)

He shared the story with remorse. Ralph appeared angry and sad because a good teacher was disparaged in front of the school family. Ralph's emotions will be explained in more detail later in the section about catharsis.

Middle school teachers, Judy and George, shared their experiences with personal relationships in schools. They described the importance of the family atmosphere for personal well-being and student success. "Students and teachers bond to their school under these conditions and in turn teachers teach better and students learn better.

Developing personal relationships and promoting respect and tolerance of differences is also key” (Judy, survey, March 29, 2017). As we discussed the past, she recalled a previous school district where collaboration promoted that communal feeling. “The decision-making process was very communal. It was teams and representation. All schools were represented and they really valued the input of teachers” (Judy, personal communication, April 5, 2017). George admitted that positive relationships with colleagues improved his work with students and each other. Positive relations with colleagues promoted a stronger sense of a collective efficacy on campus. “So I think the people that we surround ourselves with, that we work with, I think that can play a big part of that” (George, personal communication, May 10, 2017). However, teachers admitted that the family feeling on campus was not limited to teachers and students.

Parents As Part of the School Family. The concept of protection spread beyond the classroom to parents. Ralph indicated concern over misinformation and the absence of information shared with parents about schools and schooling. He suggested his district promoted high test scores to increase property values. Ralph equated the promotion of test scores to the district’s reputation and real estate values as a misleading public interest.

With regard to test scores, what I feel is that there are too many interests involved in test scores. The realtor down the street is either going to be able to sell the house for X or Y based upon what? Not on how safe the school is, not on how kids are being. But almost entirely based upon test scores. (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017)

Ralph revealed a sarcastic understanding of his belief that equity and safety are more relevant to a school's success than test scores recorded once each year. As others offered protection, Ralph sought to protect parents and the community.

Teachers sought support from parents by building relationships to foster trust. Kevin shared his thoughts on the power of parent engagement and presence as part of the school community. "It's nice to have parents on campus, and there's something to be said for face to face. There's something to be said for the experience of being at school" (Kevin, personal communication, April 11, 2017). His statements reflect his belief in strong relationships between teachers, students, and parents collectively. "Over time, trust is established, and they know they can count on me. Then, after establishing rapport over weeks, sometimes months for some kids, I feel like I have a huge impact (Kevin, personal communication, April 11, 2017). He admitted that building relationships was the most effective way to help students learn. Teachers revealed their intent to serve students by fostering relationships with parents.

Teacher – Administrator Relations

Teachers noted universal benefits of strong relationships in schools. After moments of contemplation and recollections of incidents on campus, George anticipated the benefits gleaned from working with administrators who "do the right work".

I think if we hired administrators to do things like that, to truly try and do the right work; doing that, not working harder and not doing this and not doing that, but doing the right work; if we had that, I think education would be blown up.
(George, personal communication, May 10, 2017)

Our conversation steered his thoughts to the possibilities of strong teacher – administrator relations. “I think sometimes if you are friendly with administrators, you can get away with things that other people cannot” (George, personal communication, May 10, 2017). His positive mention of the term principal precluded his belief that strong collaborative relationships across the educational ecology would subsequently benefit actors at every level. More about naming conventions is reviewed in the following section.

Trust and the Principal. Teachers reflected on incidents that helped build trust. Ten out of the thirteen teachers interviewed declared positive comments and feelings about a respected principal at some point in their career. Most reflected on their desire for greater autonomy as a sign of trust in their relationships. They assumed trust was generated when principals supported teacher independence. “I think the difference was the principal stayed out of your hair” (Esther, personal communication, April 23, 2017). Esther explained how classroom observations, constructive feedback, and collegial discourse with administrators were the elements of relationships most participants desired. Cole expressed his appreciation of his principal’s ability to trust his decision-making. “We’ve had principals that say, ‘Hey, if you know something works better, you use it’” (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017). Simply stating a level of trust informed Cole that his principal respected his professionalism.

Teachers rallied behind and spoke highly of those principals who trusted them to work at high levels in the absence of direct supervision. Evidence of trust was also revealed in statements of respect. “Yes, I know my principal’s my boss” (Alice, personal communication, April 13, 2017). Kevin explained how respect for his principal was based on supportive actions. He insisted the respect was mutual. “Now, there’s more

buy-in and trust with this second-year principal, who's still relatively new” (Kevin, personal communication, April 11, 2017). He continued to describe the positive impact gleaned from collaborative teacher – administrator relations. “Everybody's working together to do it, and it was fostered by the principal” (Kevin, personal communication, April 11, 2017). Blame for poor decision-making was overshadowed by teachers’ optimism for quality teacher - administrator relations.

Ultimately, Kevin acknowledged high regard for collaborative efforts. “The assistant principal and principal have phenomenal knowledge of what I know” (Kevin, personal communication, April 11, 2017). Teacher - administrator relations were a consistent topic throughout the interviews. They articulated an expected level of trust and autonomy from their principal. Furthermore, teachers expressed high expectations for leaders within the education system.

Empathy for the Principal. Ralph’s statements below display the concept of empathy for the principal like other participants ascribed to their students. “And it appears that everything wrong is on them and everything right goes up the chain from them. They're very limited in their ability to make a meaningful positive change” (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017). They expressed admiration for their site principals and empathized with their plight. “My principal, who I love” (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017). Ralph expressed his understanding of the pressure to hold such a position and respect for his principal’s dedication.

There's more pressure for principals to follow than there is for principals to lead. I think that principals are put in a horrible situation of being middle managers

where they're there to take the blame; they're there to become a cushion. (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017)

High expectations for site administrators influenced teachers' level of trust and respect. Ralph noted the balance necessary for principals to earn trust from teachers. "What they're there to do is implement the change that somebody else has decided, in my opinion" (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017). He empathized with the difficult charge of his site principal.

Kevin (Kevin, personal communication, April 11, 2017) offered praise for his principal. He described her efforts to improve parent involvement at their elementary school. "We offer free food, and our principal, I think, has done a really good job of that" (Kevin, personal communication, April 11, 2017). A foundation of strong relations in and beyond the school site was a desired expectation for each participant. Intellectual discourse revealed to teachers' their subconscious desires to work collaboratively and engage at deeper levels of the educational system.

Teachers were reminded of lost efficacy based on their intent to help students succeed amid complex contexts. Furthermore, they acknowledged ignored sources of efficacy revealed through conversations about trust and relationships in and around schools. Participants identified their successes beyond academic achievement to revitalize efficacy once diminished by year of testing, reporting, and administrative directives. Realizations and acknowledgements examined in the dialogical space of our conversations induced teachers to examine sources of frustration and culpability. More importantly, our time together opened a space where teachers were comfortable enough to reveal their perceptions of education's deficits.

Catharsis

After recovering a once lost sense of efficacy, participants more readily expressed emotions. The trajectory of our conversations shifted. They exposed indignant frustration and anger. Our discourse transitioned from humble acceptance of self-worth to expressions of catharsis. Participants revealed their perceptions of oppressive hierarchies that exist in public education. They shared as if to release unexpressed emotions. Corey (personal communication, May 1, 2017), in particular directed his frustration at school leaders. He emphasized the relevance and importance of teacher leadership and voice. Throughout our conversation he recognized the continual shift away from collaborative work between teachers and administrators. “It's leadership at every level. But leadership, immediate leadership, where somebody says, ‘What do you think about that?’ Instead of, ‘Here's what you think.’” (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). He identified the new norm of directives coming from school administrators.

This section highlights the importance of the act of catharsis for teachers. Participants were hesitant to point fingers and appoint blame. Nevertheless, teachers came to recognize they were no longer being asked, rather being told. Following recognition of their own efficacy, participants transitioned into a space where they needed to express blame for educational challenges. However, the act of catharsis was followed by a sense of calm that paved the way for action.

Teachers claimed effective leadership was necessary to reveal greatness in classrooms. Our conversations revealed a lost sense of efficacy, but also exposed teachers' desire and belief in the influence of administrative leadership. They equated

leadership to collaboration. Cole appeared indignant because of the lack engagement by his site administrator. “I’ve got so much, a wealth of stuff that’s user friendly, that kids can use. Never once have I had a [supervisor] come and ask me for it” (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017). His statement highlighted his belief that deeper engagement by all stakeholders would improve the entire organization. The act of catharsis was highlighted by specific naming conventions that helped teachers locate their frustrations and implicate others in the educational system. However, the naming and blaming addressed below acted as a necessary transition for teachers to recognize their potential in the new hierarchy initiated by LCAP and our intellectual dialogical space.

Naming the “Uppers”

Naming conventions for supervisors were revealed as relevant indicators of respect and trust. The use of naming conventions perpetuated teachers’ need to release emotions. Teachers continued to conceptualize their place within the hierarchy of education by delineating the terms administrator and principal. Supervisors who were perceived as authoritarian, unqualified, or disconnected from the teaching role were referred to as administrators. However, teachers used the term principal as a sign of respect. Teachers described how they named and then blamed educational administrators for perpetuating their marginalization. Principals were named as colleagues and leaders; administrators earned their label based on incidents of audacity and inaccessibility.

Each supervisor’s label was dependent on each teacher’s relationship and respect for that individual. Susan is a middle school teacher who continued to express frustration about discipline issues at her school. Susan, like the other middle school participants eagerly discussed student discipline. They affirmed respect was built on administrative

decision-making. Teachers expected disciplinary consequences for defiant and disruptive students. Judy explained that most teachers dismissed their site administrator as being too friendly.

I think our new administrator felt that we were too rigid with some of our expectations. I believe in second chances for kids, but third, or fourth, or fifth, or sixth, or seventh. Being up in the office is not a bad thing. She was not an effective disciplinary. I think she wants to be everyone's friend. (Judy, personal communication, April 5, 2017)

If consequences were not assigned to students who were sent out of class by a teacher, other teachers determined this a lack of support.

Susan made connections between the principal and the front office staff. "It was really weird" (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). She continued to refer to the office staff as "admin." "We were caught in the middle because admin would say one thing and the teachers would say something else" (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). Collectively, her colleagues expressed discontent because they believed their voices were not being heard. "The teachers have such a negative feeling towards our administration" (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). Susan used the term "principal" three times throughout the sixty-six minute interview. One of those incidents described her anticipation of positive change with a new vice principal. "The second year we also had the new vice principal, we really were hopeful" (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). She referred to "admin" and the administration twenty-seven times.

As a former elementary school teacher, Judy understood the importance of her classroom set up. Her word choice reflected feelings about site and district mandates to construct a focus wall in every classroom of the school. She explained her disbelief when she was told what and where items should be placed on her elementary school classroom walls. “You have to have your this, you have to have your that. It was dictated by administration” (Judy, personal communication, April 5, 2017). She explained how her supervisor “dictated” how her classroom must be decorated. Both Susan and Judy referred to their supervisors as “administrator”. Negative connotations of school administrators were clearly expressed in terms, tone, and demeanor during each conversation.

In addition to “admin” and principal, interview participants referred to supervisors with reproachful terms when they disapproved of their tactics. Teachers appeared frustrated by interactions with those far removed from the classroom and the school site. They expressed a decreased level of trust in administrators who no longer worked at school sites or directly with school personnel. Teachers described the differences between relationships at their schools and those with district office officials. Corey referred to district officials as, “admin out of touch” (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017)). They referred to decision makers as “uppers”, “powers that be”, and “big administrators”. Elizabeth explained her disappointment after guests observed her during a lesson.

Students and colleagues I'm around every day, so there is a relationship built.

There's trust, there's respect, understanding of one another, versus the people who just breeze in and breeze out. It feels more of that boss-and-worker mentality that

goes on. When I see people from the district office I guess that's it, the uppers...and of course there's never any feedback. (Elizabeth, personal communication, April 12, 2017)

She expected feedback. Her experience with the “uppers” was exacerbated by their absence of a response. She expressed her discontent by naming district officials “uppers” in reference to their higher position within the district hierarchy.

Cole is an elementary school teacher who expressed his belief that administrative decisions were one sided. He described his understanding that educational officials were required to obtain input to meet LCAP requirements. However, he shared his doubts that teacher input influenced larger decisions.

What I see is, the powers that be, the big administrators have to go out of their way to get some parental input, teacher input, staff input, community input. They go out and check the box off. I don't know if it's a two-way communication going on. (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017)

Elizabeth and Cole described the “uppers” and “the powers that be” as those who are far removed from classrooms but meet their obligation to address legislative requirements (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017; Elizabeth, personal communication, April 12, 2017). The statements above expound on teachers’ feelings of marginalization from larger educational decisions.

Poor personal relations and demonstrative hierarchical posturing exacerbated participants’ disrespect for administrators. Participants acknowledged poor relations between teachers and administrators. Judy explained a strained relationship with her principal.

Our main administrator, I think, does not think very highly of me. Yeah, it's pretty clear. She's very sarcastic and condescending. That hurts me because I'm a perfectionist. I take pride in what I do and I love my job. I love teaching. When you have your boss who thinks that of you or I think she thinks that of me, it's hurtful. I don't really think she has reason to. I think she was pissed because her face wasn't in the video that we showed the kids every year. (Judy, personal communication, April 5, 2017)

The absence of cordial relations was heightened by experiences with disciplinary measures. Esther recalled incidents of reprimand following conversations between teachers. She assumed teachers at her school were afraid to carry on conversations in the halls for fear someone may misconstrue the message and report it to the principal. "Then sure enough the next thing we knew is somebody was being reprimanded by admin who were talking about it" (Esther, personal communication, April 23, 2017). She explained that teachers spent more time alone in their classrooms. "I think inside the classroom they might feel that way, but as soon as they walk out of the classroom or go to a staff meeting or anything like that, they're like, 'Yeah, I guess I'm down at the bottom' (Esther, personal communication, April 23, 2017). Negative social interactions resulted in lower levels of professional trust.

The use of the term administrator helped teachers delineate levels of respect. "For decoration, admin will ask the staff and create committees. That's really a whole lot of baloney. Admin makes all the decisions, sometimes without thought or common sense" (Melissa, survey, April 12, 2017). Melissa was directed to follow the prescribed curriculum to ensure high student test scores. She referred to a note she hung near her

desk to remind her of her disgust for the lack of coherent leadership. “Every time I start to decide that I'm not gonna be pissed anymore, I look at that and I go ‘Ugh.’ ‘Adhered to and implemented with fidelity’” (Melissa, personal communication, April 14, 2017). She noted that moment solidified her belief that her voice was not valid. By naming their supervisors, teachers expressed their disappointment and feelings of a growing distance from educational decisions. Therefore, they blamed others and removed themselves as scapegoats from the failings of the education system.

Blaming the “Uppers”

Deeper reflection before and during our conversations induced participants to articulate distrust for administrators and their decision-making abilities. Esther recalled how district administrators set student scheduling policy based on test scores. She explained how students were told they must earn a minimum score on state tests to be allowed to select elective courses like music or art. “The kids are still just as scared. But I think that it's admin putting stress on the kids, because they'll say, ‘If you don't do well, you won't get in this elective.’ Then kids freak out” (Esther, personal communication, April 23, 2017). She blamed administrators for placing avoidable stress on students and explained how such decision-making influenced teacher behaviors.

Teachers expressed their beliefs that some administrators had low capacity to manage amid diverse contexts. As a special education teacher at an elementary school, Alice remarked on the lack of knowledge possessed by her principal. She noted the need for support from knowledgeable administrators who know special education laws and curriculum. “They should be in the classroom but they have no idea what I'm doing” (Alice, personal communication, April 13, 2017). She asserted her site principal had no

knowledge or experience with special education. Furthermore, she placed blame fell on the district's personnel office for hiring individuals incapable of specialized teacher support. Others identified factors that explained the divide between teachers and administrators.

Out of the Classroom. Participants blamed physical and chronological distance from the classroom as a relevant factor in determining the level of an administrator's knowledge and skill. Judy voiced frustration caused by the lack of local knowledge and inconsistent commands. "Somebody dictating every day how I need to teach the kids and somebody telling me, 'Well, they need to be here,' when they don't even know my kids or their capacity" (Judy, personal communication, April 5, 2017). Judy explained that her principal did not visit her classroom, so could not understand her students' capacity. She claimed supervisors at the school and district level were unaware of the circumstances or needs of her students. Teachers claimed limited teaching experience and time away from the classroom, precluded administrators' abilities to comprehend complex classroom matters. "I can think of one time and it's that meeting where I made a suggestion about something that seemed like everybody understood what I was saying except for admin" (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). They blamed ineffective leadership on inexperience.

Teachers appeared frustrated by interactions with supervisors who no longer work at school sites. Steven expressed his disrespect for administrators who completed the required minimum five years of teaching experience necessary before becoming a school administrator (California Education Code § 44270, 44270.5, 2017). He described those individuals as "climbers" and their decision making as "Schizophrenic leadership"

(Steven, personal communication, April 14, 2017). He equated their short teaching tenure to poor decision-making. During our conversation, he described how district officials often reversed decisions made by school site principals. He expressed frustration about the lack of clarity and consistency that comes with working for a “climber”. “And there are people who have admin credentials who are trying to climb the ladder of public education, become administrators, so they would do what anybody told them to do” (Steven, personal communication, April 14, 2017). He described a decision that was reversed after a district official visited his classroom. Steven explained to his principal his intent to modify the district-approved curriculum. Following the classroom observation by district officials, he and his colleagues were told they were to present the material as it was delivered. Perceptions of administrator’s inexperience were aggravated by episodes of disrespect.

Trust. Teachers blamed the communication gap between administrators and teachers on a perceived lack of trust. “Things would happen and there was a lot of distrust. I think administration kind of did that” (Judy, personal communication, April 5, 2017). They indicated a sense of disrespect because larger organizational decisions were made without their knowledge and input. “When they hire new administrators, they don't even send us an email” (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017). Cole was offended when district officials he had not met periodically visited his classroom. He assumed he would be informed of the addition of a new colleague. As Susan mentioned above, Cole also assumed professional feedback would build relationships and inform his teaching. However, concerns over poor communication were overshadowed by opinions that supervisors were pursuing personal goals.

Corey recognized supervisors were capable of further influencing teacher efficacy beyond testing and reporting. He blamed administrators for “pushing their own agenda” (Corey, survey, April 7, 2017). However, participants were split when placing blame. Esther indicated her doubts about the source of directives in her district. “Again, I don't know if that's the admin itself or from the district fed down” (Esther, personal communication, April 23, 2017). Four (all middle school teachers) of the thirteen teachers identified the central office, not their site principal as the reason for the power struggle between teachers and administrators. “Like I said the family feel; I think it's that they do listen to the teachers as much as they can, but they have to listen to the district and make that balance” (Alice, personal communication, April 13, 2017). Cole blamed the lack of trust on poor relations between schools and the central office.

I just see a huge detachment. And, I don't think that's because of LCAP, or anything. There's such a detachment between the sites and the district office. Anything you do is kind of hollow, because it's a one-way thing. (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017)

Teachers expected reciprocal relationships. Judy admitted to expanding the gap between her and administrators. “I've kind of kept my distance from admin in the last several years” (Judy, personal communication, April 5, 2017). Melissa noted that the Common Core State Standards promoted teacher input, similar to the LCAP. “And in the Common Core, there's like five or six spots where it defers back to the classroom teacher. We weren't given any of that” (Melissa, personal communication, April 14, 2017). However, administrator directives to follow predesigned curriculums superseded that work.

Cathartic release reminded participants of the impact of strained relationships. However, discourse provided opportunities to reflect on their past behaviors in schools. Teachers required the space and time to reflect on their work and recognize the efficacy of their accomplishments (Bandura, 1977). Recognition of some efficacy followed by the relief of catharsis, helped teachers recognize they exercised agency more than they realized. Again, the implementation of LCAP did not instigate change; it opened teachers' eyes to a previously disguised ontology and their role in the milieu.

Acceptance. Teachers expressed resolve to work with administrators. However, they emphasized their desire to work with effective leaders. Initially, teachers' admitted they ultimately deferred to policy-makers, administrators, and principals as sole decision makers in schools. "School climate is the outward procedures and practices that the principal deems important to a school" (Keith, survey, April 13, 2017). Participants realized they had accepted their place in the educational hierarchy. They expressed frustration about mistreatment, but claimed to accept the principal as boss. "I think it's still up to the actual site, and the people's attitude, with the principal down to the teachers" (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017). Cole and others recognized and articulated the fact that the principal was the instigator of action or the lack thereof. As our conversations progressed, so did teachers' ability and willingness to identify their marginalized state.

Teachers affirmed their place within the educational hierarchy with an indignant acceptance and hesitation to embrace a stronger leadership role. Cole described his understanding of a transition from teacher as practitioner to mere technician who delivers curriculum in the classroom. "And, yeah, it's gotten worse. I think it's taken a lot of

control from the teachers, a lot of empowerment. I'm the middleman. This is what they want you to do" (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017). A cycle had developed from my initial invitation to participate, through survey responses, and culminated in the cathartic responses elicited during the interviews. "How can you have local control, when they're not listening to what you say" (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017). Participants became more specific about incidents of oppression.

Teachers developed an empirical understanding of the educational hierarchy. Cole described his belief that the "trickle down" effect of principal's behavior is only one element of the development of a school's culture.

It is formulated by the principal. It's like the old Reaganomics; trickle down Economics. Whatever vibe that principal gives off; an attitude. It tends to be what the staff takes on. And it becomes that culture, and it trickles on down to the kids, and onto their parents. (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017)

He accepted the principal's role at the school site. However, he also described optimism in the ability of their principal to truly lead.

Participants admitted hopeful acceptance of the hierarchy at the school site. "It depends on the principal, I think. Depends on the admin" (Elizabeth, personal communication, April 12, 2017). She deferred school wide policy decisions to the principal. However, participants continued to refer back to their less tolerant acceptance of the hierarchy that defined their role. Their responses referenced an indignant reality where they understood their place but envisioned a different way serve. "If you're picking principals or administrators, then you better be confident that they can go and run a school" (George, personal communication, May 10, 2017). The tone of our discourse

took a more demonstrative turn. “And so he said we did our best, but we had to follow the guidelines that were given to us” (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017). Teachers anticipated direction from the principal. Their statements revealed an acceptance of the site principal as director, decision maker, and the individual who sets the tone at school.

Participants acknowledged students and parents have high expectations for teachers. Subsequently, teachers have similar expectations for principals. They anticipated high levels of leadership ability and discourse from those at the top of the hierarchy. “We had three different admin and they’ve handled everything so differently. I think that’s where teachers are frustrated” (Alice, personal communication, April 13, 2017). They expressed frustration and contemplated long-term effects of ineffectual leadership in schools. “You can be knowledgeable, but not have good leadership skills” (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017). Innate respect for authority figures was evident until incidents forced teachers to question the intent and capacity of their supervisors.

Throughout the data collection process participants deliberated on the power struggle between teachers and supervisors. Beginning with their survey responses and throughout our conversations, teachers revealed their feelings with more vigor. Statements below reflect their catharsis emphasized by deep reflection and discourse. Responses focused on administrative directives to follow prescribed curriculum plans more than the emotional toll levied by testing and reporting. More specifically, veteran teachers shifted blame from testing and reporting to poor communication.

Feeling Uninformed

It is important to acknowledge early that this study's participants were ultimately uninformed about the implications of California's adoption of LCAP. They admitted no awareness of the new requirement to initiate and monitor parent engagement. While all thirteen participants acknowledged the implementation of LCAP in California, none acknowledged the fact that schools would be evaluated based on parent engagement. In the next section, I acknowledge how parents were also uninformed about the new legislation. Teachers were aware of the legislation, but were not informed of the ramifications. Keith (personal communication, April 27, 2017) affirmed he was aware of the inclusion of nonacademic measures. However, he was unaware of how it would influence his position. "The funding is not just based on the end of the year tests, now it's based on these things, get ready, and that's all I heard?" (Keith, personal communication, April 27, 2017).

When asked if he believed teachers and parents were aware of the requirements of LCAP Corey responded with an emphatic, "Hell no!" (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). Corey's responses showcased veiled emotions about compliance. Esther admitted the survey was a good start but questioned its relevance. She expected more participation from administrators. "I don't really see change yet. I think that the people higher up need to be in the classroom more, see what's going on versus just making decisions based on what they want, or how to make money, or how to get higher scores" (Esther, personal communication, April 23, 2017). Teachers questioned the validity of their input. After they learned LCAP required stakeholder input, teachers expressed disbelief that supervisors would respond to critical feedback.

As our conversation progressed, Susan, a veteran teacher of fifteen years, recalled a survey as part of the LCAP requirement to obtain feedback from parents and teachers. She doubted the survey questions were relevant or would impact administrator decision-making. “Are the questions even written in a way that are going to give us good data” (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017)? She compared the parent survey to the teacher survey she completed earlier in the year. “I’m not sure on what end of the spectrum the parents would answer it or how much knowledge the parents would have” (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). Susan admitted she received no information about LCAP or the survey and assumed parents were in the same position. Judy offered a similar perspective. “Is the message really getting out to parents to take that survey. Do they even know how to answer those questions on there” (Judy, personal communication, April 5, 2017)? Teacher responses revealed their belief that both teachers and parents were uninformed about LCAP requirements to obtain input about the educational program or simply not interested.

Implicating Parents. Blame shifted from administrators to parents during our conversations. Teachers assumed parents were uninformed or simply not interested enough to engage with the school. Elizabeth was not surprised by her school’s low survey completion rates. “The parent part, you’re going to have low numbers” (Elizabeth, personal communication, April 12, 2017). She challenged their lack of information by questioning their level of concern. “I’ve yet to have any interaction with parents about it. We probably push it at them more than they care” (Elizabeth, personal communication, April 12, 2017). Elizabeth, like Susan and Keith, seemed to accept the

dearth of parent participation and acknowledged the fact that teaching and learning was the responsibility of the teacher.

Participants reflected on their beliefs that parents placed the onus of education solely upon teachers. They revealed concerns about parent engagement. However, their unease about misinformation was overshadowed by their belief that parents were detached from the work of the local school. “Support from parents? There's no support” (Keith, personal communication, April 27, 2017). Such comments revealed teachers’ frustration over the nonexistence of parent involvement.

Only one teacher appeared empathetic about the lack of parent presence at his school. Elementary school teacher, Kevin noted the realities facing parents at his school. He excused parents who might be overwhelmed by work or who simply do not know how to engage the educational system.

As far as the parent participation at school, I think it's unfair because I worked for a low social economic school where a lot of times both parents are working, or the other parent does not have transportation or whatever, so it's hard to get participation. (Kevin, personal communication, April 11, 2017)

He noted the need to be creative in order to help his students’ parents get more involved. “I'm challenged to wonder how are we going to increase that rate if parents have to survive” (Kevin, personal communication, April 11, 2017)? However, he echoed the sentiments of other participants by assuming parents simply trust teachers to educate their child. “Secondly, there are some parents who don't want anything to do with it. They think school is our job, no matter how much we try to invite them in” (Kevin, personal communication, April 11, 2017). His empathy was overshadowed by his frustration.

The opportunity to reflect on parent support helped participants identify sources of disappointment. Teachers blamed social norms for distracting parents from their responsibilities. Cole and Keith assumed the rapid increase in smart phone use exacerbated the problem. “Most of our parents are so checked out, that they don't even notice how bad it is. It's more of them glued to their phones” (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017). “It was like, they're always on their phone. How disgusting? I know you get used to it. I think I get that, but put it down, especially with your children around” (Keith, personal communication, April 27, 2017). They relayed stories they heard from their students and personal experience to shape their views of disengaged parents in general.

Eight of the thirteen participants blamed absent parents for placing considerable responsibility on teachers alone. “Maybe to a degree, maybe with some kids. It just depends. It's hard when you don't have parental support and parental buy-in. (Elizabeth, personal communication, April 12, 2017). As a middle school teacher, Elizabeth noted the difficulty of keeping her students motivated and engaged without parental support. Also a middle school teacher, Susan expressed her feelings of personal accountability for student progress in the absence of parental support. She claimed a sense of isolation due to the lack of parent engagement, involvement, and support within the educational process.

I don't get a lot of parent support at home. I don't know if that's just today's day and age, and what's happening. I feel like the students are kind of running the show a little bit more at home and at school. I just have to realize what I can control and what I can't control. (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017)

Susan recalled the response when she attempted outreach.

As far as relationship with the parents, I don't feel a lot of support. When I do contact parents, whether it's behavior or grades are slipping, my general feeling over the years is that I don't get a lot of parent support at home. (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017)

Respondents appeared to accept the responsibility for a child's progress as solely their own.

The absence of parental involvement in their child's education fueled teachers' assumptions about the local community. Teachers passed judgment on parents who failed to attend school events or provide academic and emotional support at home. Steven appeared indignant after hearing complaints from parents who were otherwise not involved. Our conversation appeared cathartic for Steven. He recounted an incident when a parent called to complain about their child's grade, yet they failed to respond to multiple emails and attend back to school night at the school. "They need to feel that they can do their best teaching without harassment from parents and administrators" (Steven, personal communication, April 14, 2017). After failing to receive sufficient support from parents, Steven accepted the role of educational advocate after the parent failed to engage with his pleas for support. Catharsis revealed acceptance. They blamed parents for a lack of parental support but notably accepted responsibility for acting as advocate for their students.

Filling the Void. Our conversations helped teachers recognize their compulsion to fill the void left by inattentive parents. They admitted to serving above and beyond the primary role of teaching in the classroom. Cathartic explanations revealed a willingness

to serve multiple roles across the educational ecology. However, participants displayed the need to express frustration before they were able to accept their plight as reality. Our conversations helped them traverse from an indignant position to one of empowerment. Corey claimed to want more parent support but was dissuaded by experience. Nonetheless, he recognized the power of advocacy regardless of who filled the role.

I would like to see the parents here a lot more. That's the power, that's the power man. Parents are not involved and no matter what anybody has tried, it still is that lack of involvement. Because they still see this as a babysitting place. (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017)

However, he appeared hopeful. “They don't have enough input and they don't realize what they're power is (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). Corey admitted the potential of parental support, but emphasized his belief in the abilities of teachers filling such complex roles.

Corey's statements suggest the teacher is the catalyst for childhood development. “Wow. It is very broad. Well, we have to be that focal point in all of their lives; someone that they trust” (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). He recognized his role beyond teaching. His admission of this dynamic elevated his perceived role in society. Corey, like the other teachers cited in this section, inadvertently placed themselves into a self-appointed role of caretaker and decision-maker for their students. “Everybody in my mind should go into and have a counseling degree” (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). Teachers expressed a sense of release after acknowledging their willingness to fill the void.

Teachers' exclamations of indignant isolation gave way to an understanding of their role as surrogate caregiver. Steven explained his belief in the need to work in collaboration with parents. "Teachers who are not supported by these stakeholders will not be able to do their best work" (Steven, survey, April 12, 2017). He believed a parent figure was necessary regardless of the context. Susan explained how teachers filled the void. "They become like a counselor, a parent, and a teacher all in one. Sometimes, the teachers are with the kids, especially in elementary school, the teachers are with the kids more than the parents" (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). As our conversations progressed, participants embraced the role of caretaker. They quickly placed blame then accepted the responsibility to fill in as needed. "A lot of times they are not involved, so I feel that ... I'm not saying that I take on a parent role either, but I'm their advocate" (Alice, personal communication, April 13, 2017). Discourse revealed their willingness to protest and accept their dual role. "I think in America, for the teachers, they have a large role in kind of helping shape the kids" (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). Again, catharsis provided a space for acknowledgment.

Elizabeth (Elizabeth, personal communication, April 12, 2017) expressed an understanding of the need to take on the increasingly complex role of teacher. However, she admitted how difficult it had become.

I think the role of teachers is to be an educator. There are these things that students need to be taught, but then there's the role model; somebody that you can connect with or look up to. It's kind of a two-part thing; what kids can get from a teacher. But, there are a lot of families who expect the teachers to do it all. At some point, we are only there to educate and of course build relationships, but to

expect teachers to do everything else and teach manners and all of that is hard too.

(Elizabeth, personal communication, April 12, 2017)

She highlighted the pressure she felt to support her students socially and emotionally in addition to academically.

The implementation of LCAP introduced parent engagement as a requirement in public schools, but failed to address the impact placed on teachers. After admitting to the difficulties facing students when parents do not get involved, participants revealed the need to protect and support students' navigation of school and society. As advocates for students, teachers anticipated their role would include collaboration with administrators. However, teachers' years of service determined their willingness to address their concerns.

Empowered by Tenure

There proved to be a strong relationship between years of service, age, and a willingness to recognize the need for change. Veteran teachers responded with stronger language and more aggressive suggestions for change.

Ralph and Corey were the two oldest participants and the most willing to share their frustrations. At fifty-five years old, Ralph suggested he felt a sense of security in his position to such a degree that he could implicate his boss. He recognized a newfound willingness to confront his principal. He subtly suggested his supervisor might eventually learn about his frustration and lack of trust. "I gave you the real answer from my perspective, because I didn't feel that there was anything that might mitigate what might happen to me if something happened here" (Ralph, personal communication, April

22, 2017). Each participant admitted their eagerness to share their thoughts in the safe space of our conversation.

The pace of our conversations became more rapid as participants appeared relieved to be candid. “Okay, can I be honest with you?” (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017). At the age of sixty-one, Corey admitted his attempts to regain control over his educational program. “Well, you know, when I know that someone's coming in or when I see someone coming in, I change my line. I change my line” (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). Corey confessed he had learned how to avoid conflict by showing supervisors what they want to see. Rather than wait for corrections, he made adjustments to his verbiage when administrators visited his room.

It became evident veteran teachers shared their feelings with more voracity than those in the midst of their career. Decades of service helped veteran teachers identify the center of their frustrations. A seventeen year veteran educator, Keith recounted a conversation he had with the site principal. “You have total control. I'm not going to go against you, unless I have to. You're doing something I just completely disagree with, then I'm going to back off, because I know you're going to throw this in front of me at any point in time” (Keith, personal communication, April 27, 2017). He admitted his place as a subordinate and made it clear that his service had limits. His statements rejuvenated a sense of efficacy exposed amid catharsis.

“Conditioning Teachers to Become Followers”

Participants recognized the increasing complexity of their role. However, discourse reminded them of the limits of their involvement. Interview data revealed a perceived lack of forward progress toward a more collaborative culture in education.

They expressed concern over increased responsibility with decreased participation. “It's like a go-kart, man, where's it only allowed to go five miles an hour” (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). Corey and Ralph expressed frustration about their lack of autonomy. Teachers acknowledged their removal from the conversation. Ralph believed administrators were strategically removing teachers from planning across the educational hierarchy by “conditioning teachers to become followers” (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017). He expressed his dismay after succumbing to administrative directives.

“The Hero or the Goat”. Teachers admitted emotional unrest based on real and perceived judgment and treatment by supervisors. Ralph relayed the determination of his site administrators to outperform other schools by reporting higher test scores. The message he heard from his principal was, “winning is not the most important thing; it's the only thing” (Ralph, survey, April 7, 2017). He recounted the pressure to raise test scores. “Students and staff are pressed so hard that students and staff get sick and miss school from the pressure” (Ralph, survey, April 7, 2017). Ralph emphasized his belief in the duplicity of success and failure in the eyes of school administrators. “You will either be the hero or the goat at some point” (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017). Heroes were teachers who helped students achieve high test scores. The “goat” was the teacher whose students posted low or declining test scores for the school or district. His statements indicated an assumption that those who perform under expectations would be criticized and intimidated into compliance. Ralph explained how administrators judged teachers at his school based on test scores and student performance.

There are two echelons of those people who feel like they're leaders and are lauded as leaders, and those who feel like, 'I just need to get through'. Teacher B just wants to get through. She just wants to survive. (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017)

Throughout our time together, Ralph was reluctant to use names. He appeared conflicted by the treatment of his colleagues.

Ralph (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017) recalled how administrators created adversarial situations amongst their staffs. He shared an incident when student test scores were presented by teacher name for the staff to review collectively. Teachers with high scores were expected to share strategies with those whose students earned low scores. The meeting was designed to provide support. Rather, peers placed teachers in the arena of judgment. Ralph recalled his experience with this attempt to increase test scores. He called it, "humiliation by public shame" (Ralph, survey, April 7, 2017).

Teachers grew tired of simply delivering the prescribed curriculum and accepting student failure as their own. Ralph acknowledged the impact on teachers of the posting of student test scores.

So every single teacher looked at this and this is the exact thing that most teachers said. I'd say 75% of the teachers said, 'Oh, that's a good teacher. Oh, that teacher sucks. Oh, look at that good teacher. Oh, that teacher sucks.' (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017)

He found that student performance was used to position teachers against each other.

During our conversation Ralph empathized with colleagues following incidents of

disrespect. Not until participants recalled engaging administrators under accusatory circumstances did they comprehend their station within the hierarchy.

Speaking Up. Teachers also detailed their reluctance to confront administrators about school climate. Middle school teacher, Susan shared her concerns and recommendations with the principal during a team meeting. Her statements below reflect her intent to challenge reprimands with pointed discourse.

This is the first school year where I kind of finally said, ‘you know what? It is what it is and what's the worst that can happen? They're not going to fire me for saying what I think.’ My words were, ‘If you want us to do it, we need to see you do it, too.’ It felt really good to just kind of say it. (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017)

She expressed her initial fear and ultimate resolve to speak up. However, she admitted the fear was widespread and difficult for her to get others to join her.

Let the district know what's going on and how unhappy you are, but you have to be okay attaching your name to it. I don't think anybody was okay attaching their name to it. The big thing is, is when we did speak up, it's a feeling like you got your hands slapped. Feeling punished for speaking up. I had to grow a thick skin and finally start speaking up a little a bit more. (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017)

She expressed the catharsis connected with her resolve, but recognized reluctance from her colleagues.

Teachers’ expressed feelings about their indignant willingness to follow orders. Reflecting on personal experiences forced teachers to acknowledge their place as the

other within the educational hierarchy. Corey's choice of words emphasized his growing disgust.

I'm like the drunk mute at the end of the bar, you know, signing with my hands.

So it's really hard, and it has been for 35 years. It has been an interesting and difficult road because of this right here. Of these limitations that get put on and

I've seen it. I've seen it on me. (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017)

Corey became emotional after describing his feelings about being placated in front of the staff. He did not feel heard; his voice was silenced. He expressed his belief that he was dismissed.

Corey (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017) expressed his distaste of the eroding participation and quiet voice of teachers at the hand of educational managers. He reiterated the absence of teachers' ability to develop and present a curriculum they deemed most effective for their students. Rather, he indicated directives to receive and deliver a packaged program designed by those far removed from the context of his classroom. He explained how teachers were expected to deliver predesigned lessons. "No, it's because you're shoving shit down their throat and they're either going to have to eat it or get out. I've seen too much of that" (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). Rather than engaging with teachers as professionals, administrators demanded a prescribed curriculum. "Just kills me, you know. I said it in the last meeting, I go, 'Can you stop, just for a minute, and talk to us like we're adults and not kids.' I'm getting ticked" (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). He was convinced the ultimate goal of raising test scores remained the focus of administrators while teachers sought equanimity to better serve their students.

Teachers voiced their disbelief that their attempts to join the conversation about teaching and learning were dismissed and met with disrespect. Cole reiterated Corey's thoughts on the slow erosion of teacher agency. "Teachers are lap dogs. And, yeah, it's gotten worse. So, I think it's taken a lot of control from the teachers, a lot of empowerment, to where teachers just become lap dogs" (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017). Catharsis revealed teachers' reluctant acceptance of their station.

Classroom visits by administrators were seen as compliance checks rather than data collection to inform professional development and share best instructional practices. "Five district administrators came and did rounds, stood in the back with their arms crossed. And they attempted to intimidate us. That was a bullying maneuver" (Melissa, personal communication, April 14, 2017). Teachers in this study expressed disbelief that the collaborative culture of which education espoused was nothing more than an oppressive hierarchy of command and control. However, as our conversations progressed, each teacher acknowledged the increasing complexity of his or her role and the potential of their engagement.

Identification of their accomplishments and the opportunity to express blame for educational inadequacies opened a space for teachers to come full circle with their reflection and dialogue. Participants came to a place where they could express next steps. Their reflection revealed values and a moral imperative to recapture an active role that was diluted by years of "institutional machinery" (Fullan, 2003; Mahen, 1992, p. 12)

Agency

Catharsis helped reveal teachers' often-underestimated actions taken to exercise agency. Nine of the thirteen participants recalled incidents of risk taking and independent

decision-making. Their statements described a cycle moving from acknowledgement and complaints to anger and action. Throughout each conversation, participants articulated their capacity to influence student progress, expressed the need to identify their oppressors, and recognized their potential to act within the educational ecology.

Aspiring to a New Role

This section presents a third stage of an inductive cycle explaining how teachers acted on their values and beliefs. Their insights were based on interpretations of actions and inactions of their supervisors and themselves. Discourse revealed the impact of actions and inactions on teacher efficacy and agency over the years of their service.

The Impact of Action and Inaction. Recall, participants in this study confirmed they worked in a public school for a minimum of seven years. Perceptions of diminished efficacy resulted in episodes of lost agency. However, teachers recalled opportunities to act beyond their perceived station within the hierarchy. A veteran teacher of twenty-eight years, Melissa, recognized her inaction. She shared her feelings about novice teachers being selected to work on curriculum writing committees while she and other veterans were overlooked for the task (Melissa, personal communication, April 14, 2017).

I wanted to quit. I wanted to quit. If I was younger and didn't have a mortgage, I would've quit. I didn't want to be a teacher anymore. It was a really low point.

And to have teachers who have one-third the experience I do, just because they wanted to be out of the classroom, writing curriculum.

Teachers described how they acted out publically and surreptitiously to do what they believed was best for their kids.

Participants travelled the cycle from rediscovering efficacy to catharsis, before recognizing even the smallest expressions of agency. Following cathartic rebukes, they revisited frustrating incidents that provoked action. Middle school participants recalled their responses to administrators' inaction. Teachers' complaints about a perceived absence of authoritarian presence on campus were directed at site administrators.

Susan recounted a perceived lack of support at her middle school. She described appeals to her principal for collaborative support with disciplinary issues with students. Teachers on Susan's grade level team were upset by reoccurring disruptive and defiant behavior by a group of students. She explained their reluctance to ask the principal to join them as a united front to reteach behavior expectations and follow through with consequences. "We haven't felt supported in the past, and so if you don't feel supported, you're not even going to go ask for help anymore" (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). They ultimately requested presence, but the support never transpired.

Susan (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017) encouraged colleagues to join her for what she believed appropriate actions. "We need to take a stand and do something. We're all finding similar experiences and saying, 'We've got to do something to take our school back.' We had to come up with a whole new plan" (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). She explained how her team developed a new strategy to improve student safety during lunch. The inaction of Susan's site administrator induced the collective action of teachers. However, she recalled how the episode further eroded teacher administrator relations.

Throughout our conversation, Corey (personal communication, May 1, 2017) condemned administrators. After thirty-five years as a public school educator, he

recommended teachers address their oppressive situation. “So, the answer, I really do believe the answer is get the corkscrew and pop the top” (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). He encouraged teachers to speak up and disrupt the cycle of marginalization and mediocrity perpetuated by their silence. “Right. Exactly. That's why it has to be a revolution at base, that's what it really has to be. It has to be a group of people that are vocal and considered heretic, you know” (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). His catharsis resulted in a call to action. Corey's veteran teaching status influenced our conversation and shaped his indignant responses to perceptions of an oppressive hierarchy in schools.

Statements below demonstrated teacher movement from compliance to action in their classrooms. Ralph recounted a colleague's attempts to provide the best Mathematics instruction in spite of managerial constraints. He explained how a colleague abruptly altered instruction during infrequent classroom visits by district administrators. “He taught the kids how to fake it. He taught the kids. He said okay, ‘this is what the common core is, everybody know how to do that? Okay, now let's learn the real math’” (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017). The teacher attempted to serve his students by appeasing his supervisors. Anecdotes revealed unassuming reversals of lessened teacher agency.

Ethics overshadowed pride when teachers divulged attempts to follow directives and meet student needs. Corey admitted to attempts to pacify administrators while maintaining an ethical commitment to his students.

I tell them the story about the sticks. You remember the damn sticks with the kid's name on it? I know this is horrible, but you know? So I made a bunch of

sticks that all had the same kid's name on it. So when somebody walks in the door, I would go 'Arianna, what do you think about that?' And you know, we're playing a game and that's what I hear a lot of teachers are doing. (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017)

He claimed to mollify supervisors by showing them what they wanted to see. Corey was convinced his strategy did little to impede student success. He took the time to emulate the strategy for display so he could more quickly return to the lesson of the day. Corey feigned compliance in lieu of the deprecating responses he expected from supervisors. His action was calculated, but an unassuming attempt to exercise agency in the name of student progress.

From Values Espoused to Values in Action

Conversations with teachers exposed an axiological gap between what teachers and administrators defined as the objective of a sound educational program. Teachers revealed their educational values by describing their intent to provide transformational experiences for students. Their espoused values were contradictory to their assumptions about the transactional work of their supervisors. Our conversations revealed the gap between their values and those of their supervisors.

Agency Engaged. Kevin emphasized his belief that teachers consistently presented the best instruction for their students. He admitted teachers often fail. However, he emphasized the importance of teacher agency in the classroom based on specific student needs.

I would say 80% of teachers really are going to do whatever that child needs to the best of their skill base. Sometimes they're not successful at helping a child

because their authoritarian model is not what that child needs, but that's what they know, so that's what they give them. (Kevin, personal communication, April 11, 2017)

His statement emphasized the importance of experimentation and patience based on professionalism and expertise. However, he recognized his work was not always deemed acceptable by supervisors.

Attempts to perform transformational work with students were frequently overturned by transactional expectations of administrative directives. Teachers succumbed to administrative orders after attempting to meet diverse students needs with alternative strategies. Over time, his willingness to experiment with new strategies faded. “If I spend hundreds of hours to perfect this stuff, will it be thrown out in a few years too? Will I be wasting my time again?” (Kevin, personal communication, April 11, 2017). He became exhausted by attempts to determine how to meet students’ needs beyond the prescribed curriculum. Kevin experimented with the most effective strategies for his students. “To force a kid to do something this way and this way and this way to prove mastery, I think, is not helpful. I think it's good to expose kids to every which way” (Kevin, personal communication, April 11, 2017). He admitted his disdain for fighting directives and management decisions that lacked flexibility and pragmatics in his classroom. However, he attempted to combat his assumptions that administrators equated poor student performance to poor teacher performance.

Teachers were required to comply by delivering predesigned lessons not design them. Ralph explained how student performance came to define teacher quality and

ultimately diminished their efficacy and agency. He described the impact of one teacher's failure to deliver the prescribed curriculum to the satisfaction of her supervisor.

She was just given a summary of what the other teachers had been given over a great period of time, and then told to employ it. And so, not knowing what to do, not understanding how to do it, she went back into her room and died time after time after time. She would start to employ something and they'd say oh no, this is wrong. And she'd start feeling like she was dying and she'd go to them and say can I have help and they'd say well try this. And then she'd try it without the proper training and support, she'd try that, and she died again and she continually died and each time. (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017)

His colleague's attempts to comply with guidelines were met with judgment and humiliation. She was forced to balance administrative directives with the needs of her students.

Values Revealed. Our conversations helped teachers evaluate their own educational values. Ralph noted his opposition to the values expressed by the actions of a district administrator. He assumed they shared similar ideals about the administrator role. He learned that his understanding of school safety was completely different than his supervisor.

My response was, and I believe this to the core of my being, well that's an easy one; kids and staff have to have a safe place. And from his satirical and sarcastic affect, he thought that was a bad answer. So, I felt that he didn't value that sort of thing. So, I wonder if that's truly a goal for our district. Test scores are obviously a goal. (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017)

Ralph recognized a gap between the values of teachers and administrators.

Through reflection and dialogue, Ralph expressed his understanding of differing values. “Oh a huge divide, gigantic divide” (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017). His voice rose during our conversation and his words became more direct. A deeper axiological divide was evident in Ralph’s words below.

This is a top down thing. It really is a top down thing. They didn't reach out to the entire constituency and say let's get everybody involved to become leaders.

There's this chasm or this divide that's continually growing between the motivation and intent of our central office and the motivation and intent of the men and women who are actually the line. (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017)

Ralph implicated district office staff at the top of the hierarchy and identify teachers as the “line” at the bottom. He explained how teachers were expected to navigate the directives in opposition of what they believed was the right work for their students.

Students First. Teachers were intent to do their best ethical work for students but found themselves caught between students and administrators; internally struggling with right and wrong. Susan expressed frustration based on inefficient and misdirected leadership. “The things that we maybe wanted to talk about, we didn't get a chance to talk about” (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). Feelings of oppression were exacerbated by feelings of inferiority. “It feels more of that boss-and-worker mentality that goes on” (Elizabeth, personal communication, April 12, 2017). Teachers acknowledged their plight as the oppressed before they activated their agency. It took time for participants to process. Eventually our conversations helped them make

connections between their values espoused and values in action. Recalling actions taken preceded consciousness of their values.

Ultimately, participants recognized their behaviors reflected their values. Corey and Keith expressed frustration and anger because their high expectations were not met. “Again, so you tell me, did this district take the interest of the student first? No, absolutely not” (Keith, personal communication, April 27, 2017). They based assumptions on their beliefs that educators did what was best, what was right. Keith described meeting the needs of every student as his “why”. By assuming to know why he works as a teacher, he claimed to know what is best for his students. He shared his belief that teachers who know the “why” are in the minority. However, he opined administrators fail to acknowledge the work of this minority.

There are some really good people that do not care about your prescribed curriculum. They're doing some amazing things with kids, because they know the why. It's always interesting the people that do know the why; they seem to always be the ones that are the outcasts. (Keith, personal communication, April 27, 2017)

He explained they felt like outcasts based on treatment by supervisors. Attempts to put students first were challenged. Keith questioned authority to provide educational equity for his students. “It was only one issue where I really felt like she was not putting the kids first, but in her mind, she was doing it the way she wanted to do it, and we had that battle” (Keith, personal communication, April 27, 2017). A battle of wills ensued that rose above students’ interests and resulted in teacher compliance. Keith went back to delivering prescribed curriculum as instructed.

Teachers shared their experiences with speaking up and questioning authority. Corey described his attempts to address the need for programs to meet the needs of all students.

That is rough, man. I said something about it one time and boy it got cold. It got real cold. Somebody told me that I obviously don't understand the whole bottom line. I said, 'Oh, I do.' I said, 'Maybe you don't. Maybe you don't.' Again, it got colder and I said, 'I'm going to go.' (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017)

He emphasized his belief that teachers were intent to meet the needs of all students despite curricular directives. In so doing, they revealed their understanding of how seriously marginalized their role had become.

Teachers' statements highlighted their exhausted attempts to exercise agency outside of their classrooms. "I was tired of fighting against the system, constantly" (Keith, personal communication, April 27, 2017). Attempts to engage with supervisors about their work for kids resulted in a deeper divide between supervisors and subordinates. Keith admitted that he had grown tired of the battle.

I just do throw up my hands and go, oh, well, too bad. This, I can't touch. I can't do anything about it. It's too big, it's too large, there's just no way. There's just too many people between me and the superintendent that will block, impede; all these people that'll impede changes, it's pointless. (Keith, personal communication, April 27, 2017)

Teachers began to articulate their belief that their administration dictated an educational agenda beyond the voice and input of their staff.

Attempts to serve their supervisors and promote student success resulted in diminished teacher efficacy and agency. However, discourse and reflection helped them recognize untapped potential following the implementation of LCAP. “No, there's very little teacher input. In fact, I think there's been less teacher input under LCAP” (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017). In response to a redefined sense of efficacy and attempts to challenge authority, teachers in this study recognized the need to act. “I wanted to go somewhere where I could have more of a say in what we're doing” (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). They reported the intellectual and physical energy necessary to engage with the increasing complexities of their role in schools.

Analyzing School Climate

The introduction of LCAP placed a new emphasis on school climate as a measure of school success. Participants defined his or her school's climate as a “feeling”. “School climate is the feeling; energy you receive and give when you step onto a school campus” (George, survey, April 27, 2017). Middle school teachers, George and Steven stated that comfort and safety are abstract but real conditions that are inescapable when a school has a positive school climate. They recognized the importance of collaboration to influence school climate. “School climate is the most important factor for student success. If teachers and students do not feel safe and comfortable they cannot focus on intellectual and academic pursuits” (Steven, survey, April 12, 2017). He suggested both students and teachers benefit from an affirmative climate as the foundation of a productive and strong academic environment.

Revelations about teacher efficacy and cathartic conversations about teacher voice and decision-making revealed a duality when we discussed school climate. Teachers

expressed their desire for autonomy, but agreed the school principal established and maintained a positive school climate. The introduction of school climate as a measure of school success induced teachers to reflect on their values about leadership and the realities of their role within the hierarchy.

“Leadership is Key”. Seven participants asserted the principal established school climate. As noted earlier, teachers accepted the principal as the unconditional manager of the school. “It depends on the principal; it was always admin” (Esther, personal communication, April 23, 2017). “Having a positive, fair, and involved principal can make all of the difference in creating a positive environment” (Judy, survey, March 29, 2017). “In my opinion one of the largest factors that affects school climate is the principal and the staff who models and reinforces a positive climate” (Susan, survey, April 6, 2017). Teachers noted their responsibility for perpetuating a climate, but affirmed it was to be initiated by the principal. They were forced to reflect on their responsibility as a follower and agent of school climate outside the classroom following their analysis and judgment of the site principal.

Participants emphasized the importance of the principal as the leader of a positive school climate. “Leadership is key in making or breaking school climate. Having a positive, fair, and involved principal can make all of the difference in creating a positive environment” (Judy, survey, March 29, 2017). “I also believe school climate is led by administration, and with ever-changing administration, it seems the climate at our school is constantly shifting” (Elizabeth, survey, April 10, 2017). Again, they agreed leadership shaped student behavior, and behavior proved essential to define climate. “School climate is the outward procedures and practices that the principal deems important to a

school” (Keith, survey, April 13, 2017). Participants identified the need for teachers to embrace school climate maintenance, but held high expectations for the principal to provide the foundation and support along the way.

Keith was perhaps the most demonstrative when describing the lack of attention paid to school climate by the principal. His comments conveyed his belief that the principal’s response to difficult situations set the tone on campus. “Total stress. But she knew that, and that’s the culture and the climate that she set. That’s the culture that was developed” (Keith, personal communication, April 27, 2017). What became evident from interview responses was the fact that teachers observed the principal’s behavior in myriad contexts as the foundation of school climate.

Teachers recognized their actions and inactions were responses to the principal’s actions and inactions across campus. Expressions of frustration about school climate ideals began to surface. Again, a gap was revealed. Elizabeth provided insight into her school climate expectations and those of her administrator.

Part of my frustration has been about the behaviors that are allowed; what’s allowed in the hallway. There’s this mentality that’s come from the admin, ‘Well, it’s in the hallway’. You have control in your classroom, but it all trickles into the classroom. If it’s allowed in the hallway, kids aren’t going to walk through your door and suddenly adjust. So, that’s been tough. (Elizabeth, personal communication, April 12, 2017)

Elizabeth expressed concern over the principal excusing behaviors that she felt should be addressed. Her frustration highlighted differing expectations and values

between herself and her principal. She sought clarity and consistency from the hallway into the classroom.

Through the interview process, teachers articulated the fact that they did not agree with nor understand the behavior policies set forth by their administrator. Behavioral observations by teachers identified opposing ideals and revealed disparate beliefs about school discipline. Their frustration came from their observations of inaction with regard to student behavior. These observations further placed the principal at the center of school climate policy and implementation.

Developing personal relationships and promoting respect and tolerance of differences is also key. Feeling connected and welcomed makes teachers and students want to be at school. Teachers and students bond to their school, school engagement increases, and motivation to do well improves. (Judy, personal communication, April 5, 2017)

Her values were evident in her assumptions about relationships in schools. Her assertion stemmed from a lack of consistent policies and relationships between representative groups. Judy made the connection between how administrators treat teachers and the treatment of students on campus. Again, a misalignment of values and beliefs was evident to the study participants amid the interview process.

Teacher responses highlighted their beliefs that site administrators play the role of legitimizer and advocate for the perpetuation of a positive school climate. Elizabeth expressed her belief in the potential but elusive positive school climate.

You can create a positive climate by allowing kids to feel safe. Knowing the expectations and knowing the rules is a lot of what we've lost. You throw that in

with the union stuff and then the shifts in admin, and it just seems like we've had a very fluctuating climate. Most certainly, the kids can feel that. (Elizabeth, personal communication, April 12, 2017)

She claimed the absence of positive relationships across the educational ecology would disrupt the teaching, learning endeavor for students. Again, teachers expressed an understanding that the principal initiated the climate while the teachers implemented the plan across campus. They appeared to accept the responsibility of maintaining a positive school climate if the expectations were clear and they believed the principal would support their decision-making.

Administrator behaviors that influenced school climate were deciding factors for teachers' perceptions of school success. Judy added, "When policies are in place, discipline is fair and consistent, expectations are clear, and the principal is available to teachers and students, this all helps to create a positive school climate where everyone feels safe" (Judy, survey, March 29, 2017). Teachers' personal values and beliefs showed through when they articulated the importance of school climate. Seven teachers referred to the principal directly as the key to setting the tone and implementing their school's climate. However, all thirteen participants revealed their belief that their relationship with the principal directly influenced the implementation of school climate policies. Keith emphatically addressed the importance of leadership and relationships with regard to school climate. He shared his thoughts for his current administrator.

The climate is where we're going to put the kids before you. But, they don't see the symbiotic relationship. I'm telling you, you screw with the teachers; they're

going to screw with those kids. If you don't know how to handle the kids, we'll handle them for you. (Keith, personal communication, April 27, 2017)

He emphasized the potential for teachers to influence more than they originally believed.

The LCAP's implementation of school climate as a measure of school success stimulated conversations about teacher - principal relations and the expectations of each to act. Our dialogue induced deeper reflection about personal beliefs by teachers who identified points of congruence as well as those of disconnect. The relational gap between teachers and administrators provided teachers with an opportunity to interact with their own values and more constructively identify and challenge those of the administration.

“Flowers Growing All Over the Place”

After identifying evidence of efficacy and identifying their marginalization, teachers came to recognize their potential to lead. Participants acknowledged the challenge of exercising agency amid difficult circumstances. However, they began to contemplate the future of public education if teachers embraced their leadership potential. Corey expressed hopeful anticipation for the power of teacher leadership.

We're not Tolstoy or anything like that. You know what I mean? But, they've got this lid on it and that's what's keeping everybody, you know. I think if that could be lifted, that light could be lifted just a little bit, I think you'd see flowers growing all over the place. (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017)

The acts of reflection and catharsis helped teachers reveal their diminished efficacy and agency, but exposed a hopeful anticipation following educational reforms. Corey acknowledged that years of testing and reporting matched with increased

administrative directives transformed teachers into technicians of information delivery.

“It is so sad, you know. I think they've lost that ability to, not all of them, but the majority of them, especially younger ones, have lost that ability to think on their own” (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). After completing this study’s survey and engaging in conversation, he slowly revealed a sense of understanding about his position within a marginalized group. Corey reported a newfound consciousness about his capacity and role as an educator. Participants appeared to recognize their capacity to influence the educational milieu.

Corey was the most articulate when addressing his revelation about the dynamic realities that faced teachers today. “We didn't get into this business to be subversive” (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). He described the loss of “that ability.” His demeanor shifted to that of anger and defeat. “You can get out, but people don't have the courage anymore” (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). However, his responses grew in length, and as he become more agitated the more he articulated the potential for teachers in education. He expressed his belief that teachers must act.

Let's open a conversation about what we're doing right. What's the next level that we can pursue? How do we grow that? But that wasn't it. Everybody wanted to focus on this darkness. That starts to appeal to a deeper intellect too, because you understand a better thing. So we're back to the basic question of how do we get that involved? They have to say, ‘Hey, we are teaching your children and we are allowing our teachers to be professionals.’” (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017)

His voice peaked in a call to action. Discourse grew from catharsis to appeals for action.

Reflection and discourse acted as catalysts necessary for teachers to express their thoughts about place and potential. They appeared to express dissatisfaction in the status quo. Cole (personal communication, April 22, 2017) identified the detriment of predesigned curriculum that removed the creative license from teachers. “I think you are going to have a whole, what would I say, generation of really lazy teachers. Because everything's given to them” (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017). Articulating their plight was followed by appeals for teachers’ voices to be heard. Discourse highlighted teachers “reflecting on the decline of teacher leadership” (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017). However, reflection and discourse also opened a space for possibility. Subsequently, Susan (personal communication, April 10, 2017) recognized her ability to exercise agency.

Whether it's with admin or district office personnel, its also kind of putting yourself out there. I knew one of the reasons I wanted to come to school A was because at School B, where I was, I felt like I couldn't get into a leadership role. I wanted to go somewhere where I could have more of a say in what we're doing.

(Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017)

She identified her ability to transfer to a new school based on her experience and desire to contribute to the organization.

Realizations about the desire for control arose. Melissa (personal communication, April 14, 2017) plainly stated her belief that local control would help her meet the needs of her students and community.

We need more local control, so somebody outside of our neighborhood, our district; outside of our building should not be making decisions. Our needs,

depending on our population, are not going to be exactly the same as densely urban areas. (Melissa, personal communication, April 14, 2017)

Melissa looked to supervisors as the catalyst of a failing system. She anticipated strong leaders were often overwhelmed by the power of their position thereby losing sight of students at the center of the educational ecology. Such realizations helped teachers recognize the need for their engagement in the leadership role.

Participants anticipated the results of a stronger teacher influence across the educational system. They identified a slowly developed reluctance to pursue leadership roles. Cole (personal communication, May 8, 2017) believed years of being dismissed encouraged teacher silence. “It's like, they're standing in the batting cage, swinging at the ball, but you never see where it goes” (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017). Reflection revealed a cycle of trust, disappointment, and indignation. As teachers became conscious of their place they began to challenge their role. “We need more local control” (Steven, personal communication, April 14, 2017). This consciousness lay suppressed until disrupted by reflection and dialogue.

Participants revealed and recognized a critical consciousness following reflection and discourse. “I did it on my own, because I knew I was doing this for the kids, again, the why, I know I'm going to do this for the kids” (Keith, personal communication, April 27, 2017). He justified his work by claiming his intent to do what is best for his students. He posited that he knew better when it came to designing lessons for his students. “It's just, I have more years of experience than all four of them put together” (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017). Cole acknowledged a depth of knowledge and experience previously exercised in the classroom. “I have the best scores year after year in

elementary school. But, nobody's ever come to me, never once” (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017). He claimed his expertise was often untapped as a potential asset useful beyond his students and school.

I think the teacher's role needs to be bigger. But, I don't know how that's going to parlay down from the district offices, relinquishing that power. Sharing it, or getting involved, teacher involvement. Because the way it's going right now, it's not happening. (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017)

Pursuant to Corey, “you’d see flowers growing all over the place” (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). A fresh perspective on teacher efficacy was revealed in discourse. Cathartic expressions opened a space for teachers to recognize their ability to exercise agency and identify their leadership potential.

Reflection and discourse revealed the efficacy, catharsis, agency cycle that is defined below as a critical teacher theory. This section highlighted the last stage of a cycle within which teachers may regain an efficacious role as relevant agents in educational programs. Teachers require reflection and dialogue to acknowledge their theoretical potential as critical intellectuals in American society (Giroux, 1988). Their expressions induced revelations of disruption and action within educational organizations that have been theorized but unrealized for decades.

Conclusion

Teachers’ comments disclosed a progression of their changing role from protector to practitioner to critical actor in the educational ecology. The survey and interviews initiated within this study, stimulated reflection and followed teachers through a cyclical journey to uncover their lost and found efficacy and agency in a top-heavy hierarchy of

educational management. A safe dialogical space between practitioner researcher and participants acting as co-researchers provided a catalyst for teachers to identify their role as protector, practitioner, and critical actor across the educational hierarchy. Teachers' responses detailed a gradual progression of understanding and inductive ontological discovery. Similarly, teachers acknowledged the reality of their place in a hierarchy and a consciousness about the need to act. This chapter provided the development and analysis of a critical teacher theory as it was generated from practitioner research with teachers in schools. The act of reflection and dialogue in a safe space reveals the influence of teacher efficacy, catharsis, and the potential for agency. The next chapter provides next steps and recommendations for future research and action in lieu of this studies limitations.

Chapter 5: Analysis

The Development of a Critical Teacher Theory

This study examined teachers' perceptions of their efficacy and agency amid the implementation of a significant educational reform in California. An inductive examination of teacher survey responses, interviews, and structured data analysis generated a critical teacher theory that will be discussed herein. An investigation of how teachers perceive their place in the hierarchy of public education highlighted the complexities of their role in schools and society.

The generation of a critical teacher theory discussed in this chapter explains how intellectual discourse guided teachers to recognize their potential to move from a diminished efficacy and agency to an ontological realization of their role in schools and society. The theory generated herein is a social cycle of epistemological discovery and critical consciousness induced by practitioner research following newly introduced educational reforms (Anderson & Jones, 2000; Friere, 1970). This chapter is organized to present the influence of practitioner research, a review of this study's theoretical foundations in CRM and CP, an overview of results gleaned from data analysis, an analysis of the influence of school climate measures and teacher leadership potential, the limitations of this study, and recommendations for applications and future research. However, it is important to define critical theory and explain how it is relevant to this study.

Critical teacher theory is purposefully not capitalized based on the definition of a critical theory rather than the "Critical Theory" introduced by researchers at the Frankfort School's Institute for Social Research (Bohman, 2005). "Critical Theory" was developed

at the Frankfort School, while critical teacher theory was developed from analysis of teachers' realization of their place as the other in the hierarchy that was revealed in education. Educational literature highlighted a waning of teacher efficacy following decades of high stakes testing and reporting. Diminished efficacy predisposed the gradual decline of teacher agency across educational spheres of influence. Teacher voice and authority were reduced as managerial directives were enforced to meet policy requirements. As the educational hierarchy became more rigid over the past three decades, teachers lost sight of their intellectual role in schools and society.

Democratic ideals presented by Dewey (1926) became concepts of study rather than social aspirations. This study highlights the potential emancipation of teachers from institutional domination (Horkheimer, 1993). Bohman's (2005) description of critical theory serves to articulate a description of this study's intent to generate theory; "Here I want to suggest that any such reflexive, practical understanding of Critical Theory involves both democracy and social science" (p. 354). Long term aspirations of a more sound democratic society might therefore be further realized because of the work of practitioner social science research in schools. Furthermore, the generation of theory is not taken lightly or identified without scrutiny.

Theory Generation

It is necessary to evaluate the trustworthiness of the critical grounded theory generated here as a result of the interpretation of the data collection and analysis throughout this study. This evaluation is grounded in the tenets of critical social theory. This study interweaved data collection and interpretation to explain teachers' perceptions and ultimately emancipate them from years of silence. Co-research with teachers proved

to confront and disrupt their perceptions of social reality and subordination by engaging in this practitioner research project. Anyon's (2009) definition of theory provides a relevant defense of the way this study examined reflection, discourse, and the location of teachers within a hierarchical social system.

From Latin and Greek, where theory referenced speculation and contemplation; from the modern tenet of theory as a model and set of statements and rules of inference; and from our concern and experience with discursive and social systems that produce injustice, we derive our notion of theory as an architecture of ideas – a coherent structure of interrelated concepts – whose contemplation and application (1) helps us to understand and explain discursive and social phenomena and (2) provides a model of the way that discourse and social systems work and can be worked upon. (Anyon, 2009, p. 3)

A critical teacher theory was generated by the organization of themes induced by the creation of a dialogical space where teachers contemplate their place in a larger social system. The recognition and acknowledgement of their experience in the social setting of schools is therefore a precursor to the development of a “model” that subsequently “be worked upon”. “Trustworthiness does not mean that the reader necessarily has to agree with the researcher; rather, it requires that the reader see how the researcher arrived at the conclusion he or she made” (Bailey, 2007, p. 181). Reflection and discourse framed the analysis of teachers' perceptions of their location within a hierarchy and the potential they possess to disrupt their current social reality.

The juxtaposition of data collection and analysis, as presented here, supports the premise that the researcher's perspective cannot be removed from the final interpretation.

“The theory depends on the researcher’s view; it does not and cannot stand outside of it” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 239). My relationship with the participants, our conversations in a co-created safe dialogical space, reflection, and discourse all support the collaborative work of meaning making for the researcher and participants. Interpretations of the data revealed a constructivist answer to why and how teachers act in schools. These interpretations help define and explain the social phenomena of teacher efficacy and agency. This chapter details how data collection and analysis were then interpreted for valid theory generation.

The Significance of a Safe Dialogical Space in Schools

The creation of a safe dialogical space between researcher and participant was essential for the generation of a critical teacher theory. Such a space supported my insider status as a practitioner researcher to work with participants as co-researchers. A critical teacher theory is explained here as the discovery by teachers of their perceived role in education and society following a significant education accountability reform. Our work as co-researchers revealed a cycle that moved from a renewed sense of efficacy that exposed the need for catharsis and the ultimate realization of agency and further potential of teachers in schools and society. A review of scholarly educational literature revealed years of diminished teacher efficacy and agency created by decades of public school accountability programs. Therefore, this study addresses a gap in that literature by engaging teachers as co-researchers following a significant educational reform.

Grounded theory methodology provided a structured data collection and analysis tool for making meaning of the recent implementation of California’s LCAP and its introduction of nonacademic measures into the equation of school success (Affeldt, 2015;

Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; California Education Code § 52060, 2013; Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Qualitative research methods and foundational methodologies supported this work to help teachers make meaning of their current and potential role in society following the introduction of California's LCAP.

The analysis presented in this chapter highlights a progression teachers followed during this study that revealed their role as protector, practitioner, and ultimately a critical actor in the educational ecology. Reflection and discourse guided teachers on a journey to uncover a lost and found efficacy in a top-heavy hierarchy of educational management. The authorization of LCAP inspired this project. Recall, California's Education Code 56062 requires state education agencies to engage student, parents, teachers, and the community in the development of the local LCAP plan (California Department of Education, 2016). Secondarily, LCAP initiated the inclusion of nonacademic measures into the evaluation of school and student progress. However, the reality of LCAP has yet to be fully realized by teachers, administrators, and academics because of its recent authorization and implementation. As this analysis is presented through a gradual progression of understanding and iterative discoveries, similarly do teachers acknowledge the reality of their place in a hierarchy and their slow but ultimate realization of the need to act.

Review of Methodologies

This study employed the constructivist nature and iterative structures of GTM to guide the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The dearth of scholarly literature and the newness of the LCAP necessitated the inductive nature of GTM to generate theory about the phenomenon of teacher efficacy and agency amid the reform. Volumes

of research have identified the impact of testing and reporting on teachers' perceptions and performance (Darder, 2015; Mehta, 2015). However, the introduction of nonacademic measures into the accountability equation of school success presents a new variable into the analysis of teachers' perceived role as well as their perceptions of their ability to act in this new educational era (Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2015).

GTM provided a trustworthy data collection and analysis design. CRM informed my role as a practitioner researcher. As school principal, I am a practitioner, an insider, and a co-researcher with the teacher participants in this study. Dialogue and reflection induced by CP provided a theoretical framework for this study. Balancing my insider and outsider status was fundamental during this practitioner research project. Finally, maintaining focus on Dewey's (1926) vision of democratic society was essential.

Critical Pedagogy

A key element of CP is the disruption of the hierarchy through reflection, dialogue, and action (Freire, 1970). "A deepened consciousness of their situation leads people to apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation" (Freire, 1970, p. 85). However, dialogue without action is mere activism and perpetuates the status quo. Throughout this study teachers reflected on incidents of defiant action potentially lost in memory. An investigation of the perceptions of teachers helped them realize a state of "unfinishedness" (Freire, 1998, p. 52).

This study endeavors to inspire the teacher participants and future teachers to embrace their "unfinishedness" as an opportunity to transform their classroom, school, community, and society. Participants smiled and chuckled at their own attempts to challenge administrator directives for the benefit of their students. Moreover, they acted

on their espoused values to show their capacity to evoke change in a system that silenced them. Years of testing, reporting, and administrative directives changed teachers' behaviors and beliefs. "This process alters the way teachers understand themselves and their success" (Buchanan, 2015, p. 715). Buchanan (2015) identified a shift in teacher identity and loss of "practical consciousness" due to their response to the dominant structure and because of a lack of their own self-reflection as a response to that model. Identity and authenticity are discoveries that remain untapped by many educators. A teacher's journey toward their critical consciousness relies on courage, deep reflection, and action.

The Importance of Reflection in Education. The ideal of a democratic society may be considered based on the placement of I in relation to other. We cannot realize our understanding of a democracy in isolation, but must view I in conjunction with the other. Fromm's description of "the character structure of man" and how this structure is the "result of the social process which creates man" (Fromm, 1941, pp. 4 & 11). Socialization in concert with introspection may allow for adequate personal growth. This study modeled a democratic process that could provide far-reaching benefits that we have yet to realize in education. This study reminds teachers to investigate their place as *I* in a traditionally hierarchical system. It places emphasis on reflection and dialogue in pursuit of the generation of theory. Work as an individual therefore benefits self and society.

Deeper understanding and development of oneself is a critical first step necessary before analyzing one's practice as an educator or leader (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2004). "Democratic personhood development is a 'do it yourself job' that one works on actively in day-to-day practice" (SooHoo et al., 2004, p. 12). Therefore the development

of a democratic society relies on the continual growth and development of each individual. The link to society is the moral realization that this work is not selfish or self-serving, but altruistic. An important element of this work is the ever-critical evaluation of one's actions and intentions as they play out in the public arena. This study was designed to challenge the traditional research paradigm and model critical social inquiry. Working as co-researchers, the teacher participants and I represented here, engaged in dialogue born of reflection about the current and future role of teachers.

Culturally Responsive Methodologies

Where better to examine schools and schooling than within the schoolhouse. I embraced my role as an insider to facilitate this study's contribution to K-12 public education and the academy. As a school administrator, I am considered an outsider by teachers. However, my role as an administrator/principal challenges that outsider status and forced me to engage those with whom I work as an insider. I balanced my insider and outsider status by embracing the tenets of CRM. Survey questions initiated teacher reflection. Conversations with fellow educators helped me and participants foster a safe dialogical space. The cycle that became a critical teacher theory emerged from participants' progressive willingness to recall and share narratives about their experiences as veteran teachers. Reflection and dialogue induced by this study brought educators together and therefore might be deemed trustworthy for the fact that it sought to break the bonds of marginalization by amplifying teachers' voices. Harrison, MacGibbon, and Morton (2001) posited, "We want to participate in research that contributes to and pursues social justice" (p. 325). The injustice of diminished teacher efficacy and agency is disrupted by qualitative practitioner research.

Practitioner Research. As a school employee and now scholar, I assume the title of practitioner researcher. I am able to enter the research field as a principal/insider and researcher. My insider status provides me access to richer interrogation and analysis of the teachers' perceptions. Together we are able to collect data that may otherwise go untouched save our relations as school employees.

Schools endeavor to function as institutions of inquiry for students. The same should be true for teachers who are intent to improve their craft while meeting the needs of their students. "Unless both university academics and school practitioners are willing to take intellectual risks and push their comfort zones, we will end up with non-rigorous programs that shortchange us all" (Anderson & Herr, 1999, p. 20). Administrators and teachers alike work in educational laboratories where intellectual inquiry is initiated and expected. When trusting relationships exist in schools, relevant research is possible and potentially beneficial. Collaborative practitioner research in schools provides stimuli and structure for a more rigorous educational program. This is CRM at its finest; it forces the learned to become the learner by challenging one's role as insider and outsider within both foreign and familiar contexts. I, they, we blend our voices together to build on an ever-evolving ontology about the role of teachers. Moreover, CRM provides validity and trustworthiness to this project so as to inspire further research where all stakeholders work together to change the way teachers impact schools and influence democratic society.

Teachers as Critical Intellectuals in Democratic Society

Scholars referenced Dewey to show how personal growth produced ethical individuals who may realize an elusive democratic society (Giroux & McLaren, 1986;

Glassman, 2001; Mosher, 1978; Simpson, 1971; SooHoo et al., 2004). Participants in this study acknowledged their responsibility for student achievement. Like parents, educators seek to send off their progeny better than they were while in their charge. So, we educators seek social/emotional and academic achievement for youth, and agree that such a contribution would subsequently benefit society at large. Therefore, my goal as an educator and researcher is moreover to contribute to society as well. My contribution therefore begets theirs. This study and others like it foster an expectation that teachers embrace their role as public intellectuals.

Dewey (1926) theorized extensively on the concept of American public education propagating a democratic society. “Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder” (Dewey, 1926, p. 115). Schools perpetuate democratic society. In so doing, schools address the academic and moral development of our youth. This study is grounded in Dewey’s belief that an educated populace is necessary for a democratic society (Dewey, 1938). Youth, like educators, must confront the disorder; interrupt society as they have inherited it, in order to realize the social change they collectively see fit to address. Therefore, teachers are poised to reexamine their potentially transformational role. LCAP introduced legislation to hold public schools accountable for a broader social responsibility. Teachers must accept and engage with this new responsibility if broader reforms are to ensue.

This study endeavors to explain how teachers perceive their role in schools and society. Furthermore, critical teacher theory exposes the potential for educational reforms to induce transformational work in schools and society. Tom Wilson referred to

the prose of Dewey to connect “ethics, the individual, and democracy.” (SooHoo et al., 2004, p. 9). Wilson, like Dewey before him, identified the development of the individual as the ethical prerequisite for a democratic ideal. They logically tied together self-improvement to social improvement. Wilson determined that the individual begets society thus society is dependent on the individual, so the growth and subsequent contribution of the individual is essential to a democratic society. The ethical foundation of educators is critical for the development of moral educated youth. This study presents an exercise in reflection and discourse. Based on the tenets of CP and CRM, this study offers a blueprint for educators to reflect on their educational practice and reveal the potential of public schools as institutions that induce the democratic ethos Dewey envisioned more than a century before. Therefore, a brief reflection of my own place in the educational milieu follows to highlight the significance of my role as a co-researcher with this study’s participants.

Reflexivity

The impact of reflection on my work as an educator is significant to this study and must be addressed before deeper analysis of critical teacher theory is explained. I believe education is improved with strong relationships. Educational literature posited a cessation of collaboration amongst insiders and outsiders (Charteris & Smardon 2015; Ogawa, Goldring, & Conley, 2000). A disparity of engagement is prevalent across the educational ecology; parents with kids, kids with teachers, kids with school personnel, teachers with teachers, teachers with school personnel, teachers with administrators, teachers with parents, school personnel with parents and so on. My constructivist paradigm of respect, trust, and mutual benefits is based on the progressive experiences

and lessons learned as a K-12 educator amid the development and interplay of relationships. Therefore, discourse between stakeholders within the context of the schoolhouse is critical to the ultimate success of each student (Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015). This success will include measurements of the academic, emotional, spiritual, and psychological growth of students. While addressing each is difficult, one can very often compensate for others.

It is important to identify my location on the hierarchy within the educational ecology and accept the potential of its influence on this study. The work of transformational leadership begins with an individual, but is irrelevant without reflection and discourse (Burns, 1978). Years of testing and reporting have diminished the leadership role of public school teachers. Board policies, contracts, and union politics often pose as obstacles for transformational work in schools. However, the power of relationships and the development of trust in schools serve to aid teachers as they confront hierarchical routines. Commitments of time, listening, and the development of relational trust work to Harrison's, MacGibbon's, and Morton's description of reciprocity as described by Lather, "through collaborative theorizing with participants, it is possible to 'both advance emancipatory theory and empower the researched'" (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001, p. 324). By engaging teachers as co-researchers, this study revealed the power of reflection and discourse in the school setting. My role as a practitioner researcher forced me to reflect during their research and analysis process. My role as an insider and outsider, my work as a doctoral student, and deep reflection on my own position in this research project helped determine and define the direction of this study.

Review of Research Questions

The following research questions were utilized to illustrate the influence of practitioner research on teacher efficacy and agency following a significant educational reform. These questions act as the foundation for conversations between educators following a period of reflection about their personal and professional development in schools. The questions that informed this study are: (1) How do teachers perceive their efficacy and agency following recent educational policy reforms? (2) How do teachers perceive their role following the implementation of LCAP? (3) What are the implications on teacher efficacy and agency of practitioner research in schools? Written survey responses, transcripts from participant interviews, and analytical memos were analyzed throughout this study. The findings of this study were organized into categories and three corresponding themes that define those categories. Theory generated by the inductive process of data analysis and meaning making is described in the following section.

Overview of Findings

This practitioner research project was designed to better understand teachers' perceptions of their efficacy and agency following the implementation of California's LCAP. Survey and interview questions induced teachers to reflect on their experiences in various educational contexts. My positionality as an insider helped us create a safe dialogical space where discourse revealed typically undisclosed emotions and expressions of discovery. Participants became co-researchers with me to engage in an iterative meaning-making process that culminated in the generation of a critical teacher theory. A critical teacher theory was derived from the iterative cycle of discovery and understanding gleaned from our intellectual conversations. Following coding and

multiple analyses of survey responses, interview transcripts, and analytical memos drafted throughout each stage of the research process **efficacy, catharsis, and agency** emerged as themes that define a critical teacher theory. The analysis of each element of the research process revealed movement through each theme creating a cycle that is a critical teacher theory.

A Surprising Progression

Critical teacher theory is a cycle grounded in reflection and discourse. Teachers who uncovered previously undisclosed sources of efficacy, expressed blame for the shortcomings of the public education system, and identified underutilized agency through the data collection process. It was a counter-intuitive realization that teachers identified sources of efficacy before they engaged in cathartic blame. Participants were eager to share how they navigated the increasingly complex role of a teacher. However, the conscious expression of their accomplishments further protected our dialogical space and induced movement from efficacy to catharsis. My insider status and the development of a safe space for discourse proved critical to the meaning-making process. The importance of reflection and collegial discourse will be discussed more thoroughly below in the section about practical applications of critical teacher theory. The first theme of a critical teacher theory provides an analysis of participants' responses that revealed once ignored sources of efficacy.

Efficacy

This study and the subsequent generation of a critical teacher theory are predicated on empirical evidence from teachers' subconscious determination to meet the expectations of those they serve. Consequently, reflection and discourse revealed an

overlooked sense of efficacy. Conversations helped participants recognize surprising sources of efficacy suppressed for years. They presented themselves as indignant, but ultimately accepted the fact that they were responsible for more than just academic achievement in their classrooms. This epiphany revealed a sense of efficacy previously diminished by years of testing, reporting, and administrative directives to follow predesigned lessons.

Efficacy Revealed

All thirteen participants recognized a determination to appease supervisors, serve their community, and protect students and colleagues by “doing the right work” (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). Teachers universally agreed they aspire to do their best work and meet the expectations of all with whom they work. This idea came to fruition early in the data collection process.

Co-Researchers. Their intent to address this study’s objectives and support educational research was revealed in their comments. By getting it right and “doing the right work” (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017), teachers influenced their own “physiological state” and thereby influenced their own sense of efficacy (Bandura, 1977). “I don’t know if my answers were what you wanted or were looking for” (Steven, personal communication, April 14, 2017). Teachers approached our conversations with a self-deprecating sense of pride that echoed Bandura’s (1977) original definition of efficacy. However, they admitted to rarely reflecting on what else they “can do” to impact student achievement let alone the educational process (Bandura, 2006). Our conversations were balanced by teachers’ reflections of pride as public servants and the realization that administrative directives had oppressed them over time. Teachers were

eager to contribute to academic research. Simply asking them to participate fueled a sense of purpose and helped participants reflect on the amount of work they do above and beyond test scores. However, it quickly became evident that the emotions of self-worth and efficacy had been suppressed.

Compliant Employees. Years of testing, reporting, and predesigned curriculum initiatives created a sense of teacher atrophy. Teachers were no longer intellectuals who designed learning experiences for their students, but technicians who delivered curriculum. They fell into a pattern of compliance over creativity. It became evident that participants were rarely asked to highlight their accomplishments nor were they entirely comfortable in their present physiological states on campus. They admitted to conforming to the expectations of administrators. Compliance during this study and incidents at school were attempts to do as they were asked. However, attempts to meet supervisors' expectations overshadowed attempts to help students succeed in myriad contexts. Teachers overcompensated for a diminished sense of efficacy by striving to be compliant; endeavoring to be good employees. Reflection and discourse helped them challenge the notion of "doing the right work". Striving to regain a sense of efficacy had turned into a pattern of compliance.

This realization worked to boost their efficacy as they realized the gravity of their role beyond the classroom. As discussed in chapter three, the inductive nature of the interview as a method used during this practitioner research project helped teachers reflect on their place in the educational hierarchy and the importance of their role beyond the classroom. Efficacy proved a relevant theme because academics have yet to analyze the stress placed upon educators following the inclusion of parent engagement, student

engagement, and school climate into the new accountability equation at the state level. The introduction of nonacademic measures invited new inquiries into school accountability and teachers' perceptions of these reforms. Teachers came to recognize how their navigation of professional relationships contributed to their confidence and ultimately a sense of efficacy previously underestimated.

Teachers acknowledged their attempts to meet the ever-increasing expectations of educational accountability. California's LCAP diversified and increased the real and perceived expectations placed on teachers. Twelve teachers in this study criticized the absence of parent engagement in their schools. They challenged LCAP requirements of measuring and evaluating school success based on parent involvement. Teachers' accepted their role beyond that of educator. They acknowledged a dearth of parent support. However, they matched it with an intent to do what they believe is best for their students. Data revealed an overwhelming acceptance of the challenge of playing the surrogate parent and counselor. They exuded pride in their ability to meet the demands of the underappreciated complexity of their work. Participants revealed the potential to regain a sense of efficacy in their work to meet the myriad needs of their students, in their classroom.

Relationships and Trust

Participants reminisced about the comfort of collegiality and security established by relationships and trust. This informed the generation of a critical teacher theory because it highlights how reflection and dialogue helped teachers reorient themselves within the institutional hierarchy of public education. Before they were comfortable enough to implicate others, teachers took time to recognize the gravity and complexity of

their work. A progression became evident. Building relationships improved school climate; better school climate enhanced student performance; better student performance boosted teacher confidence. Save the use of the term, participants clearly valued relationships built on trust over time. Teachers worked to develop trusting relationships with students and colleagues as means to regain a lost sense of efficacy.

Kevin affirmed his intent “to do my best for my kids” (Kevin, personal communication, April 11, 2017). Alice referred to her students as “my kiddos” throughout our conversation (Alice, personal communication, April 13, 2017). Their expressions of ownership and protection permeated our conversations. Participants admitted to protecting their students from overbearing policy decisions. They fostered teacher student relationships based on mutual trust and responsibility. Teachers appeared to increase their recognition of efficacy while explaining how they attempted to do what was best for their students.

Family. Participants were eager to share their perceptions of their relationships across the school setting. They referred to a family feeling at school. The school family proved unpredictable and reliant on trust and relationships built over time. At different times throughout each conversation, teachers acknowledged their work to develop relationships with their students, colleagues, parents, and their supervisors. Their contributions and the mutually beneficial byproducts of those relationships revealed a newfound source of efficacy. Teachers claimed to protect students from self-proclaimed flawed systems, defended colleagues when they were mistreated by supervisors, and attempted to help parents navigate public information about their local schools.

After years of emotional responses to testing and reporting, teachers in this study empathized with colleagues who were judged by student performance. Ralph expressed anger over the mistreatment of another teacher (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017). His perception of his own efficacy was reignited after he recognized his ability to support a colleague who was criticized in front of her peers. By articulating his feelings about the incident, Ralph appeared empowered by his ability to console and support a colleague. He saw in that teacher a hard worker who needed support and encouragement. The level of trust gleaned from his experience and the efficacious milestone of our conversation revealed to Ralph the capacity teachers possess to contribute to the educational process beyond student test scores. Recall and acknowledgement of trusting relationships helped Ralph and other participants regain a sense of efficacy they may have never engaged.

Efficacy as a theme initially appeared out of place in the development of a critical teacher theory. Following theoretical sampling it became clear that teachers required a safe dialogical space to share their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. Educational literature emphasized the importance of professional relationships in schools (Priestly, Biesta, & Robinson, 2013; Bogotch, 2011; Honig, 2012). Positive relationships and the maintenance of safe collaborative spaces were reciprocal elements that revealed teachers' sense of efficacy. The more they shared, the more they recognized their contributions to the educational milieu and their ability to affect change within. While they thrived on the family feel, they contributed to that feeling by fostering relationships with all parties.

Attempts to bring parents into the school setting often resulted in a stronger teacher student bond. Teachers admitted their desires for better parent engagement.

When parents were not involved, teachers responded by advocating for their students. Susan accepted inconsistent parent involvement, “I just have to realize what I can control and what I can't control” (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). A lack of parent involvement led to an increased commitment from teachers to meet the needs of their students. Our conversations helped teachers realize the amount of emotional capital and subconscious ownership they placed on relationships across the educational ecology. Such realizations informed a sense of efficacy they would have failed to admit before this project.

Principal Potential. The power of positive relationships and its influence on teacher efficacy was profound. Increased levels of trust between teachers and site administrators proved necessary before teachers recognize improved efficacy. Lieberman and Miller (2011) posited the benefits to schools and society when teachers and administrators worked collaboratively. However, those relationships were based on teachers’ expressions of high expectations and empathy for the plight of their site principal. Esther commented on the power of trust developed when her principal “stayed out of your hair” (Esther, personal communication, April 23, 2017). Cole recognized improved relations based on mutual trust. Teachers universally admitted to the existence of the hierarchy in which they were stationed below the site principal. However, teachers admitted high expectations for their educational leaders. They recognized improved relations and increased feelings of efficacy as a result of positive teacher administrator relationships.

A critical teacher theory is based on teachers’ perceptions of their journey through a cycle traveled from protector to practitioner to critical actor in the educational ecology.

The following section details their progressive understanding, inductive ontological discovery, and acknowledgement of the reality of their place within a hierarchy. After acknowledging higher than expected levels of efficacy, teachers revealed a confidence necessary to articulate their perceptions about individuals and the challenges perpetuated across the educational system. Cathartic expressions of naming and blaming were explored before teachers could acknowledge their potential to act as significant agents in the educational ecology. Movement through the cycle of a critical teacher theory helped teachers acknowledge their role as protector, identify the need for catharsis as practitioners, and recognize their current and potential to engage as critical actors in schools and society.

Catharsis

The iterative nature of data collection during this study highlighted how teachers came to realize their oppressed state. After acknowledging a shift in their revelations about reclaimed evidence of efficacy, teachers revealed perceptions of their own inadequacy in the eyes of supervisors. They recounted incidents of marginalization. Participants revealed anger and disbelief as they shared anecdotes about their attempts to engage with administrators. Our conversations progressed into cathartic exercises where teachers held other players accountable for the challenges in the education system. Before teachers were able to identify their own potential, they engaged in catharsis as if to release before they could accept responsibility.

Teachers began to identify their own place in the educational hierarchy. This epistemological discovery belies an understanding of their blind acceptance of the hierarchy and an ontological realization that others have created disruptive, distracting,

often self-serving circumstances for those who find themselves in the position of the oppressed. Their eagerness to please was overshadowed by their blame of those in positions of power. The theme of catharsis revealed how the cycle of a critical teacher theory transitioned from acknowledging one's ability to affect change to a need to express frustration about the barriers that hinder their work.

Naming and Blaming the “Uppers”

Naming their supervisors with specific titles became a cathartic experience for participants. While they name those at the top of the educational power hierarchy, they simultaneously found themselves as the oppressed other in the educational system. Teachers turned to name their supervisors and blame them for psychological impact of a decreased ability to act independently and influence student achievement. They accepted and all but dismissed the power of testing and reporting. With that, they turned blame for diminished efficacy and agency on administrators and the authoritarian tactics they used to manage schools.

The titles “Admin”, “uppers”, and “powers that be” were reserved for the unseen administrators who drove curricular and educational decisions opposed by the teachers who were to implement them. Of the thirteen teachers interviewed, only nine used the term “principal”. However, all thirteen participants used the term “administrator”. Throughout this study, teachers acknowledged their place, but eventually challenged the distinction of roles. Participants recognized the potential for teacher – “principal” partnerships amid unbalanced teacher – “administrator” structures. By naming their oppressors, teachers identified progressive epistemological discoveries that otherwise might have been left in the subconscious.

Emotions fluctuated from indignant disdain to high respect and admiration to disbelief based on the lack of ethical engagement in the work of educating youth. Interviews revealed how these emotions were reflected in internalized self-concept that ultimately perpetuated already fragile states of efficacy. The act of dialogue promoted deeper reflection on each participant's location within the educational ecology. Teachers stated disbelief about the state of education while struggling to articulate how it could or should be. Teachers' revealed their beliefs in a transactional system where supervisors are required to elicit collaboration, but often dismiss the power of such input. Participants displayed a sense of relief after going through the blaming process to identify their own place in the hierarchy and on the ecological plane.

The interview process helped teachers voice their disappointment in their supervisors. They blamed administrators for their physical and emotional absence from what teachers believe to be important. More importantly they charged administrators with taking advantage of their power positions to manipulate the educational program with little knowledge or experience with the context of their school site. Teachers hold true to their innate drive to please those they serve by challenging the ethical determinations of administrators. They assumed a moral high ground in statements of accountability. After admitting the complexities of the administrator's role, teachers began to acknowledge the potential of their abilities to serve the needs of students.

A Safe Dialogical Space

The conversations that made up one element of data collection were comprised of two school employees reflecting on their roles. My role as a principal precluded my status as an outsider, but my intentions to dialogue and listen confirmed my insider status

with the teacher participants. The creation of a safe space to reflect and express thoughts and feelings was essential to the validity of this study. Catharsis was revealed and realized within the safety of our relationship and intent to serve the educational community. Berryman, SooHoo, and Nevin (2013) defined the responsive dialogic space necessary to support the collaborative nature of this study.

We have learned that listening to the other is more likely to occur when spaces to develop respectful relationships are given priority before engaging in any joint project. Within this space potential new knowledge can emerge when both parties are able to act as co-researchers in the co-creation of new knowledge (Berryman, SooHoo, and Nevin, 2013, p. 22).

My role as both insider and outsider helped to create and maintain a space where this study's interviews become informal reflective conversations between educators. However, veteran teachers displayed a willingness to challenge the status quo beyond those with fewer years of service.

Empowered by Tenure. It was quickly evident that veteran teachers engaged catharsis more readily than those with fewer years of service. Within the safe space of our dialogue, veteran teachers proved more willing to share their emotional reflections than those with fewer years of service. Years of service became relative to the ease with which teachers engaged with catharsis within our conversations. The inductive process of analysis following conversations revealed an ever-changing and developing distinction of teachers' epistemology matched their increasing years of service. Our conversations revealed the development of teachers' critical consciousness as a slow methodical process that often grows in the subconscious before being realized and engaged. This

consideration is grown from practitioner research, years of experience, and deep reflection about the one's real and espoused values and beliefs. Therefore, emotional expressions of catharsis helped expose deep-rooted beliefs about the potential teachers hold to influence student achievement and growth. This study promoted thought and discussion about each participant's place within the hierarchy and their gradual acceptance of role and participation, or lack there of.

Those who admitted to episodes of defiance were the oldest and most veteran participants. Their age and years of service empowered them to question and regain their ability to counter administrators. "...but people are administratively handling it wrong" (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). Kevin, Keith, and Corey were the oldest and most veteran teachers in this study. They were more comfortable challenging directives to do what they believed was best for kids.

From Catharsis to Critical Consciousness. Cathartic exchanges led to a consciousness about teachers' place within the hierarchy and revealed their role as followers. Reviews of educational literature identified the positive influence of teacher collaboration and leadership in schools (Charteris & Smarden, 2015; Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015). However, theoretical sampling merely exacerbated the need for teachers to reflect, identify, and express their disbelief in the fact that their role had truly been diminished and potentially disregarded as critical in public education. Therefore, this study revealed the importance of LCAP's accountability reforms as a catalyst for practitioner research and the importance of a safe dialogical space where teachers could make meaning of their roles. The potential for teacher leadership will be addressed as the third stage of a critical teacher theory comes full circle in the next section about agency.

Whether, real or perceived, participants recognized that they had succumbed to the directions of their supervisors. With that subconscious acceptance came an admission that they follow the lead of their principal. Participants revealed an optimistic expectation that the principal would lead them and their school to meet the increasingly high expectations of educational accountability. However, participants expressed their abhorrence before recognizing their potential.

A duplicity was revealed in teachers' understanding of their complex role, attempts to maintain their oppressive position in the hierarchy, and a hopeful anticipation that they could work collaboratively with an effective leader. However, the revelation of their acceptance further revealed an eagerness to participate at a deeper level. Not until they began to reflect and discuss this dual reality did they begin to articulate the potential of teacher leadership.

Recognizing their real place within the hierarchy helped teachers move beyond a perceived sense of collaboration and inclusion. Phrases like "hero or the goat" (Ralph, personal communication, April 27, 2017) and "teachers are lap dogs" (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017) helped define their epiphany. "The more the people unveil this challenging reality which is to be the object of their transforming action, the more critically they enter that reality" (Freire, 1970, pg. 53). Not until they expressed the realities of the complex roles teachers must play and realized the lack of recognition and respect they received did teachers come to recognize their position as the other in education and their potential to affect change beyond their present status. Reflection and dialogue guided participants through a cycle that progressed from renewed feelings of efficacy, cathartic expressions of blame across the educational ecology, and ultimately

revealed real and potential of teacher action and leadership. The next section describes how teachers recognized their actions and potential agency in schools and society.

Agency

Discourse induced discovery. Participants reflected on the journey that was their career, and realized it was rarely discussed at a deeper level. These journeys proved relative to Morris' reflection on her doctoral studies. She recalled, "...the journey of coming to know yourself can be quite daunting" (Morris, 2013, p. 55). She continued, "As a result one's voice is awakened unsilenced, formed, shaped, and prepared to both learn and simultaneously challenge the norm whenever necessary, and to make change within the academic and social realms" (Morris, 2013, p. 55). Agency became a theme of this study following revelations of actions taken and opportunities missed.

Participants came to recognize their frustrations about the inaction of administrators and the often-unrealized potential of teachers to act. Therefore, expressions of catharsis initiated conversations about agency. It is important to recall the most recent and comprehensive definition of agency as defined by educational scholars. The definition posited by Priestley, Biesta, Philippou, and Robinson (2015) highlights the interdependence of teacher efficacy and teacher agency.

This concept of agency highlights that actors always act by means of their environment rather than simply in their environment [so that] the achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always-unique situations (p. 6).

A critical teacher theory identified a cyclical process revealing how teachers come to recognize their place within a hierarchy to determine the will and necessity to act within that place as displayed in Figure 5.1. The act of catharsis revealed for participants the potential of “individual efforts” (Priestley, Biesta, Philippou, & Robinson, 2015, p. 6) as an exercise of agency within a context they had accepted after years of diminished efficacy. The influence of CRM encouraged a safe dialogical space for teachers to explore the tenets of CP to identify their place and most importantly induce a willingness, ability, and necessity to act within and outside of that space.

Figure 5.1

Realizing a Space for Agency

After recognizing and articulating their tendency to comply, participants realized they were able and more than willing to take action. Melissa admitted, “I wanted to quit” (Melissa, personal communication, April 14, 2017). She grew tired of planning and presenting lessons she believed to be best for her students, only to be redirected by administrators. Her struggles were revealed in cathartic statements of surrender. However, it was such catharsis that led her to realize she could act within the context of her classroom. Initially, Melissa reflected on the fact that teachers have already had to adjust to new educational standards in Mathematics and English Language Arts adopted by the California State Board of Education in 2010 (California State Board of Education, 2010). The new standards reinforced teachers’ role as technicians who deliver predesigned curriculum. However, she realized within California’s recently adopted Common Core State Standards, “there’s five or six spots where it defers back to the classroom teacher” (Melissa, personal communication, April 14, 2017). After reflection and catharsis she recognized her own ability to implement those standards to the best of her ability and for the benefit of her students. Finding that space to act was a critical turning point for teachers; identifying those acts helped perpetuate the cycle by recognizing efficacy inspiring further exercise of agency.

Values Espoused and Values Revealed

While the tone and intensity of participant responses increased throughout our conversations, teachers realized the connection between their values and actions. Corey and Ralph voiced an indignant response to questions about teacher - principal relations (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017; Ralph, personal communication, April

22, 2017). As they expressed a level of protection over their students, they seemed to expect the same from their principal. There was an implied assumption that site administrators were responsible for the well being of both students and staff. Worse, they expressed disappointment that their site administrator was not already aware of their plight. The discovery here is the connection between teachers' innate high regard for authority that slowly eroded because of perceptions of poor leadership exhibited by their supervisor. "Oh a huge divide, gigantic divide" (Ralph, personal communication, April 22, 2017). It turns out that the high expectations teachers held for their students transferred to their principal.

Differing Values Between Teachers and Administrators. The act of reflecting and discussing their role in education helped teachers redefine their role and their expectations of supervisors. They shared experiences with administrators that shed light on divergent perceptions of what teachers should do and be. Participants recognized a values gap between teachers and administrators that led to a diminished sense of teacher efficacy and reduced exercise of teacher agency. Corey admitted to calling on random students to placate administrators during classroom visits (Corey, personal communication, May 1, 2017). However, he admitted his attempts to appease supervisors distracted students from learning. His comments echoed other participants who felt the need to act to meet the needs of their students. They assumed administrators did not share their focus on the complexities of student achievement. Poor relations and a lack of trust informed teachers' perceptions that administrators insisted on compliance and quantitative improvement on standardized tests.

Whether it was the implementation of California's LCAP, collegial conversations with another insider, or the confluence of multiple factors, this study helped teachers identify their place as the "other" in the educational system. "How can you have local control, when they're not listening to what you say?" (Cole, personal communication, May 8, 2017). Their belief in the work of student transformation was challenged due to their discovery of the highly transactional system that is public education. "Then we'll go ahead and do that. We'll do exactly what we're told, and again, teachers don't think for themselves, really" (Keith, personal communication, April 27, 2017). The desire to break free of the hierarchical resulted in acts of defiance with little educational advantage for students or teachers.

Reflection revealed progress from intentions and compliance to realizing an urgency to act. They feared acting beyond directives from supervisors diluted the educational program, diminished collective efforts across the educational ecology, and disrupted teaching and learning. Teacher statements emphasized their beliefs that administrators were so far removed from classrooms that they were not aware of students' needs. "They don't know my students" (Judy, personal communication, April 5, 2017). Again, they recognized a level of action, defined here as agency, to anticipate and address the needs of their students in myriad contexts.

Action Revealed Agency

During our conversations, teachers admitted to acts of defiance disguised as compliance. Corey described how he adjusted his lessons whenever administrators entered his classroom. His act of defiance placated his supervisors but further diluted the academic potential of his professionalism. Corey's exercise became a survival tactic, but

more importantly distracted from student learning and teacher intellectual stamina. Corey occupied his intellectual capacity with strategies that would appease his supervisors rather than engaging with the more critical task of intellectual leader in his classroom and school. The exercise of agency by teachers in this study was discovered through discourse. However, the discoveries revealed an agency that missed the mark of the true capacity of teachers.

From Action to Efficacy

CP posits reflection induces behaviors that transition from compliance to contradiction. Participant interviews revealed an axiological gap between teachers and their supervisors. Reflection and discourse helped teachers loop back to the personal and professional values they espoused when they entered the profession. It appeared that educators who maintained their role as teachers did so because of a deeper belief that they could help transform the lives of their students. “I would say 80% of teachers really are going to do whatever that child needs to the best of their skill base” (Kevin, personal communication, April 11, 2017). This efficacious epiphany is a critical insight gleaned from data. The act of reflection and dialogue helped teachers induce their efficacy and reignite an agency that had been left untapped following incidents related to testing and reporting. A critical teacher theory explains how teachers challenge authority by hiding their non-compliant actions from supervisors. Participants had to articulate periods of defiance before they recognized universal intent to do what is “...best for my kids” (Kevin, personal communication, April 11, 2017). Teachers fall back on their inclination to serve. They admitted to hiding, then demonstrating and justifying their agency. They claimed to protect and do what they believe to be best for “their” students.

Those who exercised agency beyond the expectancies of administrators, district officials, and colleagues exhibited higher senses of efficacy when describing their relations and engagement with kids. What appeared to be a logical assumption was that a teacher's years of service influenced their ability/willingness to activate agency. "Teachers begin to exercise agency after years of diminished efficacy – the diminished efficacy is a result of a marginalized space they 'act in response to how [they] view [their] situation'" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 262). This study guided teachers to locate and recognize their placement in a marginalized space before they can begin to emancipate themselves and realize their espoused role in schools and society.

Alternatively, teachers exercised agency as a form of protection and means to achieve efficacy. Choosing not to comply stimulated feelings of efficacy as much as "performance accomplishments" (Bandura, 1977). Participants shared incidents of defiance and defense that grew out of years of indignant compliance. Teachers identified repressed and delayed decision-making based on their perceived place in the social hierarchy of education. Subsequently, recognition of their ability to meet the needs of their students resulted in a realization of leadership. In particular, their ability to mold and enhance school climate reinforced their leadership potential. California's LCAP introduced school climate as a nonacademic measure of school success and promoted the importance of teacher agency to a higher level.

School Climate as an Exercise of Agency for Teachers

The inclusion of the measure of school climate in California's LCAP initiated this study and helped teachers reflect on their ability to influence student success. In 1982, Anderson determined that, "no recent comprehensive review of the school climate

research exists” (p. 368). Therefore, teacher interviews helped fill this gap in educational research. When asked, teachers were able to articulate reasons for failed school climate policies.

You can create a positive climate by allowing kids to feel safe, knowing the expectations, knowing the rules, and that's a lot of what we've lost. You throw that in with the union stuff and then the shifts in admin, and it just seems like we've had a very fluctuating climate, and most certainly the kids can feel that.

(Elizabeth, personal communication, April 12, 2017)

Teacher interviews refuted long-standing theories about the importance of principal leadership and the potential for greater teacher leadership.

Teacher Leadership and School Climate. Teachers admitted school climate resulted from personal relationships between students, teachers, administrators, and every interaction of these groups on campus. Therefore, a reciprocal relationship was identified between interpersonal relationships and school climate. Teachers acknowledged that school climate could be set and evaluated based on the values, beliefs, and practices of the stakeholders who determine the climate in each community. Furthermore, they maintained the principal is the key component of the promotion and maintenance of a positive school climate. The principal maintained relationships between members of the staff, between the staff and the central office, between the parents and the staff, and beyond so that all involved will have the opportunity, and ultimately reap the benefits. Teachers recognized the principal as the catalyst across multiple fields of the educational ecology.

This assertion about the school principal does not preclude the importance of each member of the school community to also engage across the local educational ecology. Comer (1987) and Meier (1995) provided short-lived examples of the power of collaboration and distributed leadership in schools. Their work in New Haven, Connecticut and New York, New York proved that local control and teacher leadership enhanced student success beyond academic test scores (Comer, 1987; Marschall, 2004; Meier, 1995). However, examples of such democratic educational institutions are no longer present in the modern era of school accountability. Therefore, as teachers expect a high level of leadership capacity from their site principal, they too must act to engage their own leadership capacity across the educational ecology.

Susan finally stepped into the leadership role after multiple requests and conversations with her site principal (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). She realized that student safety had been compromised on campus. Students were behaving poorly and not responding appropriately to decreased adult supervision. Her pleas for more adult supervision from site administrators were noted but not granted. Susan complained to her colleagues. Her acts of catharsis created a space for action. She invited her teacher team to discuss and plan a response in lieu of the absence of administrator support. “We've got to do something to take our school back” (Susan, personal communication, April 10, 2017). Susan located her place within the hierarchy, expressed her disbelief and blame for the situation, and then took action to meet the needs of her students. McIntosh, Bennett, and Price (2011) posited the importance of positive behavior support plans to promote improved social and academic opportunities in schools for all students. Furthermore, Affeldt (2015) recognized the importance of teacher

leadership following the implementation of nonacademic measures into California's LCAP. This study's participants' realizations about actions taken helped them acknowledge an axiology previously left dormant and underutilized.

Whether they manipulated predesigned lessons or rallied colleagues to act in the absence of the principal's presence, teachers revealed an often dismissed potential to act and lead in schools. Recalling incidents of action helped teachers realize sources of agency they previously dismissed as defiance or emotional survival. Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) stated "the field of educational leadership studies is a notoriously unstable one" (p. 177). Dumdum, Lowe, and Avolio (2002) identified the need for more research about teacher leadership in schools. This study helped to fill that research gap by inducing teachers to reflect and discuss their actions as potential leaders in schools and society. Their actions helped them regain a belief in their abilities to affect change and influence student achievement amid complex extenuating circumstances. Revelations of agency forced teachers to reflect on levels of efficacy previously dismissed following years of compliance. Therefore, travels through this cycle revealed lost sources of efficacy, cathartic revelations about the roles of actors in public education, and the propensity for teachers to act as expressions of their values framed a critical teacher theory.

Critical Teacher Theory

A critical teacher theory (CTT) explains how teachers foster a critical consciousness and leadership capacity as a means to engage in their role as a critical actor within the educational ecology. Recognition of LCAP's introduction of nonacademic measures and embracing a safe dialogical space induced teachers to enter a cycle that

flowed from diminished efficacy to indignant agency to critical consciousness. Reference to CP informed this cycle as an “unfinished” (Freire, 1976) process of discovery and growth. This is therefore considered a critical theory in that it shows how teachers gain consciousness of their place in educational social structure. Through the act of reflection and dialogue, teachers challenged their marginalization by exercising agency, thereby rebuilding self-efficacy and redefining their potential as critical intellectuals in a democratic society.

Critical teacher theory was generated from the development of themes gleaned from teacher reflection and dialogue. This study’s participants were veteran teachers invited to create a safe dialogical space and recount how their own agency may in fact be the source of their self-efficacy. Active critical discourse helped to expose a set of values suppressed due to years of oppressive directives and in direct opposition to the values of administrators far removed from students. Teacher participants struggled with the gap between their real and espoused values. They articulated their potential to exercise agency as they did when they entered the profession. The cyclical nature of teachers as dreamers, servants, and then critical intellectuals is explained by an analysis of their own words and defined by a critical teacher theory. Introducing LCAP’s nonacademic measures into school accountability programs and the endeavor of practitioner research with teachers in schools opened a dialogical space for teachers to loop back to their axiological foundation and influence their efficacy and agency, thereby influencing student success, and the communities where they live.

This analysis disclosed the progression of teachers’ role from protector to practitioner to critical actor in the educational ecology. Like the generation of a

grounded theory, this research project induced reflection and followed teachers through a cyclical journey to uncover their lost and found efficacy in a top-heavy hierarchy of educational management. The authorization of LCAP inspired this project, while the reality of LCAP's influence has yet to be fully realized by classroom teachers. LCAP is still a transactional policy shift that is operationalized by district office personnel in order to serve compliance driven county and state offices of education.

As this analysis is presented through a gradual progression of understanding and inductive ontological discovery, similarly do teachers acknowledge the reality of their place in a hierarchy and their slow but ultimate consciousness of the need to act. Practitioner research (the insider perspective), higher education pre-service teaching/administrator programs, and LEA professional development plans may address the shift from a testing and reporting accountability model, to the LCAP's broad evaluation of multiple measures. California's move from high-stakes testing to engagement and climate as indicators of student and school success initiates a greater shift in the educational milieu by charting a course where teachers might move from their marginalized location near the bottom of the educational hierarchy to a catalytic and transformational role across the educational ecology. Therefore, an investigation is necessary to posit how LCAP and practitioner research might influence teachers, schools, and the higher education institutions that examine them.

Practical Applications of the Findings

Pre-service teacher programs, administrator training programs, and LEA professional development plans will find practical applications in the form of critical teacher theory. The exercise of teacher voice as a transformative player in the

development of the public education program might be a lasting result of LCAP in California. The move to multiple measures of accountability matched with the institutionalized boost to teacher efficacy and agency stand to transform education.

Implications

California's LCAP presents one of the most significant educational reforms to be implemented in the past thirty years. The endeavor of a public education will surely be influenced by the inclusion of multiple measures of school success and the addition of firmer guidelines to elicit and include input from parents, teachers, and community members. LCAP paves the way for public education to influence democratic society. Public education is a social endeavor that claims to prepare young people for active participation in democratic society (Dewey, 1926). Therefore, the inclusion and participation of the community in the act of education helps to prepare young people to engage with that community.

Schools that represent their community, prepare students to engage with that community. This study presents the potential of community input and teacher leadership as a catalyst for improving the social and cognitive development of youth. LCAP requires the inclusion of parents, teachers, and community members in the design and implementation of the local educational program (California Education Code § 52060, g). Therefore, when all members of a community engage with the work of local schools, then local schools promote the values and identities of that community. Teacher interviews highlight the potential for parent involvement and teacher leadership in the endeavor of educating youth.

Parents. The inclusion of nonacademic measures in California's LCAP highlights the importance of local control and parent engagement. The role of school principal, as corroborated by teacher interviews, has traditionally been designated as the broker between parents, students, and teachers. Empirical evidence supplied by a critical teacher theory introduces a higher expectation and potential for teachers to work more closely with families. LCAP implemented the measure of parent engagement as one element of school accountability. Therefore, schools must engage parents more explicitly and systematically.

The creation of safe dialogical spaces for teachers to engage parents and administrators implies a better community understanding of the needs of students. Induced by a critical teacher theory, teachers have an opportunity to examine the juxtaposition of their values and beliefs and those of the families they serve. LCAP and a critical teacher theory lay the foundation for better dialogue between school and community; teachers and parents. This study implicates parents and all school personnel to address the needs and potential strategies to meet the needs of students as an attempt to meet the needs of the community. Efficacy begets agency and subsequently induces teachers to embrace their critical role in school and society. Required by LCAP; inspired by a critical teacher theory, teachers are poised to regain an advanced social status. This study expects to inspire an increased sense of efficacy and newfound confidence of agency so teachers can rebuild their status as critical intellectuals, trusted by parents and the community they serve. Furthermore, teachers are poised to join principals to fill that communication gap by engaging colleagues and community members at higher intellectual levels.

Administrators. This work influences the role of principals and high-level district and county educational administrators by inducing stronger relationships and the esoteric work of reflection and dialogue. Years of testing and reporting created a hierarchy in which school administrators directed the work of teachers. The shift from a focus on improving test scores to broader analysis of nonacademic measures forces administrators to engage teachers in a more collaborative manner. The administrator's transactional tasks of selecting and assigning curriculum has given way to the need for more transformational approaches to professional and personal development in schools. A critical teacher theory posits the importance of a shift from teacher administrator relationships as manager and employee to colleagues with a shared vision for students and schools as relevant agents in their community.

This study introduced empirical evidence to support a broader acceptance of the inclusion of teacher voice as a necessary element of the transformational work necessary to meet the expectations of LCAP. LCAP induces administrators to work more closely with teachers to develop and implement strategies to meet the nonacademic requirements of the new accountability program. Both CP and CRM, provide relevant foundations for the future of teacher administrator relations. As a school principal, I recognize the prominence of the educational hierarchy. The introduction of a critical teacher theory offers the potential for teachers to disrupt the hierarchy by exercising agency across the educational ecology. With a reinvigorated sense of efficacy, teachers have an opportunity to work more closely with administrators to determine curriculum and relevant strategies to implement it in classrooms. Their relationships with students and their understanding of student needs, places them in a critical position to inform policy

decisions. When teachers accept the reality of their leadership potential, they embrace their ability to transform how schools occupy their relevant location at the center of their community and prepare students to engage therein.

Teachers. This study presents a vision for all educators to reevaluate and embrace the leadership capacity of teachers in schools. Following years of testing and reporting, teachers are poised to regain an active, critical role in schools. The authority of LCAP and empirical evidence from similar studies direct the work of K-12 administrators to engage teachers at deeper levels across the educational ecology. “Teachers must have more voice and more respect in the culture of education” (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011, p. 165). When teachers are exposed to a safe space their discourse exposes the potential for transformative work in schools.

This study and a critical teacher theory bridge the gap between leadership studies in business and education. Business literature is consumed with the study of change and transformational leadership as the concept of affecting change for the greater good (Gill, 2011). As presented in Chapter Three, educational literature highlighted the importance of teacher reflection based on moral and ethical foundations (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Pedulla et al., 2003; Simpson, 1971; SooHoo et al., 2004). Furthermore, scholars recognized the potential influence of ESSA and LCAP on teacher leadership (Affeldt, 2015). Inspired by Freire (1970) and CP, a critical teacher theory implicates teachers to reflect, discuss, and most importantly act. Engagements in research projects, reflecting on their practice, and acting to affect change are essential implications of this study. “But human activity consists of action and reflection; it is praxis; it is transformation of the world” (Freire, 1970, p. 125). Teachers can realize the power to be gleaned from this

study and a critical teacher theory through praxis. By their action they stand to transform schools and society.

Teacher leadership need not be designated by titles, rather actions. As stated in Chapter Two, “The field does not need yet another adjective in front of the term leadership” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005, p. 177). Rather a critical teacher theory induces teachers to reconnect with their efficacious potential, address their concerns through catharsis, and ultimately engage with students, colleagues, and parents to effect change as never before. So, the call for “a substantial accumulation of theoretically informed evidence” serves to inspire practitioner research as a relevant and potentially influential contribution to public education (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005, p. 177). The introduction of California’s LCAP matched with the cycle of a critical teacher theory provides the foundation for true transformational work in schools that have not been realized for the past three decades.

Professional development provides a relevant response to constantly shifting legislation and social changes. Practitioner research in schools provides a relevant approach to pre-service teacher and administrator training programs. A study of K-12 professional development plans found that sample school districts spent an estimated \$18,000 per teacher, per year on staff development efforts only to find “the evaluation ratings of nearly seven out of ten teachers remained constant or declined over the last two to three years” (Jacob & McGovern, 2015, p. 2). The current state of educational professional development is in need of reform. Malm (2009) identified three elements of personal development that should be integrated into formal teacher professional development efforts; shared practice, collaborative learning networks, and scholarly

reflection. She suggested a more holistic and authentic approach to teacher training.

“There is a need to heighten the awareness of what it means to be a teacher, with both the personal ‘being’ and the professional ‘becoming’ as essential and interrelated dimensions of career development” (Malm, 2009, p. 86). This study emphasized the importance of reflection and dialogue as elements of personal and professional development for educators at all levels of the organization.

Practitioner research with teachers in schools is a broad field open to myriad research projects. Academics are currently engaged in research in schools to improve teacher efficacy. Donohoo, Hattie, and Eells (2018) reiterated the importance and potential of collective efficacy for teachers and school staffs.

The power and promise of collective efficacy is that it can be influenced within schools, so focusing on it as a change point is a viable path to greater student achievement, greater commitment to learning, and a more inviting place to come and learn (p. 44).

A critical teacher theory induces administrators and teachers to construct safe dialogical spaces in schools as a means to enrich their professional performance and the learning environment for students. Scholars call on school leaders to “control the narrative of the school” in order to influence teachers’ collective sense of efficacy, student belief systems, and achievement (Donohoo, Hattie, & Eells, 2018, p. 44). After Hattie’s (2016) meta-analysis of teacher efficacy research, he theorized that collective teacher efficacy stood out as the top factor influencing student achievement. Again, a critical teacher theory contributes to academic literature and provides an opportunity for educators to rewrite the narrative about how educators protect effective learning environments for adults and

subsequently, for students. The following section presents limitations that should be considered before engaging in a similar study.

Limitations

A significant limiting factor of this study is the sample. First, within this study I worked with thirteen teachers. Those teachers completed a survey of short answer questions and met for conversations. Working with more teachers would have gleaned a wider range of responses and perspectives. Second, the teachers in this study worked within a single school district. Admittedly, this study benefited from the fact that the participants shared similar experiences within their school district. However, working with a wider range of teachers from multiple school districts would have provided an opportunity to compare data from teachers with truly diverse experiences and perspectives.

My positionality as an educator in the research setting was an important element in this study. As presented in Chapter Three, my position as a former teacher and current site principal induced me to balance my role as both an insider and outsider during the research process. My relationships with educators, my understanding of life in schools, and my empathy for teachers within a hierarchy helped me bring relevant experience to the research setting. I believe my status as an insider prompted their resolve to support my work and contribute to the field. Furthermore, my own intent to act as a transformative intellectual in the public school setting could have influenced the analysis of data throughout.

It was important for me to constantly confront and check my own reflexivity during data collection and analysis. The process of coding and memo writing provided

me with an intellectual outlet where I could challenge my own values and beliefs and maintain objective interpretations. Review of interview transcripts revealed elements of my espoused values of educational leadership and provided me the opportunity to accept and quiet those ideals during the meaning making and writing processes.

Recommendations for future research and the attempts to remedy the above mentioned limitations are presented in the next section.

Recommendations

This study provides a guide for future practitioner research in schools. Herein teachers and administrators are induced to reflect and safeguard a collaborative dialogical space where adult learning develops contexts and opportunities for deeper student achievement. That work may be realized in both independent and collaborative reflection exercises. The act of discourse with teachers and other members of the community helps them confront and disrupt otherwise oppressive hierarchical structures. When teachers are engaged in reflective discourse they reinvigorate their sense of efficacy and move toward the leadership potential inherent in their role as a transformer. Teachers may eventually engage with and accept their leadership capacity when they are able to work more closely with other educators and members of their community.

After my own reflection about this study, I recommend strategic practitioner research be conducted in schools with teachers. The experience and expertise of K-12 educators/practitioners provides an appropriate lens through which teachers can reflect and share their thoughts and analyses. If teachers are to realize their capacity to act as critical intellectuals in American society, they should reflect and analyze their capacity to influence students and the American educational system. Qualitative research strategies

provide relevant methodologies to inform practitioner researchers. Recent action research projects in schools have examined the generation of living educational theories. Practitioner research provided a foundation of knowledge creation from the insider's perspective that directly affects the quality of professional practice (Whitehead, 2009).

Living Educational Theory. In his description of Living Educational Theory, Whitehead simply asked, "How do I improve what I am doing?" (Whitehead, 2009). In doing so, he simplified the complexity of epistemology to a basic question. Through reflection, inquiry, and collaboration educators can commit to an inductive process that moves from practice to their own Living Educational Theory in order to transform educational programs for young people (Ogawa, Goldring, & Conley, 2000). Whitehead encouraged researchers to record their actions in writing, audio, and video so they may later be shared with critical friends and colleagues for deep analysis. Personal reflection and collective analysis by and with others can provide the researcher an opportunity to observe their own actions beyond their espoused self. The iterative process of action, collection, reflection, analysis, and action again might work to help the researcher to constantly work to improve their professional practice. This concept is grounded in the belief that meaning making through the development of one's own living theory can transform self, schools, communities, and society beyond the promises of an educational workshop or seminar (Whitehead, 2009; Whitehead & Huxtable, 2013).

Living Educational Theory is postmodern in that the practice precedes theory. Therefore, the researcher's ontology stands to be challenged and transformed through a reflective action research paradigm. Whitehead expressed his view of the influence of living theory on the importance of combating the oppressive educational process of

accountability. We can use education to promote a continual learning of values and therefore enhance our community and society as a whole. The development of one's Living Educational Theory therefore supports the requirements of LCAP to measure a school's climate while encouraging teachers to engage with the perpetuation of a positive school climate. Therefore, educators can grow to influence a democratic society following an iterative process of developing their own Living Educational Theory. Whitehead's research assumed the work of personal growth as professional development.

Whitehead's (2009) work and the work of his colleagues and students have challenged the use of *I* in research. His critical approach to action research provided a refreshing however intense approach to knowledge generation and democratic validity. I contend that the success of practitioner research is dependent on the integrity, tenacity, and humility of educators who can take on leadership roles at all levels of the educational ecology so that they may improve the *self* in order to help those in their charge do the same. Kemmis and McTaggart (2008) explain the importance of reflection and discourse needed for personal and social transformation. The transformation of *self* provided the foundation of transformation of the organization. Again, if the educator is a central figure in the educational ecology, then the transformational leadership capacity of the individual directly influences that of society (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). Action research is a "dynamic process by which new understandings shift our engagement with the world, and how through changing our world, in turn we understand it differently" (Cahill, 2007 p. 183). An educator's ontology stands to be challenged and transformed through the reflective practitioner research paradigm.

Democratic society may be realized in concert with the personal and professional

growth of educators. Simply put, I posit the perpetuation of a sound democratic society is reliant on an efficacious professional development model. The successful implementation of a relevant educational program is dependent on the social/emotional and academic development of educators. Living Educational Theory as explained by Whitehead is supported by his work with educators who engage in self-study to, “enable them to offer as gifts the knowledge, expertise and talents they develop to extend the knowledge base of the profession” (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2013, p. 221). Such an endeavor relies on the critical intellectual ability and integrity of educators.

Educators must stand on a strong values-based foundation in order to be able to induce and support the critical participation of youth within the current bureaucratic education system. This epistemological work is absent from current professional development programs (Jacob & McGovern, 2015). Emphasis on collaboration and data based inquiry is important work in the educational realm, but must be induced by the values based intellectualism brought forth by the individual educators who make up each team (DuFour, 2014; Huffman & Kalnin, 2003). Therefore, educators must strive to become and behave as “transformative intellectuals” (Giroux & McLaren, 1986, p. 215). Professional and personal development amongst educators must emulate and perpetuate the praxis of democracy in the educational environment. So, democracy is perpetuated in the ecology of education that encircles the individual student and educator and constantly flows between concentric realms that surround the individual defined as classroom, school, neighborhood, community, and democratic society (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). Whether we refer to *I* as teacher or as student, are secondary to the necessity of the constant process of action, reflection, and growth (repeat) of the *self* in order to realize

the socially just democratic society educators espouse to realize.

Conclusion

This study filled a gap in scholarly literature and is poised to contribute to educational endeavors in K-12 and higher education. Practitioner research, higher education pre-service teaching/administrator programs, and LEA professional development plans may address the shift from a testing and reporting accountability model, to the LCAP's broad evaluation of multiple measures. California's move from high-stakes testing to engagement and climate as indicators of student and school success initiates a greater shift in the educational milieu by charting a course where teachers might move from their marginalized location near the bottom of the educational hierarchy to a catalytic and transformational role across the educational ecology. This chapter detailed the implications of my role as a qualitative practitioner researcher, an overview of the research questions, an analysis of the themes gleaned from the data, and recommendations for further scholarly engagements across the educational ecology.

Ultimately teachers exercise agency in the form of classroom and school site decisions that influence their students and the teachers with whom they work. Veteran teachers increase their efficacy following incidents of risk taking, potentially resulting in relationship building with their direct supervisors. Encouraging teacher voice into the decision making process improves efficacy across the ecology and therefore improves the climate that directly impact teaching and learning for student achievement.

At the center of each community lies the school responsible for producing the future citizens of that municipality. If we are to promote a democratic society, we can begin that work in public schools. When teachers and administrators work

collaboratively to address the challenges of their students, they lay the foundation to address the challenges of community and society at large. A critical teacher theory suggests schools be run as a democratic society. When Maine Governor Paul LaPage claims “classroom teachers are a dime a dozen”, we are challenged to promote our democratic ideals of inclusion and voice across the educational ecology and society (AP, 2017). The inclusion of teacher voice induces the inclusion of student voice and sets in motion the potential for critical social participation across the educational ecology and then the social ecology of American communities. By engaging teachers as critical intellectuals who have the opportunity to influence students, schools, and society at a higher level we may finally begin to realize Dewey’s (1926) ideal of democracy.

Appendix A: School Accountability Programs

The United States Department of Education Accountability Plan

The legacy of NCLB was the requirement that all students achieve at or above grade level (“proficient”) by the end of the 2013-2014 school year (Fennel, 2015; U. S. Department of Education, 2001). NCLB required all students be assessed annually in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics in grades 3-8 and once in high school to show academic progress on their way to proficiency. The legislation placed an emphasis on reporting the results of school-wide populations in addition to student “subgroups”. Subgroups included English-learners, racial minorities, students designated in special education, and children from low-income families. Schools were evaluated by complex calculations of adequate yearly progress (AYP) for each subgroup and all students collectively. Social implications for students and diminished roles of teachers were identified in scholarly publications as a result of a reliance on test scores as the sole measure of school success (Haladyna, Nolen, & Haas, 1991; Hoff, 1999; Sloan, 2000; Smith, 1991; Sunderman, Tracey, Kim, & Orfield, 2004). Administrators and teachers strategized best practices in response to federal initiatives to show growth and meet proficiency by 2014.

Teacher decision-making and adverse social implications at schools were the results of federal and subsequent administrator pressure to improve student test scores (Mahen, 1992). If a school or student subgroup within that school failed to meet AYP, they were subject to program improvement (PI). Schools entered PI if they failed to meet AYP two or more years in a row. NCLB mandated that PI schools allow students to transfer to higher performing schools in the same district, offer free tutoring, and set aside

federal funding to develop and implement a school improvement strategies (Klein, 2015; U. S. Department of Education, 2001). Schools in PI status for five years faced restructuring as a charter school, replacement of most of the staff, and/or face take over by the state or other outside education agency (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). A narrow focus on test scores to evaluate student learning and the lack of local control over accountability measures prompted the Obama administration to consider the reauthorization of NCLB.

The most drastic shifts to ESSA from NCLB are the transfer of control to states and districts with regard to standards and assessments, in addition to the use of non-academic measures in the accountability equation. ESSA allows state departments of education to select their own rigorous education standards, testing plans, and additional gauges of quality (like student engagement or school climate and safety) with an emphasis on college and career readiness (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The new assessment plans can be based on short and long-term goals that may include interim assessments that culminate in one summative score. Student performance targets are handed over to states and must include non-academic indicators determined by the state department of education. Rather than face PI, states are required to design and implement school wide intervention plans for institutions that fall in the bottom five percent of the district and high schools with high drop out rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The hallmark of ESSA is that it turns a transformative lens on teachers. Teachers may now have voice in policy decisions and fulfill their social obligation to educate students beyond ELA and Mathematics tests. The California Department of Education acted before the Obama administration by initiating the high

trust measures of local control and supplementing academic test scores in the transition from PSAA to LCAP.

The California Department of Education Accountability Plan

Both the PSAA and the CAASPP require all California schools to publically report annual “academic performance and growth” (California Department of Education, 2013). PSAA required that each school’s required academic growth be determined when a base Academic Performance Index (API) is subtracted from the projected growth API. The API is a numeric index (scale) recorded between 200 and 1000 points with a state mandated goal of 800 or higher by all schools in the state. Similar to NCLB’s AYP, California schools are required to meet annual “targets” for “numerically significant student groups” and reach a minimum API of 800 points and show progress each subsequent year. A school’s target API is calculated as five percent of the difference between the school’s Base API and the statewide target goal of 800 API (California Department of Education, 2016). Under LCAP, “numerically significant student groups” changed from a minimum of 100 students with valid scores to a minimum of 30 students with valid test scores based on ethnicity, socioeconomic status, language fluency, identified disability, and identification as Foster youth (a minimum of fifteen Foster students in a school must have a valid test score). Students and schools with an API of 800 are required to maintain that score or meet the minimum growth target of five points each year (California Department of Education, 2015).

The new law inverted the balance of power to include stakeholders in needs assessments and turned the lens of culpability toward LEAs so they will be held accountable for effective planning, equity, and support. PSAA relied solely on the results

of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) in grades 2-12. Progressive ideals of LCAP will hold LEAs responsible for equal access, socially responsive non-academic measures, in addition to traditional academic achievement data. The new law expands liability from teachers to local agencies by including multiple measures in the accountability equation. LEAs will be held responsible for “unprecedented” engagement and cooperation from employees, parents, and the community to meet the requirements of the new laws (Menefee-Libey, & Kerchner, 2015). LCAP insisted schools be evaluated based on eight components including: student achievement, school climate, basic services, implementation of Common Core State Standards, course access, parental involvement, student engagement, and other students outcomes (California Department of Education, 2013). The measure of a school’s success expanded beyond student test scores to a broader responsibility of access and equity determined by the LEA with cooperation from school administrators and teachers. Therefore, the role of the teacher must be reevaluated in this era of socially responsive education expectations.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I hope this exercise proves mutually beneficial to you, educational literature, and educational professional development. Your involvement in this study should promote deeper reflection about school accountability and your role in your classroom, district, and education in general. California's Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) was implemented in 2013 to measure school success based on eight components including: student achievement (based on scores from summative and interim assessments designed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), school climate, basic services, implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), course access, parental involvement, student engagement, and other students outcomes (California Department of Education, 2013). The LCAP requires the inclusion of teachers (as well as other educational stakeholders) in planning and evaluation of each district's educational accountability program (California Education Code § 52060, g).

For more information about California's LCAP and the U.S. Department of Education's ESSA:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/lc/lcffffaq.asp>

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/essaanal.pdf>

Please take a moment to complete this section before responding to the questions below. Remember, your responses will be kept confidential and your name will not be used in the final analysis.

Demographics:

Male: ____ Female: ____ Age: ____

What grades have you taught? _____ Currently teach? _____

If secondary, which subjects have you taught? _____

How many years have you been a classroom teacher? _____

Other than classroom teacher, what other roles do you play at your school?

Please contemplate your thoughts and feelings about the questions below. You can answer them on this Google form or respond to them on paper (digital or hard copy). Your responses can be stream of consciousness; let your ideas flow. The questions were designed to help you reflect on past and current policies and practices. These responses may be a few sentences or multiple pages. You may prefer to go away from them and return before you submit your responses.

Pre-Interview Open Response Survey Questions:

1. In your opinion, are standardized tests a valid measure of student and school progress / success? Describe your thoughts about the attention / emphasis placed on state standardized test scores by site / district administration, colleagues, parents, and the media?
2. Have you noticed a change in the emphasis on test scores following the transition from California Standards Test (CST) to SBAC? If so, what have you noticed?
3. To what extent, if any, have you felt pressure (from yourself, administration, colleagues, etc.) to improve student test scores? How did that pressure influence your teaching?

4. How would you define school climate in general? What elements do you believe impact school climate in schools?
5. How do you feel about school climate as a measure of student and school progress / success?

Interview Introduction:

Each interview will begin with a review of participants' responses to the written survey. The researcher will ask follow up questions so participants can elaborate and clarify their responses. Participants will be asked to reflect on the writing process with the following questions.

[Thank you again for agreeing to meet me and spend your time discussing your thoughts and feelings. Before we begin, I want to explain why and how I plan to conduct this research project and possibly influence our conversation. I am engaging in a Grounded Theory study. That means I am working to generate theory or theories based on a qualitative analysis of responses from teachers. A review of literature informed me that much research has been done about the impact on student and teachers of testing and reporting. However, no research exists to inform us of how an adapted accountability plan (LCAP) that relies on multiple measures will impact teachers; how they feel about their ability (efficacy) to successfully help student learn and make informed decisions (agency) about the educational program. After these conversations, I will code (look for meaning, line by line) each open response and transcribed interview in an attempt to identify categories, themes, and eventually theoretical understanding about how teachers perceive their efficacy and agency now that CA transitioned to the LCAP. You may see me taking notes, as I will be journaling and writing memos

throughout our meeting and this entire project. Then I will reveal my findings in chapter 4 and my conclusions in chapter 5 of my dissertation. My study is attempting to answer three research questions.]

- How do teachers perceive their efficacy and agency following recent educational policy reforms?
- How do teachers perceive their role following the implementation of LCAP?
- What are the implications on teacher efficacy and agency of practitioner research in schools?

Furthermore, I asked you to be a participant because my study is grounded in two theoretical foundations: culturally responsive methodologies (CRM) and critical pedagogy (CP). CRM assumes that we have a relationship and insists that neither you nor I command this relationship but rather that I do research with you as opposed to on you. So, this is a conversation rather than an interview. It is based on the assumption that I cannot remove my values or myself from the analysis. CRM requires that I accept and analyze my position while interpreting the data. Therefore, the relationship of me as admin and you as teacher must be addressed and accepted with CRM so we can work in a safe space where we can learn and understand our context more deeply. CP challenges us to reflect more deeply on our positions within a hierarchy (admin – teacher) in order to adopt a critical consciousness (realization – understanding; not acceptance) of this imbalance. Then, through this process of reflection, dialogue, and attention to a cycle of new realizations and progress, only then can we improve the context of our work for ourselves and those we work with; kids, community.

Do you have any questions about what or why I am doing project? I would be happy to share my proposal if you would like to read more about CRM or CP.

What was your initial impression of the topics addressed? Were you able to begin writing quickly or did you have to go away and come back to it? Was it laborious or cathartic? Why?

After reading your initial responses I believe you were trying to say... Is that true or would you like to add anything now?

Next I have a set of questions that will guide our conversation. They are merely a guide, so there is no need to stay on a particular topic, feel free to stray as you see fit or feel comfortable sharing.]

The following questions are a guide to support the semi-structured nature of the conversation and to induce organic discourse.

Interview Questions:

1. If you recall, how did you feel about the CCSS after they were initially introduced?
 - a. How, if at all, have your thoughts and feelings about CCSS changed since then?
 - b. What was your first impression of the new SBAC test for students? And now?
 - c. How did that test impact you, your students, and your teaching?
2. Describe your district's initiatives to address the implementation of the CCSS and SBAC testing.
 - a. How, if at all, did the district implementation differ from your school site implementation? Did you hear difference messages from different offices?

- b. Tell me how you learned to handle the new initiative?
 - c. How were you involved in the planning and implementation of the new standards? Would you have changed to process? If so, how?
 - d. Describe how teachers were involved in this implementation?
3. How did you feel about your ability to influence student performance on the CST - and now on the SBAC?
- a. What made you confident (or not) in your ability to influence student performance? Does that still influence you now?
 - b. Describe any changes you made to address the transition to SBAC.
4. [What do you know about LCAP? Are you aware of the need for stakeholder input, addition of school climate, and student engagement to the measures?] Have you ever seen this infographic? Describe if you felt any pressure to improve student test scores before and after the implementation of SBAC.
- a. Where or from whom did that pressure come? [How much was internal? Why do you think you put that pressure on yourself? Was it externally motivated?]
 - b. After reflecting on your experience, is there anything else you would like to add?
5. Describe your relationships with your students, parents, colleagues, administrators, and district office personnel.
- a. How do these relationships influence your job performance? [Is there a connection to the pressure described above?]
 - b. How, if at all, have these relationships changed following recent reforms?

6. How do you describe the role of teachers in American society? [How do teachers influence youth, neighborhood, and society?]

a. Describe whether or not you believe the recent reforms to accountability programs have changed that role?

b. If so, in what ways has the implementation of CCSS, SBAC, or LCAP changed your role at your school or district?

7. You described school climate as.... [Refer to pre-interview response.]

Describe your district and site's school climate initiatives. [Are they effective? Do you support them? Why/why not? How?]

a. Describe your role with these initiatives? [Planning? Committees? Or simply following policy as directed?]

b. Have they influenced your teaching? If so, how?

c. Has this changed your role on campus? If so, how?

8. How do you feel about your ability to influence student engagement? [How do you define student engagement?] School climate?

a. After reflecting, has this ability changed over time?

b. Were you asked to contribute to the implementation plan of CCSS, SBAC, and LCAP? [Did you ask to contribute?]

9. Describe your thoughts and feelings about your involvement in the recent educational accountability reforms? [Were you asked or directed? What influenced your participation or lack there of?]

- a. How do you feel about your ability to influence how we measure student / school success?
- b. How do you feel about the term “local control” with regard to LCAP? [How do you feel about your role in “local control”?]
- c. Have you considered getting more deeply involved in the implementation of CCSS, SBAC, LCAP, or school improvement initiatives?

10. After reflecting on your experiences, your role, and the recent educational accountability reforms, is there something else you would like to add? Would you like to add any closing thoughts?

Thank you for spending your time to share your thoughts and feelings. I plan to have this transcribed before I begin the coding process. May I contact you later for clarification or follow up questions? Finally, you are welcome to read your transcript at any time.

Appendix C: Participant Packet

Letter to Participants

Dear Potential Study Participant,

I am a doctoral student in the Leadership Studies program at the College of Educational Studies at Chapman University. As part of my dissertation, I am looking at how teachers perceive their role in the adoption of the latest educational accountability program (LCAP) in California. This study seeks to examine the perspectives of teachers with regard to teacher efficacy and agency in response to the shift in educational accountability programs from an emphasis on testing and reporting to newly adopted measurements of student engagement and school climate. This research study intends to generate theory about how the implementation of educational accountability programs influence teacher efficacy and agency. You are receiving this email because you have been identified as someone who has worked in the field of K-12 education for at least seven years.

Participating in the study will require your participation in two in-person or phone interviews that will take about approximately one hour. During this study you may be asked to do follow up interviews or answer follow up questions. To maintain confidentiality, you will not be identified by name on any form of recording; similarly, any identifying information that may arise during recording will be replaced in the final copies used for analysis.

My dissertation committee and I will be the only persons to read the written data, though my professors will not be able to identify any of the participants by their actual names. When the written data have been completed, you may be asked to check to see if

it accurately represents what you have shared. At that time you will have the opportunity to add any additional comments that you like to the document or ask that topics be removed. All original copies of the tapes will be kept locked, and within ten years of when the study is finished all original tapes will be destroyed. Your name and any other information gathered in this study will remain confidential and will only be used for educational purposes.

The research from these studies will be utilized for my dissertation, conference presentations, and publications that emerge from that dissertation. If, at a later date, I wish to use your data in new research, you will be contacted and given the same rights to refuse participation in the new study.

If you have any questions, please contact me or my Dissertation Chair: Dr. Kris DePedro at 818-294-4773, depedro@chapman.edu. I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of my request. I look forward to your participation in the study.

With regards,

Edward Resnick

Doctoral Student

Chapman University

College of Educational Studies

resni104@mail.chapman.edu

951-760-6024

Informed Consent for Participants

Research Project: Local Control: A Grounded Theory Study of Teacher Efficacy, Agency and School Accountability Reforms

Primary investigator: Edward Resnick, doctoral candidate, 951-760-6024

Supervising Professor: Kris De Pedro, Ph.D., 818-294-4773,
depedro@chapman.edu

I have been asked to participate in a research study that investigates teacher efficacy and agency. The purpose of this is to better understand how teachers perceive their role amid recent legislative reforms to educational accountability programs. The results of this study will offer contributions academic literature, higher education teacher training programs, and professional development plans at K-12 institutions.

In participating in this study I agree to participate in recorded interviews and communication with the primary investigator. The study will run from February – May, 2017.

I understand that:

A. The possible risks of this study should be minimal. I may change my decisions to participate at any time, and I may choose that data will be eliminated from the study. Comfort levels will be addressed throughout the study, and participants will be given a chance to read the final draft to (1) ensure that they are protected, (2) determine that the findings retain democratic validity, and (3) have a final chance to eliminate data they provided. Should I feel that I am uncomfortable or anxious at any time during the study, I will be encouraged by the primary investigator to withdraw from the portion of the study causing discomfort. Stored data will be kept in a secure, locked location, and digital data

will be stored on an external drive that is password protected. Should data be considered for a study at a later time, I will be contacted and the same steps for permission, disclosure, and elimination will be offered to me.

B. The possible benefits of this study to me are the opportunity to engage in a safe dialogical space to discuss how I feel about my role in the educational process.

C. Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Edward Resnick, doctoral candidate, at 951-760-6024 or resni104@mail.chapman.edu; Kris De Pedro, PhD, at 818-294-4773, depedro@chapman.edu.

D. I understand that I may refuse to participate or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time.

E. I also understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent re-obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact the Chapman University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Administration/IRB Administration, which oversee the protection of volunteers in research. The Chapman University Institutional Review Board Office may be contacted either by telephone at (714) 628-7392 or by writing to the Chancellor, Office of Academic Affairs, Chapman University, One University Drive, Orange, CA 92866.

Research Project: Local Control: A Grounded Theory Study of Teacher Efficacy,
Agency and School Accountability Reforms

Primary investigator: Edward Resnick, doctoral candidate, 951-760-6024

Supervising Professor: Kris De Pedro, Ph.D., 818-294-4773, depedro@chapman.edu

- I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the Research Participant's Bill of Rights.
- This study is not supported by funding.

I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

_____ Signature of Participant

_____ Signature of Primary investigator

Consent Agreement for Audio Recording

I have received an adequate description of the purpose and procedures for audio recording of sessions during the course of the proposed research study. I give my consent to allow myself to be audio recorded during participation in this study, and for those records to be reviewed by persons involved in the study, as well as for other professional purposes as described to me. I understand that all information will be kept confidential and will be reported in an anonymous fashion, and that the recordings will be erased 10 years after the study has been completed. I understand that I may request a copy of video and/or audio recordings. I understand that I will receive digital copies of all photos, and I will have the right to review photos at the end of each session. I further understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time without penalty.

Initial

_____ I agree to audio recording

_____ I do not want to be recorded

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Research Participant's Bill of Rights: Social and Behavioral Research

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in a research survey, test or experiment has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told about any potential risks or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her during the research activity.
3. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
4. To be told what other choices he/she has to participating in research (i.e., additional non-research options for extra credit, etc.)
5. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
6. To be told the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained.
7. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

8. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.

9. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time there are questions regarding the research study, the investigators listed on the consent form will answer them. For questions regarding research subject rights please contact the Chapman University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Administration / IRB Administration, which oversee the protection of volunteers in research. The Chapman University Institutional Review Board Office may be contacted either by telephone at (714) 628-7392 or by writing to the Chancellor, Office of Academic Affairs, Chapman University, One University Drive, Orange, CA 92866.

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