Making parts instead of children: policy feedback and No Child Left Behind

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MAKING PARTS INSTEAD OF CHILDREN:
POLICY FEEDBACK AND NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

by

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ABSTRACT

Most of our hopes and dreams for public education rely on how well teachers teach, and major federal education policies often need teachers to serve as their primary implementers. Yet we know very little about how teachers’ responses to federal education policies affect their teaching, their identity and their motivations. Research on “policy feedback” recognizes that policy targets derive important lessons from public policies and political discourse, but there are gaps in terms of how, when and why relationships within organizations, institutions, or communities mediate these effects on policy implementers and citizens. This dissertation uses cultural policy analysis, and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with teachers, to examine how the public framing of policy problems, policy targets, and solutions under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has impacted teachers’ political and social experiences, behaviors and identities. The primary goal is to understand the effects of NCLB on teaching, learning, and policy implementation. However, by interviewing teachers from a wide variety of backgrounds and schools, this dissertation also provides insight into how public policies and political discourse interact with teachers’ backgrounds, and the racial and socio-economic backgrounds of their students, to mitigate or exacerbate the effects of public policies on children’s educational outcomes and the democratic social purposes of schools.

Overall, the research finds that NCLB has restricted teachers’ abilities to form meaningful relationships at work, and thus their ability to fulfill the humanistic norms of teaching as an occupation. It also has shifted authority and power away from teachers and public schools to parents, state bureaucrats, corporate elites and interest groups, who use their authority to influence what is taught by constructing what is tested. Teachers
further argued, however, that the construction of parents as “consumers” of education has shifted power toward those parents who are the most vocal. These parents use their social and cultural capital to establish control over how schools are organized so that they may obtain special programs for their children, including advanced placement, gifted and talented, and homogenously tracked services. In the process, NCLB has undermined the social democratic mission of schools, which is part of teachers’ ethical commitment to a just society. The end result is that teachers are experiencing increased emotional dissonance as well as political cynicism. This was especially true among teachers who served high needs students in low resource environments, or taught in schools that used scripting and other routinizing mechanisms in order to standardize teaching and improve test performance. In terms of society, teachers perceive that the focus on performance has caused a decline in citizens’ commitment to the common school ideal, which is necessary to foster a broader vision of public education than its current portrayal as a consumption good.
Many people directly or indirectly contributed to this dissertation.

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DEDICATION

To my husband, Andre

To my children, Jess, Chris and Megs

I could not have done this without your patience, understanding, encouragement, love, prayers and hugs when I needed them. I am truly blessed.
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CHAPTER I
DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Introduction

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The law, which amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, dramatically altered and expanded the federal role in education. The original ESEA provided additional resources to schools that served disadvantaged students, with few federal requirements or mandates. As reauthorized under NCLB, the ESEA now places significant new responsibilities on state and local educational agencies, particularly in the areas of standards, testing and other forms of accountability. Stone (1997, 13) writes: “all politics involve deliberate attempts to change people’s behaviors.” NCLB is designed to change the culture of schools, the culture of teaching as a profession, and the behavior of teachers, administrators, parents and students through the use of explicit rewards and sanctions, including the public reporting of test scores, school rankings, and other indicators. Although the primary target is public schools that receive federal Title I funding, the policy design holds teachers and administrators, and, less directly, parents and students, accountable by stigmatizing schools that fail to make annual yearly progress (AYP). The theory of action (Stone 1989) is that public information and competition for public resources will stimulate positive changes in public schools and teaching, especially in schools in need of improvement (SINI) (Hess and Petrilli 2009). This dissertation uses cultural policy analysis, and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with teachers, to examine how NCLB has impacted teachers’ political and social experiences, behaviors and identities.
Why should we study this topic? My interest in this research stems from my experiences teaching American history, government, public policy and economics to high school students. During that time, I became interested in research on “policy feedback,” which studies how citizens’ experiences with government shape their political identities and behaviors. I also became interested in research on social capital, which explores how relationships contribute to the instrumental well being of individuals, groups, communities and governments (Portes 1998). While the empirical research has developed in isolation from one another, in teaching about both, I began to create a dialogue between them. This dialogue was important to me because it spoke to issues of social justice and inequality in education, including how political and economic institutions interact with the social contexts of schools to influence the academic and social well being of children and adolescents.

More directly, though, most of our hopes and dreams for public education rely on how well teachers teach, and major federal education policies often need teachers to serve as their primary implementers. Large-scale change of the kind embodied by NCLB is a natural experiment for understanding the means by which social expectations and standards are constructed, contested, institutionalized and deinstitutionalized by society and political institutions, such as public policies. Natural experiments approximate the properties of those that are controlled by scientists in laboratories, but they occur “spontaneously” in nature and are thus not controlled by the researcher. In this sense, NCLB can be viewed as “an event” and teacher, administrator, parent and student reactions to that event can be viewed as the “natural experiment.” Thus, investigating teachers’ understandings of how it has changed or failed to change their behaviors is a window into the culture of policy, the
culture of schools as organizations and public institutions, and the culture of teaching. It is also a window into how state discourse and institutions affect the political and social experiences of citizens and policy implementers.

Just as importantly, a large body of research documents the importance of teachers for student achievement, yet we know very little about how teachers’ responses to federal education policies affect their teaching, their identity and their motivations. Outside of education, research recognizes that public discourse and policies have consequences for beliefs, behaviors and actions. It further shows that public policies do not work when the state is misinformed about the values, beliefs, behaviors and incentive systems of citizens and policy implementers. They may even create the very problems the government is trying to resolve. As such, the findings from this research are important for both public policy and children’s educational outcomes.

The first section of this chapter briefly creates a dialogue between the literatures on policy feedback and social capital in order to specify the empirical gaps I address in this study. The second discusses the purpose of this research and provides the research questions. The third section offers the contributions of this research and describes the general lay out of the dissertation.

**The Problem: Linking Policy Feedback with Social Contexts**

Traditional models of the policy process are “linear,” or move from citizen participation and engagement up to government action in the form of political debate and public policies. Research on policy feedback, on the other hand, explores how experiences with public policies and political discourse influence citizen participation and engagement, thereby altering the kinds of public problems and policies that are demanded
of and acted on by government (Smith and Ingram 1993; Mettler and Soss 2004). While public policies and discourse are not the only ways citizens encounter their government, the empirical literature clearly supports that citizens’ experiences with government shape individual beliefs about themselves and their group, not just their feelings about their government. In this way, experiences with government influence the willingness of citizens to mobilize and become politically engaged (Campbell 2003; Marston 2003; Mettler 2002; and Soss 1999 and 2005).

The empirical literature on policy feedback has provided many important insights into how experiences with government impact the political participation and mobilization of citizens, but most studies focus on policies that confer individual benefits, such as welfare, Social Security and veterans’ benefits. Less studied are the ways public policies and political discourse interact with the values, beliefs, and incentive systems of policy targets within micro and meso-level social contexts, including networks of communication within groups, communities and institutions. Meanwhile, research from a wide array of disciplines suggests that individual interests and preferences are constructed through social interaction.¹ In terms of education, these interactions take place within schools as communities, but are also structured by schools as organizations, education as a public institution, and teaching as an occupation.

One way to address these gaps is to link studies on policy feedback and implementation with studies on social capital. As a theoretical construct, social capital explores how relationships contribute to the instrumental well being of individuals, groups, communities and governments (Portes 1998). Still, most research focuses on how social

¹ Please see, for example. Wildavsky (1987); Burt (1982); Katznelson and Weingast (2005); Lewin (1996); Mansbridge (1990); Etzioni (1988); Bandura (1977).
capital facilitates productive personal outcomes, such as occupational mobility (Portes 2000; Granovetter 1985). Very few studies examine the impact of the state on the formation, maintenance and destruction of social capital in groups, communities or society (Szreter 2006). This is also true in the substantive field of education where most studies focus on how social capital impacts educational achievement and attainment (Dika and Singh 2002). The literature is largely silent on how public policies and discourse interact with social capital in schools to further or thwart collective social or political goals. These include, for example, socio-economic equality, policy implementation, and the democratic participation of administrators, teachers, parents and students. This gap is magnified by the fact that few studies use social “groups,” such schools, classrooms, or teaching as an occupation, for their units of analysis. Consequently, we know little about how social capital might promote positive communal outcomes by serving as a source of social control or social cohesion in teaching, schools and classrooms.

Through this dissertation, we will learn how public policies interact with relationships within teaching and schools to influence teachers as citizens and policy implementers. At the macro-level, I use a content analysis of elite political discourse to identify the images and rationales that the president, members of Congress and other key policymakers used to advance a radically new approach to public education. At the micro-level, I use 83 interviews with teachers and former teachers to examine how NCLB’s policy tools and language have interacted with relationships in schools to construct teachers’ political and social experiences, identities, and behaviors, including the implementation of a federal law. Together, these levels of analysis capture how state-society relations interact within schools as communities to resolve or perpetuate public
problems in education, thereby impacting teaching and learning. The next section
discusses the study’s purpose and provides the research questions.

**Study Purpose and Research Questions**

This research explores teachers’ perceptions of how the public framing of policy
problems, targets and solutions interacts with the informal norms, work practices, and
patterns of social relations within teaching and schools to structure their political and
social experiences, behaviors and identities. It seeks to understand how teachers are
portrayed in the policy debates on NCLB and how that compares to the actual behaviors
they exhibit within schools. The major research questions addressed in this study are:

- **RQ1:** How did political elites justify different forms of regulation in schools under
  NCLB? What institutional and discursive strategies were used?
- **RQ2:** What are the similarities and differences between (a) the kinds of reasoning
  and assumptions public policymakers use to justify different forms of regulation in
  schools and (b) the lived realities of teachers?
- **RQ3:** Do relationships in schools and teaching interact with public policies and
  policy designs to structure teachers’ political and social identities, experiences and
  behaviors?
- **RQ4:** What are the implications for teaching and learning, and the implementation
  of a federal law?

The primary purpose of this research is to understand how NCLB has impacted teaching,
learning and policy implementation. Nevertheless, by interviewing teachers from a wide
variety of backgrounds and schools, this dissertation will also provide insight into how
public policies interact with teachers’ backgrounds, and the racial and socio-economic
backgrounds of their students, to mitigate or exacerbate the effects of public policies on
children’s educational outcomes and the democratic social purposes of schools. By that, I
mean the ability of public schools to create a level playing field in society by shaping
children’s knowledge and abilities, as well as their civic capacities and engagement. The
next section provides the layout of the research. I then discuss the contributions and audiences for this research.

Layout of the Research and Contributions

This research is divided into nine chapters. Chapter two, which follows, reviews the literatures on policy feedback and social capital in more detail. Chapter three links the policy feedback literature to public service paradigms as a means of discussing and remedying shortfalls in the literature. I then discuss how NCLB corresponded with broader changes in public service paradigms. Chapter four describes how the research design, including my research methods, case selection, data collection and data analysis, will address each of my research concerns. Chapters five and six explore how political elites constructed change in the form of NCLB. Chapters seven, eight and nine examine how NCLB has affected teachers’ political and social experiences, identities and behaviors. In the conclusion, I explore the interaction between culture, institutions and social capital in schools.

As suggested by the chapters, my findings are divided into two parts. At the macro-level, chapter four explores how political elites combined their characterizations of the policy problem, targets and solution. For example, how was the problem described? Who was blamed for it? What solutions were offered? Did the policy’s targets make sense given the definition of the problem? Did the policy’s tools fit the problem as it was defined by political elites? In chapter five, I focus on how members of Congress politically and socially constructed different policy targets. These findings are important because the literature suggests that the construction of policy targets affects their subsequent political and social experiences, identities and behaviors. In both
chapters, I was also interested in the “character” of the debate. For instance, what kinds of symbolic devices were used? What kinds of causal stories were told? How was dissent characterized and negotiated? What “public values” were represented in the discourse and how were they characterized?

At the micro-level, chapter seven focuses on teachers’ social experiences, behaviors and identities. I was particularly interested in how teachers, as part of a shared professional culture, have responded to NCLB. For example, how have they individually and collectively interpreted this new federal policy? What effect, if any, did NCLB have on the norms of teaching? How do teachers perceive this affects teaching and learning, if at all? In chapter eight, I explore teachers’ perceptions of how NCLB has influenced the behaviors of “co-producers” of education (i.e., parents and students). Again, I was interested in how these behavioral changes influenced teaching and learning, but also the social democratic mission of schools as public institutions. I was further interested in how parental behaviors impacted teachers as public servants and policy implementers. Chapter nine examines how NCLB has affected teachers’ political experiences, behaviors and identities. Here, I explore how the public framing of policy problems, targets, and solutions has impacted teachers as citizens and policy implementers, if at all. Yet, I was also interested in teachers’ perceptions of how the policy’s design has impacted the political behaviors of administrators, parents and students.

As mentioned earlier, the primary purpose of this dissertation is to inform policy. However, in doing so, this research also expands our theoretical knowledge in three fields: policy feedback; social capital in education; and policy implementation. In terms of policy feedback, the research expands the empirical field to include teachers as street-
level bureaucrats (Lipsky 1980) and policies that result in “uneven” effects. NCLB, for example, creates policy "winners" (e.g., high performing schools) and policy "losers" (e.g., SINI schools, or schools that are restructured, taken over or closed). It further expands the policy feedback field by examining how relationships interact with policy designs to structure the experiences, identities and behaviors of policy targets within social contexts. In terms of research on social capital, this dissertation advances the empirical field by providing insights into whether “the state” (e.g., public policies and political discourse) affects the composition of social capital within schools and teaching; and, if so, whether state actions impact children’s educational outcomes and the democratic social purposes of schools. In terms of policy implementation, most studies separate the democratic process of making laws from the bureaucratic process of carrying them out. The end result is that they downplay how public policies and political discourse independently structure the experiences, identities and behaviors of policy implementers in ways that affect their willingness and capacity to carry out a federal law. Through this dissertation, we will learn how policy language and structures have interacted with schools as communities to affect the implementation of NCLB.

**Conclusion**

In sum, public policies convey messages that have consequences for beliefs and behaviors. But social contexts are also quite important in terms of how government messages are received and implemented. This dissertation explores what that looks like for teachers. How do teachers perceive they are constructed by political discourse and public policies? How is this similar to or different from teachers’ perceptions of themselves? How do these perceptions affect their social and political experiences,
identities and behaviors? How does this impact their willingness and capacities to teach and carry out federal policies? We suspect that teachers’ perceptions affect whether they feel like valued professionals and, in the process, impact their willingness and capacity to teach and carry out federal laws. As such, the findings from this research are important for both public policy and children’s educational outcomes. The next chapter reviews the relevant literature, provides the specific research questions that will be addressed by this study, and justifies this research by discussing its contributions to the field.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Stone (1989) argues that all public policies are designed with a “theory of action” that implicitly or explicitly makes assumptions about how policy targets will change their behaviors in response to policy tools. This theory of action shapes public discourse, as well as the choice of tools and instruments that the government uses to redress the problem. In the process, it structures the political and social experiences, behaviors and identities of citizens and policy implementers. As discussed in the last chapter, NCLB assumes poor educational performance results from a lack of individual initiative and motivation. As such, it uses incentives (i.e., public information and the competition for public resources) to stimulate behavioral changes at the local level. The theory of action is that teachers, administrators, and students will improve their work effort in order to obtain respectable test scores (Hess and Petrilli 2009). If teaching and learning are a “rational” process, then the current system of carrots and sticks based on test scores and public information will obtain positive educational outcomes. But if teaching and learning are relational (i.e., if they are negotiated between administrators, teachers, students, parents, the state and society within schools as communities), then we need to think about how public policies mediate these relationships. This chapter proposes that one way to do so is to link the literatures on policy feedback and implementation, with the literature on social capital in education.

The first part of this chapter provides a review of the literatures on policy feedback, tools and implementation as a way of highlighting empirical gaps in both literatures. Specifically, I argue that there is a need for more research on how public
policies and political discourse interact with social contexts to structure the experiences, behaviors, and identities of citizens and policy implementers. Next, I review the literature on social capital in education. Here, I argue that the literature neglects the role of the state on the formation, maintenance and destruction of social capital in schools and teaching. The end result is that it provides little insight into how public discourse and institutions interact with the social contexts of schools to structure the political and social processes. I then discuss how linking the two literatures will illuminate the ways that public policies and political discourse affect teachers’ willingness to teach, and capacity to carry out federal laws. It will also provide insight into how relationships within teaching and schools mediate the interaction between public policies and political discourse, and children’s educational outcomes.

**Understanding Political Feedback**

Although political science has its roots in the study of institutions (Immergut 1998), after World War II, the discipline largely rejected those roots in favor of what Skocpol (1985) calls “societal approaches.” These approaches examined political phenomena through the study of individuals, rather than the study of law, history or institutions. In consequence, they favored individualistic assumptions about human behavior. Some studies assumed that individuals were motivated by their cultural backgrounds or by social-psychological characteristics. Others theorized they were motivated by self-interest or rational calculations of personal utility. Either way, individuals were presumed to act largely unconstrained by formal or informal institutions. The government, on the other hand, was portrayed as a “black box,” or an arena in which “inputs” (i.e., economic interests and the demands of normative social movements) were
aggregated and shaped into “outputs” (i.e., public policies). In short, societal approaches placed institutions on the receiving end of social change. Implicitly or explicitly, the research assumed institutions adjusted to reflect changes in society, and that individual preferences were exogenously derived from political processes (Hall and Taylor 1996; Skocpol 1985).²

These ideas changed, largely because of the empirical findings of political scientists and sociologists in two areas. The first group of studies showed that “the state” was not a passive arena for the aggregation of interests (i.e., a “black box”) or even a “neutral broker” among competing interests. For example, some studies found that state actors went beyond what was strictly required to meet the political, social or economic demands of organized groups. Others highlighted how the state acted in ways that were actually contrary to public opinion or the normative demands of mobilized groups. As a result, researchers advocated “bringing the state back in” to the study of political behavior (Skocpol 1985). Although, the “new institutionalism” that emerged has many variants, it reflects a consensus that “the state,” which is now viewed as a complex web of institutions and actors, does not simply mirror societal forces (e.g., social, political, and economic interests). Political actors use the rules of the game to influence the content, character, and outcome of political conflict (Hall and Taylor 1996).³ The second group of studies explored how political institutions shaped societal forces, thereby

² For instance, David Easton (1965) portrayed politics as a “system” in which inputs (such as interest group demands) are processed within a black box (policymaking institutions) into outputs (public policies).
³ In political science, historical institutionalism reflects the specific premise that institutional configurations constrain the behaviors of political actors and interest groups during the policy-making process (Hall and Taylor 1996). For example, Skocpol (1992) and Immergut (1992) examined how political institutions impacted the development of the welfare state.
influencing the future political demands of citizens. Within the public policy literature, scholars characterize this idea as “policy feedback.”

Policy Feedback

Traditional models of the policy process assume that political outcomes are “linear,” or move from citizen participation and engagement up to government action in the form of political discourse and public policies. Because these approaches take a snapshot view of the policy process, they minimize how experiences with public policies and political discourse influence citizens’ political participation and engagement, thereby altering the kinds of public problems and policies that are demanded of and acted on by government (Smith and Ingram 1993; Mettler and Soss 2004). Research on policy feedback, on the other hand, employs a longitudinal approach, or studies public policies as a “series of interactions” (Smith and Ingram 1993, 7). It views public discourse and policies as independent variables that structure the experiences, identities and behaviors of citizens in ways that impact future political action. These ideas are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 on the next page.

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4 For early work on policy feedback, please see Lowi (1964), Wilson (1980), Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol (1985); and Skocpol (1995). The policy feedback literature recognizes that “institutions” are not limited to formal structures, but also include public policies, public ideas and political discourse. For a discussion on how public policies constitute “institutions,” please see Mettler (2002) and Pierson (2006). In terms of public ideas and political discourse, see Stone (1997), Reich (1988), Kellman (1988), Schmidt (2008); Campbell (2002); and Beland (2005). In terms of how ideas act as policy instruments, please see Weiss (1990).
The interest in how public policies effect mass political participation stems from Pierson (1993), who drew attention to the fact that the literature on political development largely focused on interest groups and policy elites at the expense of policy clients and the public at large. He theorized that public institutions and discourse impact mass opinion and political behavior through “resource effects” and “interpretive effects.” Resource effects occur when political institutions provide recipients with the economic means, capacity, or incentive to participate. Interpretive effects affect participation by conveying meanings and information to citizens about their degree of membership in the polity, what is expected from them in terms of civic obligations, and what “people like them” can expect from the government in terms of responsiveness to their needs and concerns. This information affects civic predispositions, including citizens’ sense of political efficacy, civic duty, and group consciousness.
In terms of resource effects, some studies show that tangible policy rewards increase civic engagement by providing recipients with the incentive and material capacity to participate in their own governance. Campbell (2003), for example, found that Social Security increased members’ political participation because recipients perceived that they had a stake in national politics. This was especially true among beneficiaries who were from low- or moderate-income levels, and more dependent on their social security benefits. Other studies suggest that public policies increase political participation by instilling a sense of affect and obligation towards the government and other members of society. Mettler (2002, 362), for instance, found that the G.I. Bill created a sense of civic obligation among veterans who felt that they had been “treated… with dignity and respect.” Just as importantly, this sense of obligation was more pronounced among veterans who were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

A growing body of research also indicates, however, that public policies increase political participation by conferring civic skills and knowledge (Landy 1993; Campbell 2003; Marston 1993; Soss 2005). This includes studies by Soss (2005) and Marston (1993). The authors show that the community participation requirements included in Head Start and many Great Society programs impacted the long-term political participation of recipients by providing previously marginalized groups with the capacity and knowledge to participate more fully in political life. Perhaps more interesting, Soss (1999) discovered that political participation in Head Start increased participation in other welfare programs. Like Marston (1993), he concludes that government programs are sites of political and social learning. Policy recipients are more likely to engage in public life when prior participation demonstrates the efficacy of political voice.
In terms of interpretive effects, research suggests that the way citizens *encounter* government has a significant effect on their political participation. Some studies find that positive experiences with government are critical for increasing political participation among low-income populations (Lawless and Fox 2001). This is particularly true when policies reflect democratic versus paternalistic principles (Bruch et al. 2009). These findings are important because, in general, low-income groups are less likely to vote or participate (Piven and Cloward 1989). Other studies suggest that how government benefits are structured affects political participation. Means-tested programs, such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), foster feelings of alienation and suspicion toward society and government. This partly resulted from participants’ perceptions that they had been treated unfairly or arbitrarily (Kumlin 2004), but it also related to participants perceptions that there is a social stigma associated with participation in these programs (Soss 1999 and 2002).

In sum, public policies allocate more than benefits and burdens. They also convey messages about a policy’s targets, including whether they are good, bad, intelligent, stupid, deserving, undeserving, respected, feared, hated or pitied. Citizens encounter these messages through their experiences with government programs and public servants. In this fashion, they learn about the “game of politics,” including who wins and loses, and what groups and individuals are worthy or unworthy of government attention. Some policies convey a sense of entitlement by socially constructing a “deserving” population (i.e., Social Security). Others convey a sense of disentitlement by

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5 Soss (1999 and 2005) found that different welfare policy designs had unequal effects on political learning and participation. Those who participated in entitlement programs (e.g., Social Security Disability Insurance) were more likely to participate in public life than those who participated in means-tested programs (e.g., AFDC). His research demonstrates an important connection between resource and interpretive effects.
constructing an “undeserving” target population (i.e., welfare). Policies in the former category encourage demand-making and collective action by providing a sense of civic membership, and fostering feelings of civic belonging (Campbell 2003; Mettler 2002). Policies in the latter category foster apathy or alienation by differentiating between citizens in ways that create disenfranchisement or dependency for some groups and isolation for others (Bensonsmith 2005; Lawless and Fox 2001; Marshall 1949; Newton 2005; Schneider and Ingram 1997 and 2005; Schriner 2005; Shklar 1998; Soss 1999 and 2005; Ingram and Smith 1993). While public policies are not the only ways citizens encounter their government, experiences with public policies and political discourse inform individuals about their status as citizens. They also shape individual beliefs about themselves and their group, not just their feelings about their government.

Newton (2005, 166) writes “policies…initiate social learning…These messages are…absorbed by target groups…but …also…by the broader society that is the intended audience of this spectacle.” This is because public policies do not simply address societal problems. They also order social, political and economic relations. In turn, political and socio-economic stratification impact how individuals and groups perceive their “rights and responsibilities as members of a political community” (Mettler and Soss 2004, 61). It also influences the willingness of citizens to mobilize or exercise political voice (Soss 1999 and 2005). Thus, civic engagement is not solely a function of individual characteristics, dispositions or preferences. It results from the interaction between state and society, or between formal and informal political institutions, and individuals and social groups. In this manner, public policies and discourse “feedback” into the political process, and shape future political action and policies (Ingram and Schneider 1993).
Overall, the empirical literature on policy feedback has provided many important insights into how experiences with government impact the political participation and mobilization of individuals and groups. However, most studies focus on policies that confer individual benefits, such as welfare, Social Security and veterans’ benefits. There is a need for more research on how public policies interact with social contexts, including networks of communication within groups, communities and institutions. There is also a need for studies that explore policies that create “uneven” effects, or those that create “winners” (e.g., high performing schools) and “losers” (e.g., SINI schools), like NCLB.

Citizens sometimes experience government as isolated individuals, but often experience public discourse and policies relationally, meaning they compare how the state treats them and their group with how it treats other citizens or groups of citizens. In some cases, the state creates “groups” that would not exist without government action, such as “drunk drivers.” In others, it reinforces existing social constructions by using communities and groups as a means of delimiting who is entitled to government benefits. The government may even organize communities to achieve its objectives, as was the case with the citizen action requirements included in many Great Society programs. These ideas are conveyed in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3. Policy feedback loops

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6 Recent scholarship has begun to address these gaps. Please see Flavin and Griffin (2009) and Patashnik (2008).
Similar gaps exist in empirical investigations of how policy tools affect the subsequent political participation and engagement of citizens and policy implementers. Policy tools are the instruments that the government uses to move society in a desired direction, including, for example, mandates, inducements, regulations and public information.\(^7\) While studies suggest that policy instruments have different effects on democracy in addition to their effects on policy effectiveness (Schneider and Ingram 1997; Weiss 1993; Weiss and Tschirhart 1994; Bemelmans-Videc et al. 2007), scholars acknowledge that there is a need for more research on how the targets of policy tools react to them within social contexts (Rist 2007). As discussed in the next section, this is also true in terms of research on policy implementation.

*Policy Implementation* \(^8\)

Early empirical work within and outside the substantive field of education portrayed policy implementation as a top-down process. In consequence, most studies ignored how and why social structures impacted the implementation of education reforms. Instead, they focused on the motives and behaviors of policy implementers, who were typically blamed for the observed differences between public policies as adopted and public policies as implemented (Odden 1991b; Honig 2006b). Some studies attributed these gaps to conflicts between policy goals and the interests and preferences of policy implementers (i.e., a lack of will on the part of policy implementers). Others suggested that policies were poorly implemented because frontline workers either did not

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\(^7\) See Weiss 1993; Bemelmans-Videc et al. 2007; and Salamon 2002. Elmore (1987) and McDonnell and Elmore (1987) describe four types of instruments: mandates; inducements; capacity-building; and system-changing. Schneider and Ingram (1990) focus on how tools attempt to modify behaviors. Their typology includes: authority; incentive; capacity building; symbolic or horatory; and learning tools.

\(^8\) Nakamura and Smallwood (1980, 1) define implementation as “the process of carrying out...policy directives.”
understand what they were supposed to do, or lacked the knowledge, skills, capacity, or time to do so. Murphy (1991), for example, found that the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) was understaffed in ways that impeded the implementation of compensatory education under the ESEA. Even so, many federal and state-level administrators opposed the goals of compensatory education, and thus permitted (and even encouraged) the “evasion and dilution” of federal reforms. Gross et al. (1971), on the other hand, discovered that teachers were often asked to take on many new tasks at once, leading to exhaustion. The end result was that they lost their motivation to carry out reforms, even when they were initially committed to achieving them. Either way, most studies assumed that policy implementers were the most important unit of analysis. As such, they advocated the use of top-down hierarchical controls in order to ensure that public policies as implemented were congruent with the goals of policymakers (Odden 1991b; Honig 2006b).

Over time, policy scholars developed a more nuanced understanding of how policies, people and places mattered in terms of policy implementation (Honig 2006b). Peterson, Rabe, and Wong (1991), for instance, showed that there was a causal relationship between the type of policy and implementation. Title I took longer to implement because it was a redistributive policy, and therefore involved more conflict. Meanwhile, Kirst and Jung (1991) suggested that time was an important variable. They found that many short-

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10 Honig (2006b) suggests that many of the conclusions were the product of the assumptions that were prevalent in the academic disciplines where most of the research was located (i.e., political science and economics). Nonetheless, not all of the studies fall neatly into this group. For example, Sarason (1996) argued that federal reforms failed because reformers did not take school culture into account.
11 McDonnell and Elmore’s (1987) typology distinguishes between policy “instruments” or tools, such as mandates, incentives, capacity-building, and systems-changing. Ripley and Franklin (1982) discussed the relevance of distributive, competitive, protective regulatory, and redistributive policies.
term implementation studies had magnified the proportion of policy failures. When viewed over a longer timeframe, policies as implemented more closely resembled their policy designs. Lipsky (1980), on the other hand, developed a more nuanced understanding of the motivations and behaviors of policy implementers. He found that the practices, routines and behaviors of frontline policy implementers often diverged from policy goals, but they did so in ways that helped “street-level bureaucrats” cope with their multiple tasks and worldviews. Thus, his study moved the implementation field beyond traditional top-down concerns. He showed, for example, how hierarchical controls often alienated public service workers from the very ideals that had caused them to pursue public service work.

In short, second and third generation studies developed a more nuanced understanding of how people, places and policies mattered in terms of policy implementation. Still, they did not elaborate on how and why context mattered, and (largely) continued to reflect a top-down desire to close the gap between policymakers’ wishes and implementers’ actions (Honig 2006b).

More recently, scholars have expanded their units of analysis to include the cultures and histories of schools, and teacher “networks.” The empirical literature suggests that school-wide reform is inherently a social process that “takes place upon a social terrain”

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12 See also Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) and Vinzant and Crothers (1998).
13 Studies also expanded the list of policy implementers to state- and school-level administrators. See, for example, Cohen (1982); Fuhrman et al. (1988); Elmore and McLaughlin (1988); and McLaughlin (1991a and 1991b).
14 Odden (1991b) and Honig (2006b) both note that implementation emerged as a formal field of inquiry in the 1960s and has passed through various stages. These stages are distinguished in part due to the variables and units of analysis that were studied, but also because policies themselves grew more varied and complex.
15 Most of these studies deal with the school-wide reform movements more than implementation per se. See, for example, Anderson et al. 1987; Coburn and Russell 2008; Fuhrman et al. 1988; Lieberman and McLaughlin 1992; Little 1984; Marsh and Crocker 1991; Purkey and Smith 1983; Sizer 1986; and McLaughlin 1991b.
(Dumas and Anyon 2006, 151). Nevertheless, policy implementation is also a cognitive process that is influenced by the lived experiences of street-level bureaucrats, as well as their social and discursive networks (Hill 2003; Spillane et al. 2006; Datnow 2006 and Coburn and Stein 2006). Together, these studies recognize that individuals are embedded in social, political, and economic institutions, and this influences their behaviors (Dumas and Anyon 2006). Thus, people’s actions cannot be divorced from their social settings and from the larger political and economic institutions that structure their social interactions. These ideas are illustrated in Figure 4 below.

Summing up, the literature on policy implementation now recognizes that the various spaces within the policy process are “relational” or interconnected. As such, researchers cannot privilege any one context or group of actors. Even so, scholars acknowledge that there is a need for more research on how the targets of policy tools, including policy implementers, react within social contexts. Moreover, the research continues to separate the democratic process of making laws from the bureaucratic process of carrying them out. In doing so, it neglects how public policies and political discourse interact with the social contexts of frontline policy implementers in ways that shape, or fail

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16 These studies rarely use the term “social capital” but deal with what Smylie and Evans (2006) call “like concepts,” such as “social trust.” In general, they find that strong social relations may either impede or further policy implementation. For studies of this type, see, for example, Bryk, Schneider and Kochanik 1996; Kochanik 2003; Tschannen-Moran 2004; and Bryk and Schneider 2002.
to shape, their values, beliefs and behaviors, as well as their capacity to carry out federal laws. In this sense, the empirical literature empirically and theoretically silences the reciprocal relationships between politics and policy, or how “policies produce politics” (Schattschneider 1935, 288). By that, I mean how public policies influence future political action. This may occur in three ways: first, policies may generate new problems; second, policies may redistribute power and influence in ways that create new political alliances; and, third, policies may reconstruct interests, preferences, ideas and ideologies.

One way to redress these gaps is to link the literatures on policy feedback, tools and implementation with the literature on social capital, which sheds light on the importance of human relationships for political and economic outcomes. The next section reviews the empirical literature on social capital in education, but finds that it provides few insights into how public policies and political discourse interact with the social contexts of schools to structure the experiences, behaviors, and identities of teachers. This is because most research is in what Mettler and Soss (2004, 57) refer to as the “economic tradition,” meaning it links individual behaviors to “individual self-interest, the instrumental pursuit of goals, and rational choices based on expected utility.” In consequence, the literature downplays the effects of institutional incentives and constraints, such as public discourse and policies.

**Social Capital: Bringing Social Contexts Back in to Political and Social Outcomes**

As a theoretical construct, social capital explores how relationships contribute to the instrumental wellbeing of individuals, groups, communities and governments (Portes 1998). The vast majority of theoretical work in sociology defines social capital as either a form of social control in groups, or as a resource that facilitates productive personal
outcomes, such as occupational mobility and educational attainment (Portes 2000; Granovetter 1985). Thus, social capital is studied at the micro-level, or through face-to-face interactions. Some scholars, however, have also studied social capital at the macro level, or as an attribute of communities, cities or nations. In these cases, social capital has value because it facilitates communal or societal ends (Portes 2000; Schuller, Baron and Field 2000). For instance, American political scientist and sociologist Robert Putnam (1996, 56) portrayed social capital as a public resource (i.e., a public good) that facilitated the ability of individuals to engage in collective or coordinated actions, especially those that benefitted one’s community or society (Putnam 1993, 1995 and 2000). Despite these differences, social capital in both cases is viewed as an independent variable, or the cause of other social, political and economic outcomes, with variances typically attributed to “cultural” differences (i.e., norms, values and practices) between individuals, groups, or societies (Woolcock and Narayan 2000).

This is also true in education where most studies portray social capital as an exogenous individual or cultural “attribute” (i.e., an independent variable) that explains differences in individual educational outcomes, such as educational achievement (e.g., grades and test scores); attainment (e.g., dropout and graduation rates, and college enrollment); and, the attitudes and behaviors that affect educational development (e.g.,

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17 Putnam (1996, 56) defined social capital as “features of social life—networks, norms, and trust—that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives.” Macro-level studies have linked social capital to better health, happiness and longevity (Kawachi et al. 1997; Wilkinson 1996; Blaxter et al. 2001; Coulthard et al. 2001; Sixsmith et al. 2001; Campbell et al. 1999; Campbell 2000; Putnam 2000); lower rates of child abuse (Cote and Healy 2001); the success of housing programs (Lang and Hornburg 1998; Briggs De Souza 1998); lower crime rates (Halpern 2001; Putnam 2000; Green et al. 2000; Sampson et al. 1997; Cote and Healy 2001); judicial efficiency and lower rates of government corruption (LaPorta, et al. 1997); confidence in government (Brehm and Rahn 1997); voting participation (Knack 1992); income equality and lower rates of poverty (Knack 1999; Wilkinson 1996; Kawachi et al. 1997); policy innovation (Boix and Posner 1998); policy liberalism (Rice and Sunberg 1997); more effective and efficient government, and improved economic growth and performance (Fukuyama 1995; Schiff 1992; Knack 2002; Knack and Keefer 1995 and 1997; Putnam 1993 and 1995).

18 Please see, for example, Putnam et al. (1994).
school-related effort, motivation, aspirations, and self-confidence). In general, the literature supports that social capital is associated with educational achievement and attainment, and that it may work by affecting school-related effort, aspirations, motivation and engagement, but the direction and nature of the relationship between them is unclear (Dika and Singh 2002).

Very few studies use social “groups,” such as schools, classrooms or teaching as an occupation, for their units of analysis, and almost no studies explore the effects of “the state” on the formation, maintenance and destruction of social capital. The few studies that have examined the effects of public policies on children’s educational outcomes were conducted in England, and focus on how public policies interact with familial social capital (Reay 2004, 2004a and 2004b). In consequence, we know very little about how public policies and political discourse interact with relationships in schools and teaching to further or thwart the democratic social purposes of schools, including socio-economic equality and the subsequent democratic participation of administrators, teachers, parents and students. We also have little insight into how institutions, such as public schools, and institutional agents, such as teachers and administrators, use their relationships to mediate the effects of political, social and economic inequalities on children’s educational outcomes.

Just as problematically, most research focuses on the instrumental motivations for investing in relationships. As such, the literature largely ignores the impact of affective

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19 But please see Coburn and Russell (2008) for the effects of a local policy on teacher social networks and Hunt (2006), who examined the affects of social capital on teachers’ perceptions of control.
20 For example, Thomas (2007) explored the impact of teachers’ social ties on teacher retention. Thus, like most studies on the effects of social capital on children’s educational outcomes, he studied social capital from an individual, instrumental perspective. While his findings are interesting, short of requiring highly qualified teachers to stay in their jobs or paying them much higher salaries, his research does not tell us much about whether social capital could serve as a resource to retain teachers in the profession, or attract and retain them in high need schools and subject areas. In short, it tells us little about whether social capital could serve societal ends.
ties between administrators, teachers, children and parents. In contrast, Durkheim and Weber recognized that formal and informal groups use different mechanisms to ensure compliance with norms and rules. Formal institutions, such as bureaucracies, use legal or rational means of control. Informal groups often use social controls (Portes 1998; Woolcock 1998). Thus, ties of affection may serve as an informal source of social control and social cohesion within schools and classrooms. In this manner, social ties promote teaching and learning, as well as the ability of schools to efficiently and effectively meet collective ends.

The main problem with this individualized conceptualization of social capital, however, is that it removes children from their social settings. In the process, it obscures the link between resources and the ability to generate them through the social structure. Meanwhile, studies recognize that social capital, like other forms of capital, is unevenly distributed between individuals and across communities (DeFilippis 2001). The end result is that the empirical literature downplays the effects of systematic inequality on teaching and learning. This makes it likely that studies inappropriately attribute educational inequalities to “culture,” typically understood as values and practices, because the effects of “structure” have been obscured. By “structure,” I mean the ways that political and economic institutions interact with the social context of schools to produce and reproduce educational inequalities.

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21 Recent studies have begun to address these issues through the use of hierarchical linear modeling (HLM), which helps disentangle the effects of school and community composition on social capital and educational performance. These studies suggest that there may be a threshold of social capital that is needed to insulate children in communities with a large number of poor, minority and single-parent families from the degenerative effects of systemic poverty and family deterioration. Below this amount, a student’s individual social capital is not able to improve his or her academic success, but above this amount the lack of individual social capital may not be harmful (Pong 1998; Ho and Willms 1996; Sun 1999). Although HLM is a methodological improvement, it is still an aggregated version of individual social ties that does not account for tie strength or resources.
Economist Glen Loury, on the other hand, developed the concept of social capital to counteract human capital theory’s (Schultz 2000) focus on the individual causes of achievement (DeFilippis 2001). He writes:

The merit notion that, in a free society, each individual will rise to the level justified by his or her competence conflicts with the observation that no one travels that road entirely alone. The social context within which individual maturation occurs strongly conditions what otherwise equally competent individuals can achieve. This implies that absolute equality of opportunity…is an idea that cannot be achieved…An individual’s social origin has an obvious and important effect on the amount of resources that is ultimately invested in his or her development. It may thus be useful to employ a concept of “social capital” to represent the consequences of social position in facilitating acquisition of the standard human capital characteristics (Loury 1977, 176 quoted in Portes 1998, 4 and DeFilippis 2001, 783).

Unfortunately, the literature has largely strayed from this theoretical insight. The next section uses Bourdieu’s conceptualization of social, cultural and symbolic capital, to link political and economic institutions with social structures.

*Bringing the State Back In to Social Capital Research*

Unlike most social capital research, Pierre Bourdieu (1986 and 2000) used the term “capital” to signal that culture and social connections were important sources of power and influence. He argued that social connections do not necessarily make people richer. It depends on the resources associated with the connections. It further depends on the environment in which they are activated. This is because different forms of capital are given “currency” by individuals acting within the social structures and institutions developed by society.

Bourdieu specifically explicated three forms of capital: social, cultural and symbolic. He defined social capital as the “aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to… membership in a group” (1986, 248). Cultural capital, on the other
Cultural capital exists in three forms. Objectified cultural capital includes objects and goods that must be appreciated through the accrual of special cultural abilities, such as art, dance, music, literature, historical sites, museums and so forth. Embodied cultural capital is the disposition to appreciate, understand and manifest the preferred cultural styles, manners, preferences and knowledge. Institutionalized cultural capital includes educational credentials, the credentialing system, and schools and universities. He believed that cultural capital is a form of symbolic credit that is acquired by embodying and enacting signs of social standing (Bourdieu 1986 and 2000).
exercised through symbolic violence, which is the capacity of a class or a dominant group to chain the conferring of status to their particular signals, preferences and practices by making these qualities appear natural, authoritative and superior. Once legitimized, these qualities become standardized throughout society and regulate behavior for everyone, while tying access to resources or rewards in ways that largely favor those in the dominant group (Lamont and Lareau 1988). They do so because individuals possess unequal capital, but also because individual dispositions (i.e., habitus) are developed through our life experiences. If capital is a person’s resources, than habitus is his or her orientation toward using those resources. It is largely derived from a person’s familial relations, but can only be understood in terms of the *field*, or the setting where social action takes place. In general, non-dominant groups downwardly adjust their expectations based on their experiences of unequal societal rewards (Bourdieu 1986, 1973 and 2000).

In terms of education, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) describe the school system as a field, and doing homework and studying as practices within the field. Other practices might include interacting with teachers, administrators, and students. Bourdieu theorized that all of these unequally structure access to academic rewards. This is because school gatekeepers (e.g., teachers, counselors and administrators) value certain linguistic styles, aesthetic preferences, and attitudes and behaviors that are not taught in school, but are more likely to be displayed by children from upper socioeconomic backgrounds (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990[1977]; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). While some children from non-elite backgrounds will acquire these skills and styles of interaction, they tend to lack the “natural ease” associated with learning them in their homes. The end result is that they actually
must perform better while supposedly being asked to perform the same. Those who do not
perform as well are relegated to less valued or less-desirable positions, such as lower
tracked classes (relegation). Those who perform well, on the other hand, may be given
access to more highly valued resources, such as advanced placement classes or programs
for gifted and talented children, but will often be excluded by the dominant group.
Although some students will overcome these obstacles, the process of being less-rewarded
and less-valued by teachers (teacher selection) and excluded by other students (direct
exclusion), results in negative experiences for others. These individuals will “self-select”
out of higher tracks and higher levels of education (self-elimination), or pursue higher
education, but fail to obtain their desired results (indirect exclusion). The end result is that
schools appear to be “neutral” meritocratic institutions while actually rewarding privilege
and perpetuating the existing social order (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990 [1977]; Lamont
and Lareau 1988).

Although many researchers have studied the discriminatory character of public
education, Bourdieu did not interpret patterns of exclusion as proof of discrimination on the
part of individual schools, teachers or administrators. His analysis was “structural” in the
sense that he viewed these behaviors as institutionalized or “taken-for-granted” on the part
of administrators, teachers, students and parents (Lamont and Lareau 1988). Even so, by
treating children’s “social gifts as natural ones” (Bourdieu 1974, 32), the educational
system makes it appear as if social hierarchies are “based upon the hierarchy of ‘gifts,’
merits, or ‘skills’” when they actually reflect social inequalities (Bourdieu 1977, 496). In
the meantime, the appearance that academic standards are based on merit legitimizes the
social transmission of privileges even as it handicaps children from non-elite backgrounds,
whose habitus has developed in response to their lower levels of capital. The end result is “symbolic violence” against these children who downwardly adjust their level of effort, expectations and aspirations, thereby relegating themselves to less desirable positions even as they provide societal gatekeepers, such as teachers or educational researchers, with “evidence” that educational outcomes are based on merit rather than the product of evaluative systems that are biased toward the “signals,” or knowledge, skills or abilities, of advantaged groups in society (Lamont and Lareau 1988, 155).

Bourdieu’s ideas are supported empirically by a number of qualitative studies, which find that economic, social and cultural resources work together to perpetuate educational inequalities. These studies further suggest that structural, rather than cultural, factors are more important in terms of children’s unequal academic, work and life experiences. Unfortunately, most are conducted at the micro-interactional level, meaning they focus on face-to-face interactions. As a result, they largely silence how broader political, economic and social forces structure interactions within schools and teaching, including how social capital might serve as a “public good,” or a resource for achieving collective ends, such as socio-economic equality or civic engagement.

**Social Capital as a Public Good**

Recently, studies have begun to examine the public goods aspect of social capital in education. Glaser et al. (2002), for example, showed that civic-oriented public discourse leveraged more community support for public education than discourse that focused on children and parents as “consumers.” Community-based discourse was thus a

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moderating influence on self-interested behaviors. Moving in the opposite direction, Goldin and Katz (1999) found that civic engagement in the American Midwest facilitated the movement to construct high schools. Here, citizens were willing to tax themselves despite the fact that high school attendance was not compulsory, meaning not all members of the community benefited from these taxes. Because the cost of providing four years of high school was equal to or more than the cost of educating students up through the eighth grade and the economic benefits were mostly individual ones, the authors concluded that the “only consistent rationale for the public provision of this essentially private good was that it was an intergenerational loan” facilitated by a sense of community obligation (Goldin and Katz 1999, 718). While both of these studies suggest that civic engagement may serve as a “public good” that helps resolve collective action problems, the former indicates “the state” is not a neutral actor. Public discourse and policies may foster either self-interested or civic behaviors.

This last idea is supported by historical comparative research outside the field of education. Szreter (2002) traced the impact of the state on the formation, maintenance, and destruction of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital in the United States. Bonding social capital involves networks that are “inward looking” and exclusive. It “glues” together members who are “alike” in background, social status, role, origin or identity through strong ties (Putnam 2000). Bridging social capital involves networks that are “outward looking” and inclusive; they are composed of participants from a wide range of backgrounds who are “bridged” by weak ties (Granovetter 1973 and 1983). Linking social capital represents the capacity of individuals or groups to leverage resources from institutions outside of a community (Woolcock 2001). Thus, it is
comprised of vertical connections to more powerful external actors in either the public or private spheres (Cote and Healy 2001). He found that the state has been particularly important for facilitating bridging and linking social capital between otherwise disconnected groups. Two recent empirical studies support his argument that the state is not a neutral actor in the distribution of social capital in society. Jackman and Miller (2005) showed that institutions, more than cultural heritage, shaped attitudes and behaviors in ways that unequally structured political and economic performance in Italy.²⁴ Mishler and Rose (2001) found that social trust in eastern and central Europe was a function of government performance and conduct.

Still, most qualitative work in education focuses on interactions at the micro-level. In consequence, it neglects Bourdieu’s suggestion that political, economic and social institutions shape the experiences, behaviors and identities of individuals. The end result is that we have few insights into how political and economic institutions interact with the social contexts of schools to structure access to resources in ways that affect teaching and learning, policy implementation, and the social democratic mission of schools as public institutions.

²⁴ Jackman and Miller (1998) challenge the work of Banfield (1958) and Putnam et al. (1994), both of whom claimed that cultural factors explained the poor political and economic performance of Southern Italy. Using historical data, they trace poor economic and political performance in Southern Italy to overpopulation, deforestation, and the shortage of arable land. These structural factors caused extreme “economic precariousness,” and resulted in poor health, “little work, irregular work, little money, high prices, hunger and other economic…difficulties.” Given these conditions, the “present-orientatedness,” which Banfield (1958) observed, made sense, as did citizens’ distrust of government and dissatisfaction with “life conditions” (Banfield 1958; Putnam et al. 1994). In the 1950s, however, conditions improved in Southern Italy due to the massive outmigration of residents from the region. The reduced labor supply led to labor shortages and subsequent increases in pay. Political parties also developed a new interest in the region because its instability made it ripe for the formation of new political coalitions. Over time, the development of new political and economic institutions resulted in the changed attitudes and behaviors observed by Harrison (1992). Thus trust was endogenously generated through the improved performance of political and economic institutions, rather than through exogenous cultural patterns.
The Problem

The empirical literatures on policy feedback and social capital in education both (largely) assume that political and social behaviors (i.e., collective action and the formation of social capital) are exogenously derived. By that, I mean that they reflect cultural differences or are based on individual preferences and capacities. Theoretically and empirically, both literatures silence how internal responses may be structured by an external state of affairs. This includes marketing and advertising, as well as the effects of social, political and economic institutions. Conceptually, this downplays the capacity of schools as social institutions to shape and be shaped by the behavior of their members.

Yet, research from a wide-array of disciplines indicates that individual interests and preferences are negotiated and constructed through social interaction. In other words, when people are embedded within social structures, they may pull their own interests in line with what is in the interests of “the group,” even if it does not necessarily benefit them as individuals. This may have both positive and negative effects on the group, as well as on individuals within the group. These ideas are reflected pictorially in Figure 5 on the next page, which shows that citizen preferences, demands and behaviors arise exogenously, but also as a result of being embedded within groups, organizations and institutions. In terms of education, these interactions take place within schools as communities, but are also structured by schools as public institutions and teaching as an occupation.

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See Wildavsky (1987); Burt (1982); Lewin (1996); Mansbridge (1990); Etzioni (1988); and Bandura (1977). More negatively, Gaventa (1980) argues the powerless may lose their capacity to know what is in their interests.
We can use marriage as an institution to illustrate why these oversights are problematic, both in terms of the literature on policy feedback and the literature on social capital. The literature on policy feedback recognizes that civic engagement is not solely a function of individual characteristics or preferences. It is also influenced by institutions and policies. I also argued that implementation is partly a function of the social contexts of frontline policy implementers. These contexts influence the willingness and capacity of street level bureaucrats to implement state laws and policies. Similarly, I suggested that citizens’ willingness to comply or not comply with public policies is influenced by their social groups. I further theorized that these groups could serve as a “public good” if they informally monitor and enforce state-sponsored norms in the form of public policies. When we pull these ideas together, I am suggesting that institutions often exist as part of a complex web of formal and informal political, economic and social institutions, organizations networks and groups.

Marriage laws, for example, involve norms and laws governing sexual conduct (i.e., monogamy); gendered relationships; property rights; child-rearing; and divorce. Formally, these norms are institutionalized through public polices and monitored and
enforced by “the state” (i.e., various levels of government). Informally, they are upheld by social norms and enforced by social groups, including family, friends, and acquaintances. When the two work together, they efficiently and effectively reinforce one another through social cohesion. When they do not, the government needs to exert more social control in order to enforce existing laws. Similarly, in a school where high school graduation or college attendance are not the norm, we would anticipate that teachers and administrators would need to apply more pressure on students than schools where both of these behaviors are expected and enforced by the behaviors of other students and parents.

Normative non-abidance affects policy implementation in three ways. First, it may foster collective action on behalf of change. Here, the ability of a group to foster change depends on its political, economic and social capital. Capital in this sense includes their monetary and organizational resources, but also their (relative) social standing and the power of their ideas (i.e., symbolic capital). Second, political backlash may result in “silent” change from below. By that, I mean that those who oppose state enforced norms “opt out,” perhaps by getting divorced or living together instead of getting married. Over time, the accumulation of these actions alters normative abidance. When the state institutionalizes new norms through public policies, such as allowing gay marriage or adopting no-fault divorce laws, normative non-abidance has resulted in political change. Third, political change may arise from the normative non-abidance of policy implementers. This happens, for example, when bureaucrats adapt a law to existing circumstances or refuse to implement it altogether. In all of these cases, though, the state is not a neutral actor. State actions and discourse influence the relative position
of the players on the field, as well as their symbolic, political, social and economic resources.

Earlier, I described the field as the setting for social (political and economic) action (Bourdieu 1986 and 2000). It includes physical sites, such as the halls of Congress, but also the rules of the game, such as public policies or rules of debate in the House. Symbolic violence, on the other hand, is the capacity of a class, or a dominant group, to impose social identities on others by controlling normative ideas about what is superior or inferior. Bourdieu used the term to illustrate the relationship between ideas and socio-economic inequality, but we can just as easily use the term to convey the relationship between public policies, political discourse and political or socio-economic inequality. I am arguing that public discourse and institutions impose social, political and economic identities, but they also materially and symbolically alter the relative position of the players on the field. In the process, the state influences the willingness and capacity of groups to enforce or abide by existing laws and norms, or mobilize on behalf of changing existing political, economic and social arrangements.

I am further suggesting, however, that people often experience public policies and political discourse relationally. This means three things. First, people experience current actions in relation to past actions, inactions, injustices or grievances. Second, current resources, symbolic or actual, are influenced by past actions but are also constructed in relation to other groups or individuals. Third, people do not simply care about how the government treats “them” as individuals or as members of a social group. They also care about how government treats them in relationship to “others.” Certainly, this speaks to issues of fairness and social justice. However, it also influences their relative position on
the field. In this fashion, the state influences the costs or benefits of collective action. It also influences the likelihood and character of future political, economic and social action.

We can use state policies that affect business, labor and consumers to illustrate these ideas. When we discuss a specific public policy that, for example, benefits business, that policy is rarely happening as an isolated incident. It reflects the debates, ideas and policies that were previously adopted. It also reflects actions that are occurring or have occurred in other “fields.” The state in this sense becomes an arena for interlocking cultural, social, political, and economic fields. By interlocking, I mean that these fields are relational across time and space. This is because state action in favor of one group (e.g., business) often, but not always, influences the resources (symbolic or actual) of other groups (e.g., labor or consumers). If the relationship is inverse, negatively impacted groups may mobilize to influence subsequent state action. Then, their mobilization may have ripple effects. This occurs when other groups, such as environmentalists, see that consumer mobilization has produced positive results and therefore engage in collective action. It may also result from feelings of political efficacy. For instance, once consumers mobilize to achieve one objective, such as labels on food, they may then direct those organizational resources toward other endeavors. These may be closely related, such as labels on pharmaceuticals, but they may also be completely unrelated, such as automobile safety.

In short, by distributing social (cultural, political, and economic) rewards, the state in very real ways influences future political action. These rewards may be tangible, such as income from social security, but they may also be “the intangibles,” such as legitimizing
the claims and actions of some actors while withholding legitimacy from others. Some players start off more skilled, but the ability to play and the outcome of the game is rarely solely determined by individual capacities or achievements. This is because, in some cases, state action directly increases the risk of playing. In others, the state indirectly does so by decreasing or assuming the risks of playing for some while denying similar benefits to others. We see this, for example, through government actions that hindered or facilitated labor mobilization by imposing or removing risks associated with collective action. Historically, these risks included actual, but also symbolic violence, such as portraying labor unions as communist. In the process, state actions structured the political, social and economic behaviors of labor and business by altering their relative positions on the field.

Nevertheless, as evident from this discussion, state actions cannot be divorced from the field. In the case of labor, state actions were often linked to periods of economic distress or war. Thus, the state, as well as the actions of citizens and organized interests, cannot be divorced from “the field” or the temporal, cultural, social, political and economic contexts in which that action occurs. Public institutions and political discourse alter the rules of the game, and increase the costs or benefits of collective action. In the process, they alter the political and social experiences, behaviors and identities of citizens and groups. The construction of political and social identities is not a top-down hierarchical process. The process is iterative.

This dissertation addresses the issues in the extant literature by exploring how the “lessons” of NCLB have impacted teachers’ political and social experiences, behaviors, and identities within “schools as communities.” By community, I mean both

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26 This research is in what Mettler and Soss (2004) refer to as the sociological and political traditions. Similar to the literature on social capital, it examines the link between individual behaviors and “social
geographic or physical spaces (e.g., a public school or a public school community) and normative “spaces” (Hunter 1974). The latter sense includes “communities of practice,” such as teaching as an occupation. Thus, this definition recognizes that communities are built through discursive, symbolic and cultural elements, as well as face-to-face interactions. Language is a medium of exchange. Thus, even dyadic exchanges take place within a “wider network of assumptions, values, and social relations” (Szreter 2002, 574). At the macro-level, this dissertation identifies the images and rationales that members of Congress and other key policymakers used to advance their efforts to create a radically new approach to public education. At the micro-level, it examines teachers’ perceptions of how NCLB’s policy tools and language have interacted with relationships in schools to construct their political and social experiences, behaviors and identities, as well as teaching, learning and policy implementation. These interactions are embedded within schools as organizations and public institutions. As such, it is likely that they are structured by public policies and political discourse.

Conclusion

In sum, the empirical literature on policy feedback, tools and implementation have provided many important insights into how experiences with government impact the political participation and mobilization of citizens and policy implementers. But there is a need for more studies that explore the interaction between public policies and social contexts, including networks of communication within groups, communities and institutions, and for studies that explore policies that create policy winners and losers.
Existing social capital research in education, on the other hand, is relatively silent on how “the state” and societal institutions impact the composition of cultural and social capital within and between schools. The end result is that we lack a strong body of knowledge on how political and economic institutions interact with the social contexts of schools to structure the experiences, behaviors and identities of teachers as policy implementers and citizens. This chapter proposed research that links the literatures on policy feedback, tools and implementation with the literature on social capital in education to address these gaps. The next chapter “contextualizes” NCLB, or places the policy within its broader political, economic and social contexts, as a means of setting up the chapters that follow.
CHAPTER III
CONTEXTUALIZING NCLB

Introduction

The great promise of public education is that it will empower children from all backgrounds to share equally in the American dream, even as it prepares them for the responsibilities of democratic citizenship. For most of our nation’s history, state and local governments bore sole responsibility for fulfilling that promise. This changed in 1965 with the adoption of the ESEA. Through this law, the federal government recognized that the promise was a mirage for many disadvantaged children due to the inverse relationship between poverty and educational achievement. The ESEA has been amended numerous times over the past 46 years, but has (largely) maintained its focus on affording equal educational opportunity to children who had historically been left behind. This includes students who are living in poverty, but also those with disabilities and those who speak English as a second language. In this sense, NCLB is a continuation of the ESEA. The great promise of NCLB, however, is that it will improve the performance of disadvantaged children by raising the achievement levels of all students through higher standards, backed by testing and other forms of accountability. In this sense, NCLB is a radical departure from the ESEA. This chapter places this political change within its political, economic and social contexts.

I argue that NCLB occurred within a broader paradigm shift regarding the proper means and ends of public services. Ideationally, this new paradigm advocated the use of state power to promote markets and market-like behaviors in order to free individuals for economic purposes. In the meantime, it also advocated using state power to control individual social behaviors (Apple 2001). As such, it is not sufficient to study policy
feedback from a political perspective. We must also take into account how state policies, like NCLB, affect social behaviors. The first section of the chapter discusses these broader paradigms of public service provision. I then link them to the ESEA and NCLB. The second section places NCLB within historical context in order to show how it corresponded with these broader changes in public service paradigms.

**Public Service Paradigms**

In theory, the public and private sector are opposite sides of the same coin. In practice, public policies are situated within political models of governance, and accompanied by economic ones to create paradigms of public service provision. Since World War II, there have been two dominant paradigms for public service provision: Traditional Public Administration (TPA) and New Public Management (NPM). TPA is linked to Keynesianism and NPM to Neo-liberalism (Benington 2011; Clarke and Newman 1997). More recently, scholars have linked a less dominant model of public service provision, Networked Community Governance (NCG), to theories about public value (Benington 2011). Public value encompasses market-based values, such as efficiency and individual liberty, as well as political values, such as democratic participation, accountability, responsiveness, fairness, equity, equality, and justice. It also includes social and cultural values, including, but not limited to, the creation of social and cultural capital. The terms social and cultural capital convey the importance of human relationships and culture, respectively, for the well-being of individuals, groups, communities and governments. I would argue, however, that there is nothing about networks that make them better suited to producing public value. Networks may just as easily be used to advance private interests. Instead, I contend that each of these
paradigms has different conceptualizations about the proper role of government in society. In consequence, we should link them to a dominant way of organizing social relations. Then, the question of whether they produce public versus private value becomes an empirical one. One way to do so is to use Grid Group Cultural Theory (GGCT).

GGCT relates human attitudes, beliefs and preferences to different ways of organizing social relations, or “social solidarities.” Social solidarities vary along two dimensions: grid and group. Although both are a form of social control, group expresses the extent to which individuals are incorporated into bounded social units while grid describes the degree of social stratification. When group affiliations are strong, people spend large amounts of time interacting with other members of their social unit, and the group structures their thoughts and actions. When they are weak, people negotiate their social environments as individuals, and are free to compete relatively unconstrained by their duties to others. Conversely, people’s behaviors in high grid environments are circumscribed by rules, regulations, and conventions. This includes, for example, their station, position in a social or organizational hierarchy, or ascribed characteristics (e.g., gender, class, race or ethnicity). In low grid environments, individuals freely compete for roles or positions based on aptitude or ability. From these two social dimensions, GGCT constructs five viable “ways of life”: egalitarianism, individualism, hierarchy, fatalism, and autonomy. These cultural biases form the basis for all social organization, including how individuals live and work with one another; achieve and maintain social order; distribute jobs, positions, services or goods; control envy, greed and malfeasance; and
exercise and legitimate power (Thompson et al. 1990; Thompson and Verweij 2004; and, Wildavsky 1985).

Hood (1998) uses these concepts to discuss different systems of control in the public sector. Here, grid denotes the extent to which public management is conducted through well-understood rules and regulations. It is fundamental for understanding contemporary debates about whether public employees work by strict regulatory rules and standard operating procedures (SOPs) (i.e., “make the managers manage”), or are provided more discretion in terms of implementing public policies and providing public services (i.e., “let the managers manage”). Alternatively, group expresses different arguments about who should provide services, meaning state actors (hierarchy) markets (individualism), or civil society (egalitarianism). Markets and hierarchy have been thoroughly analyzed in the social science literature. Grid-group’s contribution is that it adds clans or enclaves (egalitarianism), isolates (fatalists) and autonomy (the hermit) to the map. These ideas are illustrated in Chart 1 and Figure 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs/Problems</th>
<th>Traditional Public Administration (TPA)</th>
<th>New Public Management (NPM)</th>
<th>Networked Community Governance (NCG)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defined by bureaucrats and professionals</td>
<td>Defined by market and “consumers”</td>
<td>Co-defined by state and civil society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>State and producer centered</td>
<td>Market and customer centered</td>
<td>Shaped by co-producers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance through:</td>
<td>Hierarchies</td>
<td>Market</td>
<td>Networks and partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation by:</td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Exit</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>Public servants</td>
<td>Contractors, providers, clients</td>
<td>State, civic leaders, citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>Public goods</td>
<td>Public choice</td>
<td>Networks (public value)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture (GGCT)</td>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>Individualist</td>
<td>Egalitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Policy</td>
<td>ESEA</td>
<td>NCLB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Chart 1. Governance paradigms

27 Adapted from Benington (2011).
Linked to TPA and Keynesianism, social organization through state bureaucracies (hierarchy) promotes social order through clearly defined rules, regulations, and roles. TPA separates politics from administration. This means that public services are coordinated through command and control hierarchies and provided by bureaucrats and professionals, who are removed from society-at-large and political interference but regulated by what Hirschman (1970) calls “voice.” Voice involves any effort to change an unsatisfactory situation. In public life, it includes running for office, participating in campaigns, serving on boards and commissions, testifying in public hearings, serving on juries, voting, sending letters to the editor or public officials, and writing public blogs.

Linked to NPM and Neo-liberalism, social organization through markets (individualism) promotes individual liberty, which is defined as “freedom from” state control. Individualists argue that the market more efficiently and effectively meets individual wants, as well as broader social needs. They advocate the use of incentives,
competition, and choice rather than social control through bureaucratic rules, regulations and red tape because they view the state (hierarchy) as a threat to individual liberty. Still, the goal is not necessarily to roll-back the state. Instead, unlike classical economists, Neo-liberals blur the boundaries between the state and the market. This includes using the state to promote market mechanisms for distributing risks and rewards (i.e., competition and choice), but also using market logics to evaluate state programs (i.e., efficiency and choice) (Benington 2011; Soss et al. 2011). Thus, choice, or what Albert Hirschman (1970) calls “exit,” becomes both the means and ends of public services. Exit involves taking your business elsewhere. In terms of public schools, this may involve moving from one school district to another or leaving a public school to attend a private or charter school. The theory of action is that competition for students will force schools to improve service quality.

Social organization through grassroots activities (egalitarianism) promotes social cohesion through a relative equality of social condition. These ideas are linked to NCG. NCG views civil society as the heart of governance. Although it advocates using civic and voluntary organizations to provide public services, proponents use the concept of co-production to convey the importance of fostering (1) the linkages between the state, markets and civil society; and, (2) citizen involvement in the production of public goods and services. Sometimes, co-production is by design, meaning the government purposefully co-opts users into contributing, either to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public services or to promote other goals, such as citizen engagement. Other times it is citizen directed, as is the case with citizen militias or community policing. As just mentioned, services may also be co-produced with private and not-for-
profit contractors. Either way, citizens and clients assist in service delivery. In this way, NCG blurs the divide between market, state and civil society that is prominent in both neo-liberal discourse and TPA (Ostrom 1996, 1073). It argues that networks of trust and reciprocity are the primary glue that holds civil society together. By serving as a source of social cohesion, networks enable group members to monitor and enforce compliance with group norms (i.e., social control). When government is able to mobilize these social ties, civil society becomes an avenue to create public value in a similar way to how the state and markets create value under TPA and NPM. Political scientists and sociologists call this social capital. Economist Albert Hirschman (1970) refers to it as “loyalty.” In this case, loyalty is (largely) an emotion that has behavioral effects, meaning individuals fulfill their obligations to the group due to feelings of respect and trust for its members, or because they are closely aligned with the group’s norms and values, rather than as a result of hierarchical controls or market incentives. NCG contends that these properties of networks and inter-organizational partnerships promote flexible and adaptive responses to public problems while also ensuring a more equitable distribution of public resources, especially when compared to hierarchies and markets.

Although fatalism and autonomy are not socially active cultures, conceptually, we can associate them with under- and over-governed societies, or excluded groups within societies. Both are characterized by “neglect,” which involves withdrawal or non-compliance. Neglect is not discussed by Hirschman (1970), but has since been added to his typology of behavioral responses to organizational and public problems. The main difference between neglect under autonomy and neglect under fatalism is that the former

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28 Lam (1996) and Ostrom (1996) found that coproduction requires the active support of government officials. Productive relationships are created and sustained through a large array of formal and informal rules that relate individuals to one another (Lam 1996).
is typically characterized by feelings of self-efficacy while the latter is associated with feelings of powerlessness, dependency, and disenfranchisement. Still, both may be characterized by feelings of suspicion or alienation, and both serve as a “reservoir of social discontent.” As such, they provide a space for rival cultures to recruit allies in their struggle against one another, thereby mobilizing individuals for future political, economic or social action (Hood 1998; Hoppe 2007; Thompson et al. 1990; and Wildavsky 1985).

In sum, GGCT recognizes that interests and preferences are constructed through social interaction. People use their perceptions about their natural and social worlds, and the forms of relations that are appropriate given those perceptions, to build institutions that will promote their beliefs and values. In turn, these institutions influence future political, social and economic action. In this fashion, cultural biases become embedded in the distinctive institutions that arise from different ways of organizing social relations. Thus, political and economic institutions, such as public policies, have cultural and social roots as well as effects (Thompson et al. 1999). People use culture to interpret and shape their worlds (Lockhart 1999). This is what I mean by policy paradigms.

Hall (1993, 279) defines a policy paradigm as a “framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy,” but also the kinds of “instruments that can be used to attain” those goals, and the “very nature of the problems” government programs and policies “are meant to address.” Policy paradigms reflect the worldviews of political elites and interest groups, who deploy discursive and institutional strategies, meaning they use rhetoric and the rules of the game, to build and sustain support for their favored political solutions. This may involve creating political momentum from below
through grassroots mobilization, or by affecting changes in public opinion through the media or public information campaigns. Alternatively, new paradigms may be fostered by developing the “para-political sphere,” which is defined as the institutionalization of business, government and academia through think tanks and academic research institutions (Beland 2005).

Sometimes, rival cultures are willing to form political coalitions in order to gain specific benefits and protect their way of life. For example, “American exceptionalism” brings individualism and egalitarianism together in ways that weaken hierarchy, while Britain combines hierarchy with individualism in ways that weaken egalitarianism (Thompson et al. 1990, 4). TPA combined hierarchy (bureaucracy) with egalitarianism (professionalism). Even so, these cultures remain incompatible. In consequence, changes from one paradigm to the other are likely to cause social conflict, and may eventually lead to political, economic and social change. They are also likely to have different effects on the development of social capital within society, meaning social cohesion and social control. As such, paradigms of public service provision are an important, but largely unacknowledged, part of this story. First, they put NCLB into historical context. Second, they are important for understanding how NCLB, as part of the broader paradigmatic shift from TPA to NPM, has interacted with public schools as institutions and organizations, and the occupational norms of teaching. The remainder of this section discusses TPA and NPM, and then links each to education policy.

*TPA, Keynesianism and the ESEA*

The reforms of the post-World War II welfare state were largely informed by Keynesian economics, which criticized the classical economic view that markets, left to
their own devices, would provide socially optimal solutions. Under its theory of public goods, for example, Keynesianism recognized that some goods and services are frequently under-produced because they are non-rivalrous and non-excludable. Public goods are non-rivalrous because consumption by one individual does not affect consumption by others. They are non-excludable because, once provided, non-contributors may also receive benefits. In economic terms, public goods provide “positive uncompensated externalities,” meaning people may benefit from them without contributing to their costs of production. The end result of this “free riding” is that public goods are not produced in sufficient quantity because private organizations do not reap sufficient rewards from their production. This is the case, for instance, with national defense where everyone benefits regardless of whether they have contributed to its provision. In cases where public goods and services also provide broader societal benefits, versus primarily promoting individual economic utility, Keynesians advocate state production.

In the 1950s, these ideas were expressed by economist John Kenneth Galbraith (1952, 1958) and President John F. Kennedy. Galbraith, for example, argued that the U.S. had become affluent in its private sector due to economic concentration, but its public sector had grown increasingly impoverished in terms of its social and physical infrastructure. Rather than advocate breaking up large corporations, however, he recommended countering the concentration of economic power through political and social institutions. The federal government, for instance, served as a countervailing power when it protected consumers from manipulation by advertisers, or intervened in the labor market to establish a minimum wage or mandate protections for workers.
Social and economic organizations, such as unions, farmers’ organizations and consumer associations, also performed similar functions. Thus, in contrast to classical economists, Galbraith recognized that workers and consumers are not necessarily rational, calculating actors. Sometimes, they need state protection in addition to representation through intervening social and economic organizations. President Kennedy used the phrase a “rising tide lifts all boats” to convey similar ideas. He initially used the phrase to counter political criticism that a federal dam project was “pork barrel spending,” a pejorative term that denotes the appropriation of public tax dollars for local projects in order to secure votes. Yet also used it as a metaphor for how fiscal policy would spread economic opportunity. In either case, he claimed that economic growth benefits everyone through rising income levels (Sperling 2005).

During the 1950s and 1960s, growing bipartisan support for Keynesianism resulted in an increased state role in managing the economy through taxes and spending, or fiscal policy. This translated into more public spending on social welfare and public goods (Clarke and Newman 1997). In other words, the Keynesian welfare state decommodified many goods and services, meaning they were removed from the logics of the market (Epsing-Anderson 1990). Under TPA, they were then provided by public servants, and coordinated and standardized through the use of rules, regulations and SOPs (Clarke and Newman 1997; Hood 1998). In this way, Keynes’ belief that experts in government could manage the economy aligned with TPA’s focus on bureaucratic administration (Benington 2011; Clarke and Newman 1997). Even so, both acknowledged that some social and economic problems and needs were too complex for simple political or bureaucratic solutions. In these cases, public services needed to be
personalized rather than standardized. Professionalism was one means of doing so (Clarke and Newman 1997).

As a means of social coordination, professionalism sharply contrasts with bureaucracy. Clarke and Newman (1997, 6-7) write:

Where bureaucracy operates through the standardization of work processes in the tight formal specification of roles and responsibilities, professionalism is based on the standardization of skills through externally controlled training and qualification…While administrators could be trusted because their purpose was merely to implement rules, professionals could be trusted because their neutrality was guaranteed by an ethos of service (exemplified in the Hippocratic oath)…bureaucratic administration promised impersonal fairness…professionalism promised disinterested fairness. Bound by professional values and codes, the professional placed his or her skills and expertise at the state’s disposal in the pursuit of social improvement.

In short, bureaucracy and professionalism are both designed to ensure fairness through “neutrality,” but bureaucracy ensures impartiality by standardizing services through rules and regulations. Professionalism does so through training and value introjection, meaning professionals adopt certain codes of behavior, such as an ethos of service. Nevertheless, the goal in both cases is to reduce behaviors that are based on personal biases and prejudices, while enabling the state to standardize some services (bureaucracy) and engage in social change through others (professionalism). In the latter case, TPA trusted professionals to apply their expert judgment on behalf of the public good and, in this manner, brought professions and occupations under its organizational umbrella. This allowed TPA to expand the number of services that were provided through state hierarchies. Clarke and Newman (1997) call this the “organizational settlement.”

Even so, tensions remained between hierarchy and professionalism due to the ways that each structure internal and external relationships. Internally, professional accountability (largely) involves self-regulation, or deference to professional norms,
standards, and expertise. Through formal training and socialization, members of a profession learn the skills and informal norms that guide day-to-day practice (Clarke and Newman 1997). For example, administrators, teachers, and other school staff must acquire specialized knowledge, pass certification exams, and uphold professional standards of practice. Meanwhile, group members formally and informally train, monitor and sanction those who fail to comply. This may involve appealing to management (i.e., hierarchy) or imposing social costs, such as gossip and social exclusion. Yet, professionalism also contrasts with hierarchy in terms of the relationship between managers and workers. First, managers are typically trained in the same field and drawn from within the ranks. School principals and superintendents, for instance, are often former teachers. In consequence, they frequently deploy collegial management styles. Second, professionalism decentralizes decision-making. In part, this relates to the complexity of the work, but it is also due to the difficulties standardizing (and thus evaluating) work processes and outcomes (Clarke and Newman 1997).

Externally, professionals, like bureaucrats, are separated from their clients by their training and qualifications (Clarke and Newman 1997). Still, unlike bureaucracy, professionalism does not necessarily preclude emotional ties to clients and patients. Many professions and occupations, like doctors, nurses, teachers and social workers, engage in social reconstruction. This typically involves sustained interactions over time. It also frequently includes dealing with what Harmon and Mayer (1986) call “wicked” problems. By definition, wicked problems are those where society does not agree on the definition. In consequence, there are irreconcilable differences in terms of how to resolve them, but also in terms of how to measure the effectiveness of the intervention. Wicked
problems include poverty, homelessness, drug abuse, crime, and family decay. What further complicates the issue is that many professions and occupations also deal with unwilling clients and/or clients who are co-producers of their own services (Clarke and Newman 1997). Both of these are the case, for example, with public education where school attendance is compulsory, and parents and children “consume” education but also produce it through their educational behaviors. In these cases, public outcomes are co-constructed by many different actors, who need to work collectively in order to achieve public, as well as individual, ends. In short, public value is co-produced.

In all of these ways, professionalism is more closely aligned with NCG and public value. It creates a different balance between the personal and the impersonal than we typically see between bureaucrats and citizens. It also shifts motivation and the locus of control from external sources to internal ones. By that, I mean that workers are influenced by managerial, professional, and occupational controls, but they often attend to the quality of their work because they care about how it affects the subjects of their work. They may also be motivated by the personal and intrinsic value of caring to go beyond what is formally required at work.

Hochschild (1983) refers to these kinds of occupations as “care work,” which she contrasts with “emotional labor.” Workers in caring occupations manage their emotions and relationships in accordance with professional norms, client expectations or the demands of the job. They are not closely supervised and retain some autonomy over their emotion management. In jobs that involve emotional labor, on the other hand, emotions have “exchange value,” or are sold for a wage, and are prescribed and monitored by management as part of the capitalist labor process. Under the former, extrinsic incentives
and hierarchically applied rules and regulations may actually crowd out the intrinsic motivations for high performance. In this sense, there is a real tension between hierarchy and professionalism that was never fully redressed by TPA.

In sum, TPA argued that political representation could be combined with bureaucratic administration and professionalism to promote the equitable and impartial treatment of citizens. Bureaucracy and professionalism both standardize services, but professionalism was further viewed as a means of promoting social change to advance the public interest (Clarke and Newman 1997). These ideas were reflected in the ESEA. Through this policy, the state recognized there was an inverse relationship between poverty and educational achievement. Because it was assumed that poor performance was resource based, the state directed extra resources to schools serving students from low-income backgrounds in order to offset deficits in learning (Peterson et al. 1991). Still, the ESEA did not alter traditional models of organizing public schools and structuring teaching as an occupation. Administrators and teachers provided public services based on their professional expertise, but were then governed by strict rules, regulations and procedures in terms of who was entitled to what level of services. Meanwhile, public schools as organizations remained hierarchically arranged in terms of clearly defined roles and responsibilities. This included the authoritative divisions between administrators and teachers, but also between schools and state and federal Education Departments (DOEs). Then, within these hierarchies, teachers’ professional voice was protected through tenure, seniority and other forms of due process and procedural protections.
Beginning in the 1970s, the Keynesian welfare state was increasingly attacked on both the left and the right. The causal relationship is unclear, but these events occurred alongside a collapse of trust in the neutrality of public bureaucrats and professionals. Eventually, this led to the breakdown of traditional structures of authority and social control under TPA. Overt time, the destruction of the existing ideational coalition (i.e., TPA as a policy paradigm) made space for new ones. The next section discusses these processes and how NPM linked with Neo-Liberalism to fill the void.

_NPM, Neo-Liberalism and NCLB_

The welfare state was predicated on a number of assumptions about the nature of society and the family. These assumptions created the necessary preconditions for the expansion of the welfare state under TPA and Keynesianism. One precondition, for example, was full male employment, which rested on a heterosexual, patriarchal view of the family. It also reflected a gendered division of labor between the wage-earning husband and non-wage earning wife, who served the public realm by reproducing the private sphere of the home. Together, these preconditions ensured that most citizens had their needs met through the private market (i.e., wages, pensions and health care). In those cases where either there was no male head of the household or no earned income, the state stepped in through welfare programs, such as income security, health care, and food stamps. These state benefits were funded by the tax and insurance contributions of those who were employed (Clarke and Newman 1997).

Although these preconditions and biases were never fully met or totally accurate, the family as a focal point of the welfare state was increasingly challenged in the 1960s and 1970s due to broader social and institutional changes. This included, but was not
limited to, changes in the construction of marriage and the family as both social and
economic institutions, due to the rise in divorce rates; the spread of alternative familial
arrangements, such as living together outside of marriage and gay or lesbian households;
and the gendered division of labor in the home, due to the growing involvement of
women in the workforce. One consequence of these changes was that groups on both the
left and the right attacked TPA and Keynesianism (Clarke and Newman 1997).

On the left, many charged that government programs had failed to alleviate social
and economic disparities. Others argued that experts in government had delimited
democratic participation through paternalism disguised as professionalism (Benington
2011; Clarke and Newman 1997). Some even claimed that the state was actually
reproducing racial and social inequalities through its policy designs. These claims were
later supported by research that shows the South had used its power, both within
Congress and within the Democratic Party, to ensure that policy designs (largely) denied
opportunities to African Americans. This was typically achieved through two
mechanisms. When programs were more inclusive, Southern congressman ensured that
the policy design provided a great deal of discretion to local officials (e.g., governors,
legislators, mayors or state and local bureaucrats). These officials then ensured that
federal programs were set-up and administered in ways that were congruent with local
mores. This included, for example, Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), where state
legislatures could establish low levels of funding and unsympathetic bureaucrats could
discourage qualified blacks from applying, thereby keeping African Americans in their
place. Programs that were federally administered, on the other hand, were fashioned in
ways that kept African Americans out. For instance, old age insurance did not apply to
farmworkers and domestic help, which effectively excluding the majority of African American workers in the south. One side-effect to these designs, however, was that they also kept poor whites in their place in order to keep state spending to a minimum (Katznelson 2005; Lieberman 2001). Either way, these practices led many on the left to challenge the (supposed) neutrality of the welfare state, public bureaucrats and professionals, and argue that the state was reproducing power relations through public programs (Clarke and Newman 1997).

On the right, TPA and Keynesianism were challenged by Neo-liberals and Neo-conservatives. Neo-liberals attacked the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of what they called the state monopolization of public service provision, and challenged the claim that state bureaucrats and professionals were driven (and controlled) by a public service ethos. Specifically, they charged that public servants used their insulation from market pressures, and their ability to hide behind regulations, red tape and bureaucratic or professional expertise, to build empires and evade accountability. Either way, the end result was inferior public goods and services, as public servants used their public monopoly to pursue “producer” interests at the expense of citizens and taxpayers. They further claimed that the welfare state had actually undermined economic and social progress in three ways. First, the costs of an expanded welfare state necessitated high levels of taxation. Second, the state as an employer siphoned-off workers from “wealth creating” private sector jobs and employed them in “wealth draining” public sector jobs. Third, welfare benefits rewarded those who did not work while penalizing those who did through higher taxes, thus creating disincentives to work and free-ride off of others.
(Clarke and Newman 1997). They argued that, together, these perverse side-effects had inhibited entrepreneurship and impeded America’s ability to compete abroad.

Neo-Conservatives also focused on the perverse effects of the welfare state, but they viewed the issue in terms of how it negatively affected morality and traditional values (Clarke and Newman 1997). At the individual level, they claimed the welfare state harmed those it sought to help by demoralizing recipients and creating a cycle of dependency that was passed down through families. Meanwhile, welfare designs destroyed family values by encouraging (unwed) single female headed households. Welfare also discouraged work by paying benefits that exceeded the take-home pay that would be earned through working in a minimum-wage job. Parents then passed on these untraditional values to their children. At the societal level, they charged that the welfare state had created a permanent (predominantly black) underclass (Murray 1984). In this manner, the welfare state had been an active agent in producing national decline, not just a drain on economic resources (Clarke and Newman 1997; Murray 1984).

In spite of their differences, Neo-Conservatives and Neo-Liberals did not differ in their conclusions. Both portrayed national decline as resulting from the growth in the welfare state. They also agreed that the welfare state had undermined personal responsibility. Neo-liberals, however, focused on “economic man,” or how public policies, such as welfare, food stamps, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicaid and subsidized housing, created disincentives to work, save and invest. Conversely, Neo-Conservatives focused on how the demoralizing effects of welfare had led to a decline in traditional family values. Similarly, both perceived that public professionals had played a role in the problem, but Neo-Liberals claimed that this was due to their public service
monopoly. Neo-Conservatives, on the other hand, blamed their professional values. According to them, the professional commitment to “cultural relativism” had fostered a decline in traditional values, including an ethos of personal responsibility, even as it promised a more egalitarian, anti-discriminatory, and child centered society. In sum, the New Right was never solely focused on the size of the welfare state, or even the efficiency and effectiveness of welfare programs. It also critiqued TPA’s organizational and social regimes. As part of TPA’s power centers, public bureaucrats and professionals were viewed as both a part of the problem and a barrier to its resolution. This meant that the New Right needed to establish a new organizational and social regime if it hoped to restructure the welfare state (Clarke and Newman 1997).

By the 1990s, the Neo-liberal wing of conservatism had gained prominence within the Republican Party. As previously mentioned, Neo-liberals view the state and markets as naturally antagonistic forms of social coordination. Unlike the laissez-faire doctrines of the past, however, the goal was not necessarily to “roll back the state.” Instead, they advocated using state power to actively build markets and support market-like behaviors. The theory of action is that the unfettered pursuit of self-interest helps the collective well-being (Apple 2001; Schram et al. 2008). Politically, they proposed tax cuts for wealthy individuals and firms, and deregulating federal oversight of the private sector. They justified these policies using President Kennedy’s slogan “a rising tide lifts all boats” (Sperling 2005). In terms of public service provision, they advocated devolving federal social welfare programs to state and local governments, recommodifying many public goods and services, and using market logics to transform
the public sector at all levels of government (Apple 2001; Epsing-Anderson 1990; and Schram et al. 2008).

Stone (1997) argues that the success or failure of a narrative is indicated by whether it becomes the dominant story. Another way to study the success of a narrative is whether it gets co-opted by the other side in a conflict. An example of this is Kennedy’s phrase “a rising tide lifts all boats.” Even though Kennedy advocated tax cuts, Sperling (2005) claims “there is not a single example…of his using the metaphor specifically to promote tax cuts.” Instead, he used the phrase to justify spending on public services and infrastructure, especially those that benefitted broader socio-economic goals. Now, it is largely used to justify tax cuts, which mostly benefit those with high-incomes. In this manner, political elites use taken-for-granted meanings to create new political coalitions and achieve political change.

Largely informed by Neo-liberal ideas, NPM has dominated academic and practitioner debate ever since and, similar to TPA and Keynesianism, has generated support across the political spectrum. Hood (1991) defines NPM as an approach to public administration that deploys market orientated management techniques to the public sector, in order to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and general performance of public services and modern bureaucracies. Today, Democrats and Republicans both use the rhetoric of economic efficiency, effectiveness, and freedom of choice for “consumers” of public services in order to justify the increased privatization of the public sector and deregulation of the private sector (Benington 2011; Clarke and Newman 1997). Meanwhile, the belief that public servants will behave self-interestedly if left alone has fostered a bipartisan movement to hold public bureaucrats and professionals
accountable for spending tax dollars efficiently and effectively. Ideationally, these ideas culminated in the performance in government movement (Radin 2006).

The performance in government movement is predicated on the idea that the public sector is broken and needs to be fixed. It differs from prior reform efforts in that it seeks to change the very culture of government itself by applying private sector management tools and market incentives (Hood 1991; Kettl 2002; Kettl and DiIulio 1995; Newlin Carney 1994; Osbourne and Gaebler 1992). As institutionalized by Democratic president Bill Clinton’s National Partnership for Reinventing Government (NPR), the performance movement is another example of how language gets appropriated and adapted by different ideologies for different purposes. In From Red Tape to Results, for instance, Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore argued that the public sector needed competition and choice as an incentive to minimize waste, fraud and abuse, and “put customers first.” Then, when unveiling his NPR initiative, Clinton proclaimed that government programs had been “undermined by an inefficient and outdated bureaucracy.” He claimed NPR would “reinvent government,” or “make the entire federal government less expensive and more efficient” by moving “the culture” of “bureaucracy away from complacency and entitlement toward initiative and empowerment” (Clinton, “Remarks Announcing the National Performance Review”). In his 1996 State of the Union Address, he further boasted that "the era of big government is over" (Clinton, "1996 State of the Union Address").

Even so, President Clinton did not totally replace management principles based on bureaucratic-professionalism with economic ones. Certainly efficiency and effectiveness were given primacy, but he continued to advocate professional autonomy, as well as
discretion for frontline policy implementers. Instead, he positioned his reforms as a “political third way,” and argued that “catalytic government” engaged in “steering rather than rowing” (Osbourne and Gaebler 1992). In this case, voice and choice enabled the state to monitor and enforce bureaucratic responsiveness to citizens and taxpayers.

In terms of education policies, the performance in government movement was institutionalized in the form of NCLB. As reauthorized under NCLB, the ESEA is now (largely) an incentive-based accountability policy. It assumes that low performance results from the lack of individual initiative and motivation rather than socio-economic inequality. To that end, it requires states to test students in reading and math in grades three through eight to measure annual progress, and then publish annual report cards that disaggregate student test scores by school and district, and by racial and ethnic subgroups. As a form of public information, these report cards provide the means to “name and shame” failing schools, thereby furnishing an incentive to remove – or never obtain – the stigma of failure. In short, NCLB presumes that teachers, administrators, and students will improve their work effort in order to obtain respectable test scores (Hess and Petrilli 2009). The theory of action (Stone 1989) is that public information will encourage voice (i.e., parental complaints) and choice (i.e., competition for public resources as a result of parental exit to better performing public or charter schools within the district). In this way, it will stimulate positive changes in public schools and teaching, especially in schools in need of improvement (SINI), and make public education more efficient and effective.29

29 States are also required to intervene in “failing schools,” or schools and districts where students do not make adequate yearly progress (AYP), or else risk losing federal administrative funds; and students in schools that fail to make AYP are eligible for school choice provisions, resulting in the redirection of federal funds away from their home schools. The sanctions get more onerous the longer a school fails to
In sum, as amended by NCLB, the ESEA now relies on different forms of social control. Earlier I described how there were tensions between hierarchy and professionalism under TPA. There are also unresolved tensions between markets and professionalism under NPM. As previously mentioned, many professions and occupations deal with wicked problems, where outcomes are neither agreed upon, nor (easily) observed or measured. They also serve unwilling clients who are often the co-producers of their work outcomes. All of these are the case with public education, where teachers partially create public value, but educational outcomes are a function of many different actors who need to work collectively in order to achieve public, as well as individual, ends. The importance of citizen co-production suggests that declines in quality are not necessarily attributable to schools as “producers” or fixable by schools as organizations. Meanwhile, children’s academic outcomes are highly correlated to their socio-economic backgrounds, and racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately likely to be poor. Thus, teachers and schools that serve large numbers of poor and minority children are also more likely to have high numbers of students who are at-risk academically.

Just as importantly, the production of educational outcomes is complex. Schools as public institutions and organizations have multiple goals. They are also affected by a variety of district, state and federal mandates. Principals and teachers, on the other hand, perform a variety of tasks, many of which cannot be measured. Schools, principals and teachers need to balance these tasks with competing goals and mandates. They also need make AYP. Explicitly the law assumes accountability mechanisms will foster efficient and effective educational practices. Implicitly, the law assumes that accountability will foster equity between schools by closing racial and ethnic achievement gaps while raising overall test scores (Hanushek, 2002). For a discussion of policy theories of school choice, please see Weiss (1998).
to balance individual needs with the communal good. More problematically, as a human service, teaching involves a large amount of labor, much of which is “invisible.” By that, I mean it is not a formal part of the job, and thus goes unreimbursed. As professionals, teachers engage in these behaviors in order to meet the needs of their students. Still, because the value of this labor is difficult to measure, it is typically not a part of teachers’ assessments. Finally, learning is a cumulative process that cannot be attributed to the impact of one teacher at any one point in time (Koretz 2002). It further depends on many other factors, including the level of resources available at the school and district level, and within the community at-large.

For all of these reasons, tests are noisy measures of school, principal and teacher performance. They focus on some tasks and the transfer of certain kinds of knowledge at the expense of others, but the incentive is to focus on the most easily measured activities at the expense of those that cannot be measured. Testing as a form of accountability also tends to focus on economic value at the expense of social and political value. By economic value, I am conveying two things. Classical economists distinguish between three forms of value: exchange, labor, and use value. The basis of private value is exchange value, as created by market relations. Labor value, on the other hand, reflects the amount of human effort and skill invested in the production of a good or service. Conversely, use value reflects how beneficial a product is to a given person or in a given situation. In terms of public schools and education policies, testing focuses on the skills and knowledge needed for future employment, while choice focuses on exchange value or market relations. Meanwhile, social value examines how schools contribute to social capital, including social cohesion and social control, and political value examines how
schools contribute to democratic participation and engagement. Both of these are more closely aligned with how we think of use value. In this case, social and political value occur when relationships create social and political meaning and identity. Either of these may foster the creation of economic value, but it is not the primary goal. Ascribing value to schools based on the creation of market and labor value may not be welfare enhancing in terms of individual students or society-at-large if it crowds out these other important goals.

Finally, ascribing value to principals or teachers based on student test scores may also lead to results that are not socially optimal because neither have total control over their work environment or even their work “product,” meaning children. In this case, welfare improving behaviors are crowded out as teachers and principals narrowly focus on the goals and objectives that are tested. Meanwhile, the focus on external controls (i.e., testing and choice) may also crowd out internal sources of control and lead to losses in efficiency. By “internal,” I mean intrinsic motivations but also professional norms and values. In this case, Neo-liberalism presumes that public servants are motivated by their own self-interests at the expense of citizens and society, and thus need to be controlled through market incentives. This approach is reflected in NCLB, especially as modified by President Obama’s Race to the Top (U.S. Department of Education 2009). Social scientists, however, recognize that individuals are motivated by intrinsic, as well as extrinsic, rewards. The focus on extrinsic rewards and the use of hierarchical rules and regulations to control behavior may actually crowd out these intrinsic motivations. To the extent these motivations are productive, this will not be welfare enhancing for children or society.
Summing up, the theories of public goods and rational choice, which were informed by Keynesian economics and Neo-liberalism drove macro-economic policy but were also associated with a logic of action that drove policy development, institutional reform and organizational change. In this section, I showed how political change from the ESEA to NCLB corresponded with this broader paradigm shift regarding the proper means and ends of public services. The next section contextualizes NCLB by placing it within this historical shift. My claim is that these trends are important because they put NCLB into historical context, but also because this dissertation takes place within these larger developments. Meanwhile, as systems of political, social and economic organization, the ESEA and NCLB are not compatible. In consequence, we would predict that they would engender different policy cultures, and result in political and socio-economic conflict. As such, we need to understand the political and social roots of political change, in order to explore its effects.

**Public Service Paradigms and Policy Feedback**

Education’s rise to prominence as a social policy traces back to the 1960s when it became a substitute for versus a compliment to the more direct forms of public intervention that were pursued under the New Deal. The Great Society sought to mitigate socio-economic disadvantage through policies that focused on developing human capital, including education and job training to help the disadvantaged participate in the labor market. Liberals argued that education was better suited for promoting socio-economic equality than radical political, economic or social change. In consequence, the Great Society (largely) left the structural conditions that had fostered socio-economic inequality
untouched (Kantor and Lowe 2006; Pincus 1985; Matusow 1984). This is perhaps best evidenced by Title I of the ESEA of 1965. The ESEA was organized around the idea that the federal government could best alleviate poverty and economic inequality by providing funding to schools that served “educationally deprived children” (Kantor and Lowe 2006). It was argued that education would help these groups fully participate in the labor market and thereby achieve other social democratic goals. Informed by TPA, the ESEA thus charged schools, administrators, and teachers with fostering socio-economic equality by redressing the cultural deprivations associated with poverty.

When combined with federal and state court decisions, the ESEA institutionalized a liberal consensus in education. Largely concerned with issues of equity, this consensus focused federal attention on promoting increased educational opportunities for disadvantaged children and desegregating public schools. Over time, however, the equity regime was extended “horizontally” to women, the disabled, and bilingual students. It was also expanded “vertically,” or beyond K-12 education, through the provision of grants and low-cost student loans, as well as through increased funding for public colleges and universities. Between 1960 and 1980, these programs sharply increased federal aid to education at all levels. They also expanded the middle class. Concomitantly, they benefited private businesses and the defense industry through government-funded research at public and private universities and through the production of trained human capital (Pincus 1985).

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30 Kantor and Lowe (2006) are not arguing that the Great Society solely focused on education. It also included, for example, health care (Medicare and Medicaid), food stamps, job training and public service employment. Nonetheless, when contrasted with the New Deal, the Great Society favored the provision of services, such as education and job training, which would enable those on the margins to help themselves, rather than direct intervention in the labor market through, for example, large-scale job creation or income redistribution.
Although initially contested, the ESEA increasingly generated positive feedback from groups that perceived it served their interests (Cohen and Moffit 2009). Positive feedback occurs when institutions create political constituencies that have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo or expanding existing programs. The latter was the case, for example, with demands to index Social Security to inflation. In terms of the ESEA, policy beneficiaries restricted large-scale political change in federal education policy for decades, while advocating increased and expanded benefits. Empirical research also shows, however, that political institutions generate negative feedback. Negative feedback occurs when previously apathetic groups mobilize, either because they perceive they are being penalized or ignored by government, or because they believe that “the state,” meaning public institutions and policies, is not working efficiently, effectively, or as intended. In this fashion, political institutions provide the impetus for political change (Weaver 2010). In terms of the ESEA, negative feedback largely resulted from trends within the political economy. These trends fostered growing skepticism about public and private institutions in general, but were linked to federal education policy due to the way President Johnson rhetorically constructed the Great Society. As previously mentioned, he specifically made a discursive connection between education and socio-economic equality.

Public education was also impacted by the broader ideational environment, or what Cohen (2003) calls the “Consumer’s Republic.” She used the term to convey the larger strategy for reconstructing the nation’s economy after World War II. Discursively,

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31 For example, Pierson (1996) shows how postwar social programs created an “army of beneficiaries” and vested interests that mobilized to prevent widespread changes in the welfare system. The ESEA has been changed over the past forty years, but mostly by building on it rather than eliminating it or providing major revisions. Even NCLB was layered on top of the ESEA.
political and economic elites (i.e., policymakers, business and labor leaders, and civic groups) advocated the private marketplace, supported by government resources, as the primary avenue for delivering economic prosperity, as well as other important social democratic goals, such as political freedom, democratic participation, and social egalitarianism. She argues, however, that the Consumer’s Republic transformed the nation’s political culture in ways that created longer term political, social and economic issues. For example, by linking American values, attitudes and behaviors to mass consumption, the Consumer’s Republic transformed how Americans interacted with one another, as well as what they expected from their government. In the case of business and labor, for instance, unions developed stable relationships with employers through collective bargaining. This benefited employees and employers by minimizing strikes and other clashes in the workplace in two ways. First, in return for their loyalty, employers offered health and retirement benefits, and paid wages that reflected the general cost of living. Second, employers were able to invest in job training without worrying that employee exit would benefit their competitors in the form of trained human capital. The business-labor arrangement also benefitted the state and society. As previously mentioned, the welfare state rested on the ability of most Americans to meet their needs through the private workplace.

The ESEA of 1965 was forged within this broader ideational environment, but its implementation was then impacted by challenges created as a result of these ideas. Specifically, the Consumer’s Republic interacted with New Deal liberalism and the emergence of the Cold War military-industrial complex in ways that shaped the spatial patterns of post-war economic, social and political development (Cohen 2003; Lassiter
This, in turn, affected local public schools. Institutionally, for example, the Federal Housing Administration and the G.I. Bill subsidized the American Dream of middle-class homeownership for millions of white families, who left rural and urban areas to move to sprawling suburbs. Suburbanization was further expedited by the Interstate Highway Act. The act was adopted in 1956 to facilitate Cold War mobilization. Yet, both encouraged the relocation of corporations to the metropolitan fringe by subsidizing automobile-based commuting through the development of federal highways. In consequence, jobs, workers and tax revenues also migrated from urban centers to the metropolitan fringe and suburbs.

Ideationally, the dependence on unregulated private markets often encouraged the pursuit of profits and individual self-interest at the expense of higher collective goals, including a commitment to social justice and democratic participation. For instance, using private developers to solve the nation’s housing shortage promised a more egalitarian and democratic society, by offering Americans a stake in their communities, but created private communities that were stratified by race and class (Cohen 2003). In part, this resulted from “consumer choice.” However, white flight was also institutionalized by federal policies, such as the G.I. Bill and federal loans for home ownership. These policies combined instruments, such as redlining, with local discretion in ways that enabled communities to overtly and covertly discriminate against blacks who applied for business loans and mortgages (Jackson 1987; Katznelson 2005). Then, as home ownership became a key source of economic security, federal policies contributed to socio-economic and racial stratification in ways that had profound consequences for public services (Katznelson 2005). This was especially true for education, where
communities varied in terms of property values and therefore tax revenues. The end result was that local communities differed substantially in terms of the kinds of services they offered their residents. This meant that citizens who did not enjoy a fair share of property ownership were also relegated to inferior public services, including public schools (Cohen 2003).

All of these changes occurred as Cold War military spending propelled a shift in political power to the South and the West. These areas were transformed into the Sunbelt, or a booming region that stretched from Virginia to California, through the infusion of federal resources to build military bases and defense-related industries. Here, between 1950 and 1975, the population expanded at nearly twice the rate of the “Rust Belt,” or states in the Midwest and Northeast. The end result was that, by the late 1960s, the single-family suburban neighborhood emerged as the dominant form of social organization, and northern suburbs and the Sunbelt were transformed into centers of political power (Lassiter 2006). This trend is perhaps best evidenced by the fact that six of the eight elected presidents between 1964 and 2012 were from the Sunbelt. This occurred even though Democrats and Republicans controlled the office for roughly even amounts of time.

Americans (largely) did not question these changes during the 1950s, when unprecedented affluence fostered upward mobility (Cohen 2003).\textsuperscript{32} Certainly, dramatic increases in the standard of living were not novel to that time period, but the post-war economy was unique in the fact that increases in real income did not solely expand the

\textsuperscript{32} Matusow (1984, xiii) writes: “From 1950 through 1970…the American Gross National Product grew at an average annual rate of 3.9 percent, perhaps the best performance in the nation’s history. In consequence, the average American commanded 50 percent more real income at the end of the period than at the beginning.”
consumption of necessities, such as food, clothing or shelter. Instead, rising income enabled “the mass of Americans, including many blue-collar workers,” to “enjoy substantial amounts of discretionary income,” or money to purchase amenities. Matusow (1984, xiii-xiv) posits that this affluence was not only “the distinguishing feature of the post-World War II era,” it also determined the socio-economic, cultural and political character of the era. Socio-economically, it “blurred class lines and eased class antagonisms. Culturally, it undermined the self-denying ethic,” which “was no longer appropriate” in a high consumption economy. Politically, it “nourished the… idealism” of the 1960s and the rise of post-war liberalism, including the “optimistic conviction” that “most American problems could and would be solved.”

This period of relative tranquility ended in the 1960s, partly due to the mobilization of previously apathetic groups, such as minorities, women and the disabled, but also as a result of a resurgence in left-wing scholarship after a period of demobilization during the Cold War Red Scare of the 1940s and 1950s. Together, these groups challenged the legitimacy of American institutions, including public education, which they charged had afforded inequitable access to the American dream. In terms of social policy, these ideas were perhaps best exemplified by Michael Harrington’s The Other America (1962), which revealed that, despite relative affluence, 20 percent of the population and over 40 percent of the black population still suffered in poverty. In education, on the other hand, the re-emerging left claimed public schools were being used by elites to maintain their positions of privilege, by relegating minorities and the

33 Similarly, writing at the time, Potter (1959) argued that the distinctive character of the American people was shaped by economic abundance.
economically disadvantaged to low-skilled and underpaid positions.\textsuperscript{34} Within this ideational environment, Democrats came to power by advocating federal intervention to extend “the blessings of American life to excluded citizens” (Matusow 1984, xiv). The theory of action was that the nation’s social ills could be resolved by bringing minorities and the poor into the economic and social mainstream through a War on Poverty, and by expanding civil rights and liberties. Informed by Keynesian economics and its theory of public goods, the Great Society was an attempt to fulfill the promise of a more just society, while also expanding democratic participation. We see this, for example, with the community action requirements included in many government programs during the 1960s.

During the 1970s, though, Americans of all income levels grew increasingly skeptical about the ability of the state to foster economic equality and extend democratic participation. In part, growing skepticism resulted from a series of political scandals, including the resignation of President Nixon and the growing disenchantment with the Vietnam War, but globalization and the Arab oil embargo also triggered the most serious economic downturn since the Great Depression.\textsuperscript{35} In the spring of 1975, unemployment reached 9 percent, its highest level since 1941, and skyrocketing energy costs pushed inflation into the double digits (Collins 2007). “Stagflation,” or a combination of high unemployment and inflation, undermined the economic security of many Americans, while the rising costs of the war in Vietnam and the ailing economy impacted the federal

\textsuperscript{34} See, for example, Herndon (1969); Kohl (1967); and, Kozol (1968).

\textsuperscript{35} The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was created in 1959 to enable Arab oil producing countries to have more control over their political economy. The cartel engineered the embargo in 1973-74 in response to the Arab-Israeli conflict, but continued raising prices even after the embargo was lifted in the spring of 1974. Energy costs skyrocketed from $1.99 per barrel to over $10 a barrel by the end of 1974 (Collins 2007).
government’s ability to redress the crisis. All of these events weakened the nation’s faith in conventional economic policy (Jennings 1990; Matusow 1984; Toch 1991).

In the meantime, concern was mounting about the viability of American capitalism due to declining competitiveness abroad. From 1969 to 1979, America lost 32 to 38 million jobs as a result of increased global competition. Just as troubling, nations that were presumed to be economically and technologically inferior were passing the United States in trade and manufacturing, and America became a debtor nation for the first time in nearly four generations (Jennings 1990; Troy 2005). Declining competitiveness abroad was accompanied by a sharp decline in productivity growth. Economists do not agree on what caused slowed productivity, but these changes curtailed a long period of upward mobility, and many Americans felt fearful about their economic futures (Collins 2007).

Although these trends exacerbated unemployment, deindustrialization was also changing the face of employment, as the American economy shifted away from manufacturing toward a service economy where jobs are typically non-unionized and pay lower wages. They also offer few, if any, benefits (Troy 2005). Changing labor practices were also generating uncertainty for many workers, who could no longer count on working long-term for one company as firms experimented with flexible labor practices, including contracting out different aspects of the production process or hiring part-time and temporary workers. This affected workers’ access to health insurance and pensions, but unstable wages and the need to move around to “follow the jobs” also made home ownership risky. Now, problems that had once been confined to the working poor spread to the middle class. These included job insecurity, restricted access to affordable health
care and pension plans, bankruptcy and foreclosure. The expansion of risk reshaped Americans relationships to their employers, but it also reshaped their relationship to the state and one another (Hacker 2006). For instance, flexible work arrangements negatively impacted union membership, which affected labor’s power vis-à-vis big business.

Fears about the viability of American democracy and capitalism were further exacerbated by a series of high-profile fiscal crises in both the public and private sectors. In 1975 and 1979, for example, New York City and Chrysler verged on bankruptcy (Troy 2005). The federal government bailed out Chrysler, but President Ford initially adopted a “tough love” approach toward New York City. He angered many voters when the *New York Daily News* headlined “Ford to City: Drop Dead.” The crisis was averted at the last minute when Albert Shanker, President of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), agreed to use $150 million from the union’s pension fund to buy Municipal Assistance Corporation bonds. Ford eventually persuaded Congress to approve federal loans to the city, which New York paid with interest (Amlung 2010; Blumenthal 2002; Roberts 2006 a, b). Still, both of these crises were indicative of the structural problems that were afflicting manufacturing and the nation’s older urban centers at that time.

Americans have often looked to their schools in times of crisis. The late 1970s were no different. On the left, criticism mounted that the ESEA had not redressed educational inequalities. Many of these claims related to the policy’s design. In point of fact, Title I of the ESEA was designed to distribute benefits quite broadly across schools.

36 By the 1920s, auto manufacturing was dominated by three large companies: General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler. In the 1970s, American companies were struggling as a result of increased competition from foreign auto manufacturers and rising oil prices. In 1979, Chrysler was bailed out by a $1.5 billion federal loan.

37 Ford never explicitly said “drop dead” (Roberts 2006b). Ford was actually a moderate, but adopted a tough love approach over the objections of his Vice President, Nelson Rockefeller, who had been the Governor of New York.
Just as importantly, the policy was never fully funded and did not penalize states with large disparities in per pupil expenditures. As a result, the policy did little to redress inequities across districts, either in terms of overall resources or in terms of the average amount spent per pupil (Cohen and Moffitt 2009; Cross 2004; Jeffrey 1978; Kantor and Lowe 2006; Stein 2004). Just as problematically, the negative portrayal of children and their families, when combined with the ESEA’s policy design, resulted in the relegation of disadvantaged children, many of whom were minorities, into separate programs for large portions of the day. Unsurprisingly, some fell further behind due to the slower pace of learning in these classrooms. Others relegated themselves to educational underperformance as they internally adopted the attitude that they were less capable (Stein 2004).

On the right, conservative intellectuals were being drawn to education after a period of quiescence during the 1960s. In large part, this was due to conflicts over civil rights and liberties, but also concerns about declining educational productivity. Ideationally, conservatives argued that federal policies had broadened educational opportunities at the expense of educational effectiveness. Some complained, for example, that federal actions on behalf of the disadvantaged had done little to improve

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38 The program was designed so that schools in nearly every district received funding yet was never fully funded. As such, there was never enough to cover all of the children who qualified, and it was not uncommon for districts and schools with large numbers of poor children to be short-changed while schools in relatively wealthy districts with few low-income children received benefits (Kantor and Lowe 2006). These were not the only equity issues. For example, due to legislative ambiguities and limited oversight, many districts used funding for programs that benefited all children, such as purchasing books and supplies. Over subsequent reauthorizations, these school wide programs were allowed for schools with very high rates of poverty but the threshold was consistently lowered, thereby benefitting larger numbers of children who were not poor (Jennings 2001; Murphy 1973; Stein 2004). This issue was discussed in the debates on NCLB.

39 This method of service delivery was used to demonstrate regulatory compliance. By hiring practitioners and paraprofessionals solely for Title I programs, schools could demonstrate that Title I money was spent on “Title I kids.” Unfortunately, there was no incentive to mainstream children back into “regular” classrooms because it would result in the loss of Title I funds and jobs, as well as larger class sizes (Stein 2004).
their performance, while the bureaucratic maze of rules, regulations and red tape had escalated costs. Others contended that the added responsibilities for schools and students had minimized the amount of time devoted to “active instruction,” or the teaching of traditional academic subjects. Some also focused on what Kagan (2003) would later call “adversarial legalism,” or a “legal style” that emphasizes the use of courts, rather than legislative or bureaucratic solutions, to make public policy. They charged that federal mandates on behalf of the disadvantaged and disabled had created a “culture of compliance” because educators had become hyper-concerned about “dodging lawsuits” (Hayes 2004; Toch 1991).

Some of the most vocal critics were the media and business groups. As early as 1975, newspapers began reporting a 12-year decline in scores on Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SATs), which are used for college admissions. By 1981, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported a decline in students’ abilities to write and think. That same year, the National Science Foundation (NSF) reported that the decrease in graduation requirements was negatively affecting the proportion of students who pursued math, science, and foreign languages. In contrast, the nation’s economic and political competitors, such as the Soviet Union, Japan and Germany, provided rigorous academic programs across-the-board, but especially focused on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Many claimed that the nation’s graduates did not have the necessary skills to compete in an increasingly technological society, and business groups increasingly blamed this job-skill mismatch for the nation’s lost advantage in manufacturing and other industries (Hayes 2004). Within this environment, the New York Stock Exchange commissioned a report by a group of economists to study

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40 NAEP was established in 1968 by Congress to sample the nation’s students and measure annual progress.
Japan’s growing dominance in industry. Although the report was supposed to focus on business techniques, it cited Japan’s educational system as the primary driver for their superior economic performance. It concluded that America’s public schools would need to raise the achievement levels of all students if the nation was to compete economically (Jennings 1990).

In short, by the 1980s, critics on the left and right increasingly claimed that public schools were not challenging students academically, and linked school reform to the nation’s economic well-being. Ideationally, this link mobilized a reform movement that drew support from groups that were largely outside the education establishment, especially business interests and the nation’s governors. The ties between these two groups were not accidental. State and local governments were both experiencing rising social costs at a time when tax revenues were declining due to unemployment. In the meantime, state and local governments had to raise taxes just to provide the same level of services due to inflation and rising energy costs. Toch (1991) shows that many governors viewed school reform, especially reform that focused on developing productive human capital, as a means of attracting business investment, thereby bolstering their states’ failing economies.41

At the same time, public schools were experiencing turmoil as a result of various social trends, especially those associated with federal and state lawsuits. As mentioned,

41 During this period, many governors convened reform commissions, and were engaged in comprehensive statewide school reform. They clearly viewed excellence in education as a way of attracting businesses during a time of economic decline. Toch (1991, 18) writes that the “competition for economic development was so intense that no fewer than thirty-six states campaigned for one particularly prized investment: a $3.5 billion assembly plant for General Motors’ new Saturn automobile.” Tennessee was rewarded for its efforts in 1985. And, GM officials would later claim they chose Tennessee due to the strength of a “school-reform package” that had been proposed in January of 1983, three months before the publication of A Nation at Risk. by Governor Lamar Alexander. He would later become chair of the National Governors’ Association (NGA), which would become a major player in education debates at the national level beginning with George H.W. Bush (Toch 1991)
these lawsuits were designed to expand civil rights and liberties for previously excluded groups. Court actions were occurring, however, at a time when enrollment in public education was actually declining as a result of the passing of the postwar Baby Boom. From 1971 to 1982, enrollment went from 46 million to 39 million, respectively. This affected community support for local taxes, such as property taxes, which at that time contributed to half the costs of schooling with federal and state aid funding the rest (Toch 1991).

Together, these broader socio-economic trends fostered the development of grassroots suburban populism (McGirr 2002). Some of these politically engaged homeowners no longer had a stake in the nation’s schools, but many were suffering from increased economic insecurity and increasingly questioned taxes at all levels of government (Toch 1991). These trends spurred “suburban warriors” (McGirr 2002) to engage in anti-busing crusades, taxpayer revolts and other movements designed to preserve race and class-based spatial patterns. They also built up the para-political sphere on behalf of educational change. When combined with other cost-cutting and tax-reduction efforts, tax limitation measures, such as Proposition 13 in California and 2½ in Massachusetts, reduced the flow of revenues to public schools, and resulted in teacher layoffs, salary freezes, program cuts, and even school closings and bankruptcies in some extreme cases (Toch 1991).

42 Concerns about the quality of public education had been building among education scholars, conservative intellectuals, and business groups, and were reflected in a number of studies that were done at the time. Some were published before and some after A Nation at Risk. See for example, Boyer (1983); Coleman et al. (1982); Finn et al. (1984 and 1985); Gardner (1984); Goodlad (1984); Keisling (1982); Oakes (1985); Powell et al. (1985); Ravitch (1985); and Sizer (1984). Condensed versions of some of these are published in Gross and Gross (1985a).
Given these events, it is not surprising that the 1970s were also a time of rising teacher activism, including growing unionism, walkouts and strikes. Between 1960 and 1965, for example, public school teachers went on strike twenty-five times. This number increased to over 1,000 strikes, involving over one million teachers, between 1975 and 1980 (Toch 1991). Economic mobilization on behalf of higher wages and improved working conditions spilled over into the political arena, as teachers’ unions mobilized for the first time in 1976 on behalf of presidential contender Jimmy Carter. President Ford would later acknowledge that his handling of the New York City fiscal crisis cost him the presidency when Carter narrowly carried New York State (Roberts 2006).

Nevertheless, teachers were not the only group mobilizing on behalf of political change. Grassroots conservative mobilization eventually resulted in the election of Republican president Ronald Reagan, and enabled an increasingly conservative leadership in both parties to reject “big government.” Within this environment, political elites once again offered the market as the means to ensure a more inclusive and just society, but now advocated privatization, deregulation, and a self-interested, market-style relationship between government and citizens (Cohen 2003).

President Reagan, for example, proposed a new and competing approach to resolving economic problems. This approach stressed the use of monetary policy and supply-side economics to resolve economic instability. While Keynesians focused on increasing demand, supply-side economists argued that the way to achieve prosperity, without inflation, was to increase the supply of goods and services by providing incentives to businesses and individuals to work, save and invest. Although this largely involved tax incentives, supply-side economists also advocated deregulation, or
delimiting government involvement in the private sphere. Ideationally, Reagan argued that a dynamic, private market would foster economic growth, and that the resulting prosperity would eventually trickle down in ways that obviated the need for redistributive policies (i.e., re-slicing the economic pie). In other words, a rising tide would lift all boats. Politically, he advocated devolving national programs back to the states under New Federalism, especially programs dealing with social and economic assistance.

Despite these trends, conservative mobilization in education was never a uniform movement (Pincus 1985). Centrist conservatives blamed educational problems on the excessive social experimentation of the 1960s and 1970s. They claimed, for example, that court decisions promoting civil rights and liberties had elevated individual rights at the expense of order and discipline, both of which affect educational achievement. They also explicitly linked public education to the interests of the state and capitalism. Here, they argued that public schools had a special obligation to promote economic growth by providing businesses with skilled labor (human capital), as well as scientific and technological support through state-funded research at public and private colleges and universities (Pincus 1985).

In contrast, the New Right argued that Democratic support for “big government” had resulted in a succession of ineffective “federal reforms” (increased spending), and created a bureaucratic maze of rules, regulations and red tape. In the process, federal mandates stifled innovation and enabled the “monopolization” of local schools by “vested interests,” such as federal and state bureaucrats and teachers’ unions, at the

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43 George Will wrote: “The fact that American education has always aimed to serve commercial vigor has imposed on education a special duty. It is the duty to strengthen the social bonds that are weakened by the dynamism of a restless society of atomized individuals preoccupied with getting and gaining” (Cited in Pincus 1985, 335).
expense of parents and taxpayers (Pincus 1985). Reagan’s second Secretary of Education, William Bennett referred to these interests as the BLOB,” or big learning organization bureaucracy, to convey that it was a vast conglomerate of interlocking, but autonomous parts.44 As later defined by Chester Finn, the BLOB is:

a synonym for (the) “education establishment”—the myriad adult interest groups and institutional forces that generally control American public education and live off it. They include the teacher unions, of course, but also dozens of administrator groups, textbook publishers, software vendors, colleges of education, state and district bureaucracies, and so on. Like a “blob” they’re without any clear shape or mission other than self-preservation. And like a blob, they’re uncommonly difficult to move out of the way on behalf of the needs and interests of children (“Eight Questions for Chester Finn”).

Conservatives claimed that the BLOB worked in concert to extract more resources from the federal government and maintain their control over (local) public education. Then, they pursued their own interests at the expense of society and individual students.45 Neo-liberals call this “producer capture” to denote that schools serve the interests of teachers and bureaucrats (producers) rather than consumers (students and their families) (Apple 2001, 39).

Reagan largely favored New Right thinking. Upon assuming office, he advocated three strategies in education: consolidating programs, reducing spending and abolishing the DOE, which had been established by the Carter Administration in return for the

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44 Bennett served as Secretary of the DOE from 1985 to 1988. He was actually a Neoconservative, which Pincus (1985) includes under centrist conservatives. Nonetheless, intellectuals in both groups use this characterization.

45 These arguments later became influential in the charter school movement. For instance, Jacobs (2007, 13) writes:

From the morass of red tape, regulations, forms, files, work rules, and mission statements, a huge monster arose. “The Blob”…is the impenetrable mass of bureaucracy that crushes creativity, chokes innovation, and gobbles up education funds. For years, education reformers…have tried to beat back the Blob. It kept growing. So they looked to charter schools as a way around it. Oddly enough, it was a union leader who popularized the idea of charter schools…Albert Shanker, the dynamic leader of the American Federation of Teachers…(to shake) up the system. Let groups of teachers design their own schools…If the school doesn’t achieve its goals, close it.
support of teachers’ unions during his presidential campaign. He also advocated federal tax credits for parents who paid tuition at private schools, while providing disadvantaged students with vouchers that their parents could redeem at private or public schools. He justified his reforms by excoriating public education for promoting “uniform mediocrity” (Toch 1991, 23). Reagan’s first Secretary of Education, on the other hand, was a Centrist Republican. Although he was tasked with abolishing the Department of Education (DOE), Terrell Bell would later state in his memoirs that he believed the federal government had an important role to play in education. He believed public education was in desperate shape, but felt at a disadvantage in an administration that was dominated by conservatives, most of whom thought he was too liberal and too cozy with the education establishment (Bell 1988).

Within this political environment, Bell decided to “stage an event that would jar the people into action” on behalf of the nation’s public schools, colleges, and universities. He established a department-level task force and charged it with studying the condition of public education (Bell 1988, 115). Entitled A Nation at Risk, the Commission’s report acknowledged that the average citizen was more educated and more knowledgeable than a generation ago, yet provided evidence, largely test data and scores on college entrance exams, which appeared to indicate widespread mediocrity. In terms of the policy prescription, the report recommended that state and local governments retain primary responsibility for public education, but advocated a stronger federal role in order to help states raise standards and meet the needs of disadvantaged children, and the gifted and talented (NCEE 1983).

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46 While working in the Office of Education, Bell had actually testified before the Senate in support of President Carter’s bill to establish a federal DOE (Bell 1988).
Even though the public embraced the report, its collective call to raise the overall quality of public education did not initially lead to political change at the national level. Reagan largely used the bully pulpit to urge state and local governments to improve their schools, while questioning the usefulness of an expanded federal role in education (Cross 2004; Davies 2007; Jennings 1990). In the meantime, his New Federalism resulted in a retrenchment in funding for the ESEA, even though there was strong bipartisan support in Congress for federal programs that served disadvantaged children. Consequently, fewer disadvantaged children were served under Title I in the 1980s than in the 1970s (Jennings 2001; Cross 2004). Over time, though, the report opened up a “policy window” (Kingdon 1984) on behalf of national political change. 47

First, by portraying the Nation’s educational institutions from kindergarten to college as “mediocre,” A Nation at Risk expanded the scope of the problem in education and thus the number of people who believed they had a stake in ensuring something was done about it. In the process, the report provided state recognition to groups that were marginalized in education debates during the 1960s and 1970s, when the political field was dominated by lobbyists for public schools, urban schools, school boards, administrators, teachers, parents, and civil rights groups. It fostered, for example, the mobilization of business leaders and conservative interest groups, who threw their support behind the burgeoning “excellence in education” movement. These groups built up the conservative para-political sphere on behalf of educational change (Gross and Gross 1985; Toch 1991; Vinovskis 2009), and their mobilization dramatically increased

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47 Most scholars agree that A Nation at Risk served as what Kingdon (1984) calls “a focusing event.” They also concur that the national response to the report needs to be understood in the context of what was going on economically at the time (Berube 1991; Hacker 1984; Jennings 1990; Gross and Gross 1985b; Vinovskis 2009).
the size and ideological diversity of the educational polity. They were eventually joined on the left by a new breed of civil rights groups. Together, these groups argued that, by raising all boats, accountability and school choice would more efficiently and effectively foster equity for disadvantaged children. What united them was a commitment to “excellence for all” versus equity for some (DeBray 2006; DeBray-Pelot 2007; Rhodes 2011; Vinovskis 2009).

Second, by linking education to business productivity and global competitiveness, the report implicitly framed business leaders as “education experts.” In this manner, it justified the diffusion of a market-based, business-economic discourse to public education. This included the rhetoric of accountability, performance, efficiency, effectiveness, choice and so forth. It also shaped the range of public problems, policies, and tools that were viewed as the legitimate means and ends of government action. For instance, policies that focused on economic means and ends, such as increased efficiency through competition for public resources, were viewed as legitimate (Cuban 2004). Alternatively, policies that focused on non-economic ends, such as expanding access to knowledge, increasing political participation, fostering social inclusion, or diffusing political, social and economic power, were challenged.

Third, the report invigorated conservative thinking in terms of education. Many conservatives, for example, used the data from *A Nation at Risk* to support their argument that there had been a decline in “educational productivity,” meaning the nation was

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48 On the left, discontent was growing among blacks and Latinos, both part of the Democratic base. Minority advocacy groups, such as the Education Trust and the Citizens’ Commission on Civil Rights, joined New Democrats to put pressure on liberals to support changes (McGuinn 2006; Rhodes 2011).

49 These ideas were not uniform nor were they uniformly supported. Labeled “centrist conservative,” standards and accountability-based reforms were supported by Republicans and Democrats at the state and national level. Neo-liberals, on the other hand, developed a market-based agenda that aimed to reform schools by empowering individual families through school choice (Kaestle and Lodewick 2007b).
spending more on education in terms of overall dollars but getting fewer returns on its investment.\textsuperscript{50} Their argument that “money does not matter in education” appeared to be supported by a number of studies that were (largely) conducted by economists.\textsuperscript{51} These arguments convinced many state policymakers to move away from measuring the quality of education by its inputs and focusing on outcomes, including student achievement, attainment and performance on state tests.

Fourth, it generated institutional change at the state level when governors and state legislators across the country took Reagan’s suggestion and mounted major reform efforts affecting nearly every school district. Most of these reforms favored a centrist conservative agenda, as evidenced by the fact that forty states were using standardized test scores to rate school performance by the spring of 2000. Most published the information on report cards, which included school rankings on a variety of indicators (Kane and Staiger 2002). The theory of action was that uniform standards, backed by testing to hold schools accountable for student outcomes, would result in more effective teaching. In the process, it would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public schools (Hanushek 2002). Over time, these new state initiatives generated their own policy feedback, or mobilized groups that had a stake in their continuation (Davies 2007; Hayes 2004; Manna 2006; Toch 1991). Although many of these groups had diverse agendas, what would eventually unite them was a focus on excellence for all versus equity for some.

\textsuperscript{50} For example, Berliner and Biddle (1996) and Bracey (2000) claim educational data was used to support half-truths and erroneous conclusions, leading to a (manufactured) crisis of confidence in America’s public schools.

\textsuperscript{51} See Eric Hanushek (1989) and Burtless (1996). Hanushek argued that differences in educational outcomes do not reflect variations in expenditures, class size or other measures of schools and teachers. Because some schools use funds effectively while others do not, resources (inputs) will not (consistently) improve outcomes.
In short, by the mid-1980s, a centrist conservative agenda had achieved bipartisan support and had diffused across state governments. Nevertheless, national standards and tests remained controversial throughout the 1990s, even though they were advocated by both a Republican and a Democratic administration (i.e., George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton). Partly, this was because the equity regime was reinforced by a powerful “iron triangle,” or an alliance between the DOE, moderate Republicans and Democrats in Congress, and established educational interest groups. Still, conservatives in Congress also bolstered the equity regime by exercising a negative veto over change while tacitly accepting the status quo (Anderson 2007; Davies 2007; DeBray 2006; DeBray-Pelot 2007; Kaestle 2007; Kaestle and Lodewick 2007b).

By the 1990s, though, the Neo-liberal wing of conservatism had gained prominence within the Republican Party (Apple 2001). Led by Newt Gingrich (R-GA), the Republican Revolution altered the political terrain in Congress even as its Contract with America altered the ideational terrain. Although education was not specifically part of the Contract, Republican promises to cut taxes impacted the availability of resources for discretionary programs, such as education, even as the new Republican majority opposed standards-based reforms. Meanwhile, Neo-liberals revived proposals to abolish the DOE and extend school choice (DeBray 2006; McGuinn 2006).

Republicans would eventually relent on their efforts to eliminate the DOE, but only after Clinton’s crushing defeat of Robert Dole in the 1996 election. By that time, education had become a major political issue, and many attributed Dole’s loss to the Republican Party’s anti-government stance, especially their position on education. This included GOP proposals to abolish the DOE and establish private school vouchers, both
of which were unpopular with voters (McGuinn 2006 a, b). From that point forward, Republicans would (largely) support increases in education spending, even as conservatives delimited large-scale change in the educational status quo. Even so, proposals to privatize education, through vouchers and other forms of school choice, and devolve decision-making responsibility to state and local governments, remained salient with conservatives all throughout Clinton’s second term (Hess and McGuinn 2002; McGuinn 2006). The end result was that the education polity was highly unstable. The debate between Democrats and Republicans had moved beyond whether the federal government should play any role in education, but the proper means and ends of federal education policy were still being hotly contested. As an event, NCLB occurred within this ideological and ideational terrain. This dissertation explores how political elites used ideas and values to construct political change in the form of NCLB. It then examines how this impacted teachers’ political and social experiences, behaviors and identities.

**Conclusion**

Summing up, the political compromises used to forge a consensus and build an equity regime took place within a broader ideational environment about the proper means and ends of public services. Increasingly, these broader ideas and values were a source of political backlash, which fostered the mobilization of groups that perceived their interests were being ignored or compromised by the welfare state in general and education policy specifically. Just as importantly, negative feedback was generated by the rhetoric of entrepreneurs within and outside of government who hoped to use socio-economic discontent for political gain. Over time, political mobilization on both the right and the left threw established partisan ideological positions, interest group alliances, and
institutional relationships into disequilibrium. It also created new understandings of the educational challenges facing the nation. Still, the legitimacy of these new ideas remained hotly contested. The next chapter discusses the research methods and data that were used in this dissertation before moving on to how national political leaders used ideas and discourse to overcome previous barriers to educational change.
CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As discussed in chapter one, this research examines how public policies and political discourse impact teachers’ political and social experiences, identities and behaviors. The primary research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

- RQ1: How did political elites justify different forms of regulation in schools under NCLB? What institutional strategies were used? What discursive strategies were used?
- RQ2: What are the similarities and differences between (a) the kinds of reasoning and assumptions public policymakers use to justify different forms of regulation in schools and (b) the lived realities of teachers?
- RQ3: Do relationships in schools and teaching interact with public policies and policy designs to structure teachers’ political and social identities, experiences and behaviors?
- RQ4: What are the implications for teaching and learning, and the implementation of a federal law?

In the last chapter, I discussed the theoretical underpinnings of this research. This chapter discusses the research methodology. I begin the chapter by describing the overall research design. Next, I discuss the data that was used as part of this research. I then describe my data collection and analysis. I conclude by discussing any ethical considerations, describing the limitations of the study, and offering an assessment of the quality of the study.

Research Design

Yin (2003) argues that research methods should be chosen based on the research question. Histories, case studies, and experiments are best suited for research that asks “how” and “why” questions, but the choice of method depends on the researcher’s level of access or control. Histories are the preferred method when there is no access or control, as is typically the case when studying something that has happened in the past.
Case studies are better suited for contemporary events where the researcher is unable to manipulate the relevant behaviors, but is able to directly observe the events under study and/or interview those involved. Alternatively, experiments are preferred when the investigator is able to “manipulate behavior directly, precisely, and systematically” (Yin 2003, 8). This can be done in laboratories, where the investigator manipulates some variables and controls for others. It may also occur in the field as a social experiment. The key difference between these methods is that an experiment deliberately divorces a phenomenon from its context in order to focus on a few variables. Case studies and histories deal with situations where the phenomenon and context are entangled, and there is a need to retain “the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin 2003, 1-2).

In terms of this research, at the macro-level, I used cultural policy analysis and NCLB as a case study to understand how national political actors employ institutional and discursive strategies to construct political change. At the micro-level, I used cultural policy analysis and NCLB as a natural experiment to explore how the structural and narrative elements of public policies affect the political and social experiences, behaviors and identities of citizens and policy implementers. Natural experiments approximate the properties of those that are controlled by scientists in laboratories, but they occur “spontaneously” in nature and are not controlled by the researcher. As previously mentioned, NCLB decisively departed from the early ESEA, which was the federal government’s primary policy for education for the previous thirty years. Large-scale change of this kind is a natural experiment for understanding the means by which political institutions construct the political and social identities, experiences and
behaviors of policy implementers and citizens. In this sense, NCLB can be viewed as “an event” and teacher reactions to that event can be viewed as a “natural experiment.” Thus, investigating teachers’ reactions to NCLB and their understandings of how it changed, or failed to change, their behaviors is a window into how public policies and political discourse interact with the informal norms, work practices, and patterns of social relations within teaching and schools to mediate and structure individual and group behaviors. The research design is illustrated in Chart 2 below. The next section discusses the data that were used in this research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Chapter and Sub-Questions</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
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<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Chapter 5: How was the problem described? Who was blamed for it? What solutions were offered? Did the policy’s targets make sense given the definition of the problem? Did the policy’s tools fit the problem as it was defined by political elites? What kinds of causal stories were told? How was dissent characterized and negotiated? What “public values” were represented in the discourse and how were they characterized?</td>
<td>Cultural policy analysis and NCLB as a case study</td>
<td>Congressional hearings and debates</td>
<td>Content and narrative analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td>Chapter 6: How were the targets of the policy politically and socially constructed? What kinds of symbolic devices were used?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Speeches made by President George Bush and his first Secretary of Education, Rod Paige</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>Chapter 7: How have teachers, as part of a shared professional culture, responded to NCLB? How have they individually and collectively interpreted this new federal policy? What effect, if any, did NCLB have on the norms of teaching? How do teachers perceive this affects teaching and learning, if at all?</td>
<td>Cultural policy analysis and NCLB as a natural experiment</td>
<td>83 interviews with teachers and former teachers</td>
<td>Content and narrative analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ4</td>
<td>Chapter 8: How has NCLB influenced the behaviors of “co-producers” of education (i.e., parents and students)? How has this influenced teaching and learning, and the social democratic mission of schools as public institutions?</td>
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<td>RQ5</td>
<td>Chapter 9: How have NCLB’s policy design and images impacted teachers’ political experiences, behaviors and identities? How have parental behaviors interacted with the policy’s design to impact teachers as public servants and policy implementers?</td>
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Data and Data Sample

In this dissertation, I am studying how public policies and rhetoric influence teachers, as policy implementers and citizens, within schools as communities. I used several sources of data, some of which were public and some of which I collected specifically for this research. For my case study of NCLB, I conducted a content analysis (Merriam 1998) of national congressional hearings and debates between January and December of 2001. I also conducted a content analysis of the speeches made by President George Bush during his first term in office, and the speeches made by his first Secretary of Education, Rod Paige. Debates and speeches comprise the public aspect of policymaking in that government officials frame issues, events and people in ways that create alliances and generate support for their preferred policy solutions. In the process, political elites provide power, authority and resources to those designated to fix the policy problem. I was especially interested in how the language and symbols used to describe the problem, perpetrators, beneficiaries and victims influenced the adopted solutions under NCLB, including the policy’s tools and instruments, but also how these causal stories related to public opinion and domestic political developments. I supplemented my analysis of public discourse with a content analysis of NCLB’s policy “structures,” meaning its mandates, instruments and regulatory requirements. Like public discourse, policy instruments influence the experiences, behaviors, and identities of policy targets. Both also affect how citizens are represented and served by policy implementers.

In terms of my data sample, similar to other inductive forms of content analysis, this dissertation focuses on the communication of meanings. Thus, words or discourse
are my data (Merriam 1998). However, I was not interested in the “authenticity” of the messages. Instead, the research focused on identifying the images and rationales that key policymakers used to advance a radically new approach to public education. To do so, I developed a set of focusing questions, which were grounded in the relevant theoretical and empirical literature on policy change (Please see Appendix A for the focusing questions). I used these focusing questions to open-code the transcripts of the debates, speeches, and hearings, as well as the law and its regulatory language.

During the data analysis phase, I noticed that there was “policy learning” over the course of the debates on NCLB. By that, I mean members of Congress adopted one another’s language to describe the policy problem, targets and political solution. I also noticed that political elites used stories to politically and culturally construct public schools and teachers in ways that justified new forms of regulation and accountability. In consequence, I used the themes and constructs from my qualitative analysis to construct a quantitative analysis of the debates on the Conference Report, which would eventually become NCLB. This analysis was important for showing how members of Congress portrayed the policy problem, victims and perpetrators in ways that would favor NCLB as a solution (Please see Tables 1-13 in Chapters 5 and 6). I was particularly interested in how teachers and public schools were characterized relative to other affected groups as part of an effort to construct political change.

In terms of how NCLB has impacted teachers’ political and social experiences, behaviors and identities, I conducted 83 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with teachers at various stages of their careers. This included teachers who left the profession, retired, or became administrators. Because NCLB was serving as a natural experiment, I
interviewed teachers who had (1) only taught under the policy intervention, (2) never taught under the policy intervention, and (3) taught before and after the policy intervention. Participants were also selected for maximum variation in terms of age, grade and subject taught. Finally, I interviewed teachers that served demographically different populations, including, for example, teachers from rural, urban and suburban schools, and schools that served high, average and low need students with different levels of resources. Research indicates that all of these influence teachers’ experiences at work.

Although I did not use a formal sampling technique, in general, sampling for difference ensured that the interview population resembled both the actual teaching workforce in the state, and the variations in their work situations, including differences in school capacity and resources, and student composition. This sampling strategy was important because it enabled me to study the interaction between public policies and political discourse, and the informal norms, work practices, and patterns of social relations that structure teaching and learning. In total, I conducted interviews with teachers in 39 school districts across a northeastern state.\textsuperscript{52} Participants included 21 males and 62 females. Of those, 14 percent never taught under NCLB, 22 percent only taught under NCLB, and 64 percent taught before and after NCLB. The average age was 43 and the average number of years teaching was 17, but actual experience ranged from 1 to 40 years (Please see Graphs 1-14 at the end of this chapter). The next section discusses data collection.

\textsuperscript{52} Some informants are reported as working in more than one school district. This included administrators who taught in different districts than where they served as administrators, and teachers who changed districts \textit{and} spoke about both districts. This latter category mostly included new teachers who started in one district and switched as a result of layoffs, but there were some teachers who were at later stages of their careers and moved or were laid off.
Data Collection

This section begins by discussing data collection on NCLB’s national policymaking context. I then discuss data collection at the micro-level. The latter includes the pilot study I conducted for this research, as well as my interviews with teachers. Together, these approaches were used to identify how NCLB’s language and structures have impacted teaching and learning, and policy implementation.

Macro-Level Data Collection

As previously discussed, in this part of the analysis I used a qualitative and quantitative content analysis of the speeches made by George Bush, members of Congress and other key policymakers to identify the images and rationales they used to advance a radically new approach to public education. In terms of data collection, I obtained the transcripts of national congressional hearings and the congressional floor debates on NCLB. I also collected all relevant speeches made by President George Bush and his Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, as well as copies of the law and its regulatory language. I further gathered recent headlines on teachers and teaching. I then asked teachers to comment on these headlines during my interviews. This part of the analysis goes beyond formal discourse and analyzes teachers’ reactions to accounts in the social media. This is important because, although public policy is “the primary tool through which the government acts to exploit, inscribe, entrench, institutionalize, perpetuate, or change social constructions,” advertising, music, film, historical custom and popular culture are also important (Ingram and Schneider 2005a, 5).53 As such, we need to broaden our analysis to

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53 One of the most powerful actors is the media, who often acts as a “moral entrepreneurs.” Moral entrepreneurs are “issue activists” who typify and stereotype “behaviors to generate anxiety about a particular group and place the actions of that group on the public agenda.” Political entrepreneurs “translate those concerns into public policy” (DiAlto 2005, 84). The use of moral reasoning to justify
account for how the problem, policy targets, and solutions are socially, as well as politically, constructed.\textsuperscript{54} The remainder of this section discusses data collection for my open-ended interviews with teachers, beginning with the pilot study I conducted for this research.

\textit{Micro-Level Pilot Project}

During the fall of 2005 and the spring of 2006, I conducted a pilot study to inform my research. As part of that study, I used Spradley’s (1979) guide to ethnographic interviewing to develop a series of open-ended questions, which were designed to elicit general and specific information from teachers and administrators about their jobs and things that affect their jobs, including public policies.\textsuperscript{55} I field-tested the interview protocol on 11 informants using what Soss (1999) calls a “start and stop” snowball sampling approach. This technique enabled me to maximize sample diversity, while also ensuring my information was reliable through the use of multiple informants within the same setting. In this case, the initial informants were selected through purposive sampling based on my own contacts (Please see Appendix B for the recruitment script). At the conclusion of the interview, I asked each informant if he or she would give my name to someone who might be willing to contact me for an interview. As predicted, informants typically referred me to contacts within their own schools or school districts.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{54} Please see Berger and Luckmann (1996); Stone (1997 and 1989); Ingram and Schneider (1991); and Schneider and Ingram (1990, 1993, 1997, 2005a).
\textsuperscript{55} As a method, ethnographic interviewing recognizes that language is the most important medium through which people transmit culture. Spradley (1979, 3, 7-8 italics in the original) writes: “Ethnography is the work of describing a culture. The essential core of this activity aims to understand another way of life from the native point of view…Field work…involves the disciplined study of what the world is like to people who have learned to see, hear, speak, think, and act in ways that are different. Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people.… Culture… cannot be observed directly… People…learn their culture by observing other people, listening to them, and then \textit{making inferences}…If we want to find out what people know, we must get inside their heads.” By getting people to talk about their social worlds, ethnographic interviewing allows the researcher to “get inside their heads.”
\end{flushleft}
I interviewed people within a “single environment” (i.e., a particular school or a particular district) until I had “saturated” informants’ experiences within that school, meaning the information provided by informants was repetitive although it may not have been consistent from all informants. At that point, I initiated a new contact either within the same district or in another district. Where information appeared to be inconsistent, or I was unclear about some information, I returned to one or more of the informants for a second interview. But most interviews consisted of a single encounter that lasted around two hours.

Overall, I found that the interview protocol and sampling approach enabled me to exploit differences between individuals and schools, while generating commonalities among them. Moreover, early questions created rapport and drew the informants into the protocol, which made the more difficult questions easy to handle as we went along. In consequence, I mostly kept the protocol the same, although I formalized many of the questions that I had asked informally during the course of my pilot interviews. The next section discusses recruitment and selection for my interviews with teachers.

*Micro-Level Data Collection*

During my pilot study, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in my university wanted me to get the permission of school administrators to interview teachers. I was concerned that teachers may feel more constrained in terms of their responses if they were required to inform their supervisors. The IRB agreed that I could interview teachers, administrators, and other paraprofessionals without the permission of the chief district administrator as long as I accessed faculty and staff through my own contacts, and

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56 The participants were informed that their identities and their schools would be kept private. I created fictitious names and developed a coding system to link these fictitious names with data on the respective institutions.
interviewed them outside of work. The end result was that most interviews took place in
coffee shops but some of the teachers preferred for me to come to their homes. Because I
felt that teachers were more forthcoming in their responses as a result of this approach, I
also employed it for this research.

In terms of recruitment, I followed the exact same process as my pilot study. However, to ensure I had a meaningful sample, I purposively interviewed teachers from
districts and schools that differed along several key factors: district size; level of
needs/level of resources; racial and socioeconomic composition; policy label (i.e., SINI
schools, schools in good standing, or schools that are being restructured, taken over or
closed); and geographic location (i.e., located in an urban, rural or suburban community). I
also purposively sampled teachers from different subjects, including tested and non-tested
subject areas; grade levels; professions (e.g., teachers, speech pathologists, counselors,
psychologists); age cohorts; and genders (Please see Graphs 1-14 at the end of this
chapter).

I was able to ensure my sample was diverse due to a unique “data set,” which is available through the Department of Education website for the northeastern state that is the
subject of my microanalysis. This website groups schools according to the needs of the
school population (e.g., rates of student poverty and limited English proficiency) and
school district capacity (e.g., the income and the property wealth of the district’s residents).
It also describes other important features of schools and school districts, including whether
they are located in urban, suburban or rural areas. Sampling for difference helped me
disentangle the multiple meanings ascribed to a federal policy by divergent communities,
while distilling those meanings that were held in common. In short, it enabled me to
illuminate how the “state” (i.e., public policies and political discourse) interacts with different kinds of communities, and the implications of these interactions for children’s educational outcomes and the democratic social purposes of schools.

In terms of data collection, the interview protocol was designed to explore how teachers’ social contexts interact with public policies to affect teaching and learning, and policy implementation. Beyond using Spradley’s (1979) guide to ethnographic interviewing, I drew from many sources to design the actual questions for the interview protocol. One source that was particularly important was Lortie’s (2002) ethnography on the sociology of teaching as an occupation. Much of his descriptions and data are out of date, having been collected in the 1960s and early 1970s, but his text provided historical support for a present-day analysis of teachers and teaching. In other words, using specific questions from Lortie’s analysis allowed me to further exploit NCLB as a natural experiment by constructing a “before” and “after” analysis of teaching as an occupation.

I began my interviews by informing respondents that I am a former teacher and then briefly explaining the research. I felt it was important to discuss my background because I did not want my informants to find out and then wonder why I had not told them I was a former teacher. On the positive side, being a former teacher provided me with credibility. On the negative side, I needed to ensure my background did not influence participants’ responses. For instance, I did not want them to restrict their responses because they assumed that, as a former teacher, I understood what they were talking about or because they were concerned I might “judge” them. In the first case, their responses would be clear to me, but not make sense to my “audience” of non-practitioners. In the latter case, their responses would not be true to their own experiences.
I largely addressed these concerns about authenticity and personal bias through my interview protocol. First, I made sure to draw respondents into the interview by asking them very specific questions about their educational background, career history, and why they went into teaching. These questions were designed to set the respondents at ease and create a platform for the questions that followed. Next, I moved into combinations of what Spradley (1979) calls “grand tour,” “mini-tour,” example, experience, and contrast questions. Grand tour questions encourage informants to provide verbal descriptions about significant features of their cultural environments, including information about activities, objects, events, and people. The other types of questions elicit concrete responses or encourage respondents to provide examples of very specific aspects of their experiences. Together, these two major types of questions elicit rich, thick description, but the process of alternating between them keeps respondents from getting bored with rapid response “drill and grill” type questions. So, for example, my grand tour question “Did you feel well prepared to teach when you got your first job?” is combined with a series of follow-up comments and questions (“Basically, I am trying to understand what experiences you think

57 In essence, grand tour questions say, “Could you show me around...(your office, your profession, your home, etc.) .” Mini-tour questions do the same thing, but they deal with smaller units of experience. Thus, a grand tour question might ask, “Could you describe a typical day at work.” Then, if the respondent said, “First, I make calls,” a mini-tour question might ask, “Could you tell me what is involved in ‘making calls’?” Example and experience questions, on the other hand, ask the informant to provide examples or experiences for a specific subject matter. And, contrast questions seek comparisons between experiences, objects and so forth. For instance, in my interviews, I asked: “Could you tell me about a negative and a positive experience from your career as a teacher?” This question is an example of an experience combined with a contrast question. Finally, native language and structural questions are designed to get informants to translate terms and phrases (i.e., their cultural repertoire) for laypeople and test what might be included in a cultural domain, respectively (Spradley 1979). These questions are not in my interview protocol because they were asked spontaneously based on something my informant said. For instance, I asked an informant to describe a typical day as an elementary school teacher. She described some things and then said, “And then we do ‘circles’.” I followed-up by asking her a native language question “When you say ‘do circles’ what is that referring to?” Later on, when she was talking about a specific activity, I asked a structural question “Is that something that is included in ‘circles’?” So, some questions and probes were designed in advance, but many were developed during the interviews as part of getting my informants to expand on their information and narratives. Some were also developed during the data analysis phase as part of theory building. This was true for structural and contrast questions, which often require an interviewer to return to the informant to seek clarification.
were most influential in terms of teaching you how to teach and what to teach. For example, what classes, experiences or jobs were best in terms of preparing you to teach?""). I also tried to alternate questions that were either more difficult to answer or could generate emotional responses with questions that were designed to elicit other kinds of experiences in order to relieve anxiety. Similarly, I used visual and discursive cues to adjust my questions as I went because holding informants to a mandated format would have created a forced atmosphere to these encounters.

Finally, as part of the data collection process, I compiled field notes on my impressions of the informant, including his or her level of comfort and the emotions that he or she displayed during the interview. My pilot study revealed that emotions are important for understanding how informants experience their social worlds. For example, I observed that “jokes” were a way for teachers to bring me into the workplace, but “laughter” often revealed when they were uncomfortable. Intuitively, I learned that emotions were one indicator of when I needed to probe more deeply, albeit sometimes with reserve and caution. In consequence, my field notes became an important part of my data collection. The next section discusses data analysis.

**Data Analysis**

This dissertation uses cultural policy analysis to explore how the structural and narrative elements of NCLB have influenced the political and social experiences, behaviors and identities of teachers as policy implementers and citizens. Traditional forms of policy analysis focus on the relationship between discrete policy problems, policy configurations, and program outcomes in an effort to find the “proper” combinations of incentives to
motivate, encourage or deter specific individual behaviors. Interpretive, cultural and anthropological approaches explore the structural and narrative elements of a policy. The latter includes how the language and symbols used to describe the problem, the beneficiaries, and the solution influence program outcomes (Stein 2004; Yanow 1987). These approaches argue that belief systems are inherent in policy “texts” (Yanow 1993), meaning both political discourse and public laws. These texts convey messages about how individuals and groups are viewed by the government and society.

Language is not neutral. During policy debates, members of Congress craft narratives and develop rhetorical strategies that frame issues in ways they believe will generate support or opposition for a chosen policy. These strategies may appeal to reason, yet often contain symbols and language that are designed to manipulate public emotions in order to justify state intervention. This might include, for example, appeals to values and the use of favorable or unfavorable stereotypes (Ingram and Schneider 1993; Stone 1989). In the process, political debates embed assumptions about beneficiaries and their needs and perpetrators and their pathologies. They also frame recipients in ways that convey a sense of entitlement or disentitlement by constructing who is “deserving” (e.g., social security recipients) or “undeserving” (e.g., welfare recipients) of governmental assistance and support (Schneider and Ingram 2005b). In this manner, they shape how citizens are represented and served by frontline policy implementers (Yanow 1993; Stein 2004). This happens, for example, when policy

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58 In education, traditional approaches would examine which “inputs” (teacher certification, resource allocation, etc.) have the desired effects on “outputs” (standardized test scores, graduation rates, etc.). For a critique of traditional approaches, please see Fischer (2003); Fischer and Forester (1993); Roe (1994); Shore and Wright (1997); Stein (2004); Stone (1997); and Yanow (1990). Stone (1997, 9), for example, critiques the “rationality project,” which focuses on the connection between means (policy programs or instruments) and ends (policy goals and intentions).
messages become reified in the rituals and practices engaged in by frontline policy implementers, or what Lipsky (1980) calls street-level bureaucrats. Still, the relationship between political discourse, public policies and the behaviors of frontline workers is not necessarily direct. This is because street-level bureaucrats are influenced by different “contexts and spaces” within the policy process (Stein 2004). In consequence, they construct their own meanings in an attempt to “make their social worlds coherent” (Weeden 2002, 720). Nevertheless, different policy contexts interact to shape and constrain one another, meaning the “social space” is a site of negotiation and contestation between agents with different means as well as ends. When combined, though, the “language” and “rituals” of policy formulation and implementation define the contours of a policy’s “culture” (Stein 2004; Yanow 1987).

Cultural policy analysis interrogates the contours of a policy’s culture through the systematic analysis of its language and structures, and the behaviors and rituals of those involved in the policy “performance.” It seeks to unveil the “often-obscure assumptions” and implicit standards of normalcy that are built into policies, including those instances where policies provide a “limited ...distorted—lens for viewing people and their life conditions” (Stein 2004, 7). As such, it shifts the focus of analysis away from the individual attributes, characteristics, and behaviors of policy beneficiaries, toward the processes of creating and implementing policies intended to address their needs or conditions. Because it highlights those instances where the “structures of society,” rather than individual deficits, contribute to “unequal and inequitable life

59 See Fraser (1989); Fraser and Gordon (1998); Hill (2003, 2006); Ingram and Schneider (1991); Ingram and Smith (1993); Schneider and Ingram (1993 and 2005a); Stein (2001 and 2004); Stone (1997); and Yanow (1990 and 1993).
circumstances” (Stein 2004, 7), cultural policy analysis is particularly useful for understanding relationships that involve power. This includes, but is not limited to, how the state constructs the political, social and economic experiences of citizens and policy implementers.

In sum, unlike traditional forms of policy analysis, cultural policy analysis recognizes that people use their perceptions about their natural and social worlds, and the forms of social relations that are appropriate given those perceptions, to build institutions that will promote and sustain their beliefs and values. Thus, it recognizes that people use culture to interpret and shape their worlds. Institutions, such as public policies, have cultural and social roots, as well as effects (Gusfield 1981). At the cultural level, public policies involve ways of “seeing” phenomenon. They are:

systems of thought and action used to regulate and organize behavior…they construct a way of seeing those affecting or affected by the problem…(and) impart lenses for viewing the people they aim to address. The language of the policy reveals who is dominant…(and) subordinate, and what controls the dominant should exercise…over the subordinate…(they) condemn certain behaviors and extol others…intimate claims of normalcy and propose mechanisms for bettering those falling outside the often unspoken and loosely defined norm (Stein 2004, 5).

At the structural level, these ways of “seeing” influence how society addresses public problems through formal and informal institutions. Over the long-term, these institutions become taken for granted by those who are involved in the policy process, but structure the behavior of those individuals who are implicitly and explicitly involved in the policy performance, including political elites, policy targets and citizens.

This dissertation uses cultural policy analysis to illuminate the “practices of meaning-making through which social actors attempt to make their worlds coherent” (Weeden 2002, 720). It also uses cultural policy analysis to bridge between state level
discourse and policies, and the social and political experiences, identities and behaviors of teachers within schools. At the macro-level, it examines both policies’ tools, as well as the language and symbols used to describe the problem, the beneficiaries, and the solutions. At the meso-level, it seeks to understand how state level discourse and policies interact with teachers’ social and institutional settings. At the micro-level, it examines how policy tools and language construct the political and social experiences, behaviors and identities of teachers, if at all. In short,

The primary method of cultural analysis I use in this dissertation is narrative analysis. This method emerged as part of my pilot project when I noticed that teachers frequently told me stories instead of providing more direct responses to my questions. Although there were many different reasons for these stories, there were patterns across informants. For example, many of these “stories” were actually “narratives.” They had a plot, a cast of characters, and a beginning, middle and end. I also noticed that when and why informants told me stories were both important. For instance, informants often used stories to make sense of their experiences, especially when they were conveying tacit knowledge that was difficult for them to express explicitly. Narratives were also used to convey emotions or express things that made informants uncomfortable. Stories therefore helped informants communicate across what they perceived to be a practitioner/non-practitioner divide. They also allowed informants to open up their worlds to me as a researcher (to bring me in), while simultaneously affording themselves distance when needed.

Because my fieldwork and initial data analysis indicated that narratives were an important way to learn from teachers, I used narrative inquiry as my primary form of
cultural analysis. I also used narrative analysis for my “informants” at the national level (i.e., the speeches of national political elites) because I noticed that political elites told stories to convey ideas and justify political choices. Narrative inquiry is a theoretical approach that compares stories across a single informant, or stories across multiple informants, in order to understand how people communicate ideas, as well as make sense of their worlds.\(^6\) By analyzing stories at both levels, I was able to connect elite perceptions of policy meanings with the perceptions of teachers as public servants, policy implementers and citizens. In consequence, I was able to construct the shared meanings, understandings and storylines between and among political elites and teachers, while also highlighting points of contestation. I then deployed techniques from grounded theory to generate an overall narrative about how state level discourse and policies interacted with the social contexts of schools to construct the social and political experiences, identities and behaviors of teachers.

Grounded theory employs a “constant comparative method” to iteratively generate theory from data (Merriam 1998). It involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similar and opposing dimensions. These dimensions are then used to illuminate patterns in the data, and to construct categories that describe particular social phenomenon. In the process, the researcher is inductively constructing a substantive theory about “everyday-world situations” (Merriam 1998, 17-18).\(^6\) In this case, I was constructing a narrative about how the public framing of policy problems, policy targets, and solutions impacts teachers’ political and social experiences, behaviors

\(^6\) See, for example, Feldman et al. 2004; Fischer and Forester 1993; Loeske 2007; Ospina and Dodge 2005a, b and c; Roe 1994; Schram 1993; Stone 1997; VanderStaay 1994 and Yanow 1993.

\(^6\) Grounded theory is actually a “complex process” of induction and deduction, which is “guided by prior theoretical commitments and conceptual schemes” (Merriam 1998, 49 quoting Schwandt 1993, 9).
and identities within educational settings. The empirical literature suggests that the construction of political and social behaviors and identities is not a top-down hierarchical process. Therefore, in terms of how NCLB affects teachers, I needed to go back and forth in an iterative fashion between macro-level discourse and micro-level experiences and behaviors. Together, these analyses provide insight into how national institutional and ideational processes impact the language and routines of schooling. They are also important for understanding how practitioners internalize, interpret, formulate, reformulate, and resist policy rhetoric and structures through their practice.

In terms of the actual data analysis, at the macro level, I open-coded the transcripts of congressional hearings, debates and speeches, as well as the speeches made by George Bush and his then Secretary of Education, Rod Paige. I used my focusing questions to develop themes and analytic categories. I later used these themes and analytic categories to construct a quantitative analysis of how members of Congress portrayed the policy problem, solution and various target groups (Please see Tables 1-13 in chapters five and six). In terms of my ethnographic interviews, I transcribed each tape in its entirety. Then, I printed out a hard copy of the full-length transcript. This transcript was stored in a binder and used throughout the data analysis process. I also stored any field notes from my ethnographic interviews in the same binder. From there, the process of data analysis was largely the same for both my micro- and macro-level data.

First, I read the entire interview transcript (hearing, debate or speech) to make sense of the overall themes and mentally compare what was going on in one interview (hearing, debate or speech) to other interviews (hearings, debates and speeches). At the macro-level,

*64 It should be noted, however, that, due to the iterative nature of my data analysis, many of the categories and “variables” emerged over the course of this analysis, as well as over the course of the study.*
this analysis was used to compare, for example, different ideological positions or how one target group was treated in comparison to another. At the micro-level, this analysis was used to highlight similarities or differences between or within organizations, occupational positions, or the “spatial” location of an informant within their career trajectory (i.e., a brand new teacher compared to an experienced teacher or a retiree). Second, I annotated the interview (hearings, debates and speeches) by making comments in the margins as well as by highlighting quotes or stories that were particularly interesting. Third, I open coded the interview (hearings, debates and speeches) by looking for themes and analytic categories. Fourth, I recoded, resorted and reanalyzed the data to capture the overarching themes and sub-themes that were common across individuals or “data sets,” while also highlighting the comments or themes that were unique to particular individuals, situations or circumstances (Corbin and Strauss 2008; Strauss and Corbin 1998). The actual data sets varied depending on the theme or construct. For example, my interviews with teachers included tested versus non-tested subject areas, male versus female teachers, specific types of schools or districts, and different stages within the teaching career. Fifth, I captured my thoughts as I went by writing “memos,” or notes to myself. The outcome of this entire process was that I created groups of related concepts and then constructed categories that represented the particular social or political phenomenon of interest (Strauss and Corbin 1998; Corbin and Strauss 2008).

Although I am discussing these components of my data analysis as if they were separate, in reality I moved back and forth in an iterative process between theory, my memos and my coding to construct relationship(s) between analytic themes, categories and concepts (Corbin and Strauss 2008; Strauss and Corbin 1998). I kept running notes on
emerging themes and constructs as I went, including those that were shared across informants (interviews or speeches) and those that were unique to individual participants or situations. Early notes, along with my thoughts and interpretations, were used to create a “start list” of important themes and constructs (Miles and Huberman 1984). I also kept notes as I went on newly emerging themes or unique comments that were not part of that initial list. I used both of these to guide the kinds of probing questions I asked informants (or to understand individual political speeches). They also served as the initial codes for organizing my data. I further stored and analyzed the data, as well as my thoughts, interpretations, memos, and questions in NVivo 9/10, which is a qualitative data analysis software package. NVivo 9/10 was important for helping me link my micro- and macro-level data.

Across data sets, three themes emerged. First, teachers’ perceived that there was a conflict between the new performance discourse under NCLB, which stresses the technical, rational and measurable aspects of their jobs, and the humanistic discourse of teaching as an occupation, which involves a professional obligation to go beyond what is formally required at work to develop and care for children as human beings. In brief, there was a conflict between what Forrester (2005) calls the “performing” and “caring” aspects of teachers’ work. Second, teachers believed NCLB was part of a broader movement that had elevated the private over the public. Third, as just mentioned, political elites and teachers frequently used stories to convey ideas and support their positions. More importantly, political elites and teachers consistently used stories to convey emotions or express things that make them uncomfortable. Thus, I explored emotions as part of my analysis.
Ethical Considerations

This research poses no more than a minimal risk of harm to participants. I minimized any risks associated with the study through a combination of transparency and privacy protections. In terms of the former, before beginning the interview, I verbally explained the research to each participant and informed them of the associated risks. I then showed the participant the written consent form, and provided him or her with enough time to read the document and ask questions before signing it. I also mailed each participant a copy of the signed consent form for his or her records. In terms of the latter, all of my conversations with my informants, and any supporting documents, will remain confidential for all time. The consent form is the only record linking the participant to the research (Please see Appendix D). It is stored in a locked file cabinet that is kept separate from my research materials. During the interview phase, I stored my voice recordings in a locked, exclusive use file cabinet. I destroyed all audio recordings once I had transcribed their contents, and used false names on the actual transcriptions. I reminded participants at the beginning of each interview not to use any real names, such as the names of other teachers, administrators, students, their school or district, or their home communities. If a name was used, I deleted it. The next section discusses the limitations of this study.

Limitations

My background is the primary limitation associated with this study. Specifically, it could be argued that my experience as a former teacher is a source of personal bias in my research. My background also posed a risk that teachers would offer what they felt were socially or professionally acceptable answers. On the other hand, my background was also one of my strengths because it allowed my informants to identify with me. Moreover, all
researchers bring their experiences to their work. Recognizing this, I built safeguards into this study to ensure that it was true to the experiences of my informants. First, I fleshed out the experiences of teachers through the use of open-ended interviews. I also interviewed teachers from a wide variety of settings and backgrounds, many of which were quite different from my own background and experiences. Second, I supplemented my interviews with other sources of knowledge on teaching and public schools, including ethnographies and histories written by other researchers. Each of these enabled me to ensure that my research was true to the experiences of my participants.

A secondary limitation related to the research design. Some of my interviews were with retirees who have been away from teaching for a while. As such, they may be more likely to remember their most positive and negative experiences rather than their “everyday worlds.” Still, I believe that their contributions to this research far outweighed this drawback. Their accounts were particularly important for illuminating the culture of teaching and schooling over time. These interviews also served as a pre-NCLB analysis when compared to my interviews with teachers who only taught after the adoption of NCLB, or who taught prior to and after NCLB. Another weakness in my design was that I interviewed administrators and teachers about their experiences and behaviors rather than observing them firsthand. Therefore, it is possible that my informants skewed the research by only offering their most positive portrayals of their teaching. It could also be argued that single interviews are not ideal in terms of getting informants to open up or disclose deep emotions, thus further increasing the likelihood that my informants offered their most positive characterizations of other teachers, administrators, students and their schools. Nonetheless, my research makes clear that I am discussing teachers’ perceptions of their
behaviors versus their actual behaviors. Moreover, I found that teachers and administrators were quite open in terms of discussing negative experiences and behaviors. In fact, both groups were quite hard on themselves and often focused on what they did “wrong” rather than what they did “right.” In part, this was a product of the interview protocol, which was designed to draw teachers in slowly. But, by eliciting “stories,” my individual questions allowed informants to open up their emotions without “naming” them, meaning teachers could put themselves in the middle of their narratives while also affording themselves emotional distance if needed.

A more serious limitation is that “sampling for difference,” or heterogeneously sampling informants based on factors such as school context, personal characteristics, experience with the policy intervention, and so forth, limited my sample size in terms of the number of informants who were specifically impacted by NCLB. Still, I feel that what was gained was more important than what was lost. Sampling for difference allowed me to bifurcate those narratives that were specifically related to the policy intervention (NCLB) from those that related to other factors, including the particular circumstances of the people being interviewed (e.g., stage of career, gender, and so forth) and their “teaching contexts” (e.g., occupation, school district or community). The latter, for example, included teachers who experienced strong managerial restrictions on their teaching (Please see Graphs 1 and 3 at the end of this chapter). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the sample size for most districts was too small to confidently make inferences to the district as a whole. We know, for instance, that there are clear differences between school districts in terms of policy responses, and that school district responses affected the experiences of administrators and teachers. Still, more research is
needed in terms of how or why schools differed in their responses to the policy intervention. Research indicates that schools produce their own specific cultures (e.g., beliefs, customs, routines, rituals and practices), and that these cultures are affected by their socio-economic and political communities. It is clear from this research that some schools were better able to mitigate the effects of NCLB on teachers and students. Due to the design of this study, however, we cannot make generalizations about the organizational factors that allowed them to do so. The next section discusses the quality of this study.

**Study Quality**

Brower, Abolafia, and Carr (2000) developed guidelines to assess qualitative research using Golden-Biddle and Locke’s (1993) three dimensions for examining ethnographic accounts. *Authenticity* involves convincing the reader that the researcher was “there in the field” and has “faithfully represented the local experience that he or she encountered.” *Plausibility* means the researcher has told a story that makes sense to the reader. *Criticality* is achieved when the researcher causes the reader to “examine critically their own taken-for-granted assumptions” (Brower, Abolafia, and Carr 2000, 374 and 382). My research is designed to meet these guidelines in a number of ways.

I ensured the authenticity of my research by using the actual speeches and testimonies of political elites and fleshing out the experiences of teachers through the use of open-ended interviews. I increased the likelihood that my research will tell a plausible account through the use of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998; Corbin and Straus 2008), and by incorporating narratives used by George Bush, members of Congress and other political elites, as well as those told to me by administrators and teachers. My
research will make a critical contribution to the field in three ways. First, I employed methods that have not been routinely used in policy analysis (i.e., cultural policy analysis and narrative inquiry). Second, I designed the research to address empirical gaps in the literatures on policy feedback, tools and implementation, as well as the literature on social capital in education. Thus, this research could be applied to other policy areas outside of education. Third, a large body of research documents the importance of teachers for student achievement, and major education policies often need teachers to serve as their primary implementers. As such, the findings from this research are important for both public policy and children’s educational outcomes.

Conclusion

In sum, public policies are a way of seeing the world. We suspect that public policies are unlikely to work when the government is misinformed about the values, beliefs, behaviors and incentive systems of citizens and policy implementers. In these cases, public policies may even create the very problems the government is trying to resolve. Field research grounds our understanding of how participants construct their social worlds. Seen in this light, this research is designed to explore, question, and challenge our ways of seeing and constructing our world. The next part of this dissertation examines how political elites constructed the policy problem and solution, as well as teachers, teaching and learning. I then explore how this has impacted teachers’ political and social experiences, behaviors and identities.
Graph 1. Interviews by NCLB status.\textsuperscript{65}

Graph 2. Interviews by school type and context.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{65} N=83 interviews with teachers and former teachers.
\textsuperscript{66} N=39 school districts. Statewide, about 44\% of students attend urban schools, 43\% suburb/town, and 13\% percent rural. Some teachers taught in more than one school. Each of these schools was counted in cases where teachers (a) taught in more than one school \textit{and} (b) compared and contrasted those schools in the interview. For the most part, this involved new teachers who moved as a result of layoffs or to find a permanent position, although it also included experienced teachers who had moved between schools.
Tier 1 = 4 districts (1 urban, 2 charter and 1 suburban): Public managers standardized and routinized teaching in order to ensure job consistency and (theoretically) improve educational outcomes. Standardization was achieved through top-down hierarchical controls, but often backed by explicit rewards and incentives.

Tier 2 = 3 districts (1 urban and 2 suburban): Public managers adopted a very strong ‘performative’ discourse that was often backed by explicit rewards.

The overall sample included: 2 high need, low resource urban school districts, both of which had schools that were labeled under NCLB; 2 urban charter schools; and 3 suburban districts, none of which were in danger of being labeled under NCLB. Two of the suburban districts served average need students with an average level of resources. The other district served low need students with a high level of resources.

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Graph 3. Interviews by district managerial controls.67

N=39 school districts. Some teachers taught in more than one school. Each of these schools was counted in cases where teachers (a) taught in more than one school and (b) compared and contrasted those schools in the interview. For the most part, this involved new teachers who moved as a result of layoffs or to find a permanent position, although it also included experienced teachers who had moved between schools.
Graph 4. Interviews by school district resource and capacity. The Department of Education for the northeastern state that is the subject of my microanalysis classifies school districts according to the needs of the school population (e.g., rates of student poverty and limited English proficiency) and their resource capacity (e.g., the income and property wealth of the district’s residents). This graph shows the interviews according to these classifications.

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58 N=39 school districts. Some teachers taught in more than one school. Each of these schools was counted in cases where teachers (a) taught in more than one school and (b) compared and contrasted those schools in the interview. For the most part, this involved new teachers who moved as a result of layoffs or to find a permanent position, although it also included experienced teachers who had moved between schools.
Graph 5. Interviews by teaching status.\textsuperscript{69}

Graph 6. Reasons left teaching.\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{69} N=83 interviews with teachers and former teachers.

\textsuperscript{70} N=83 interviews with teachers and former teachers.
Graph 7. Interviews by gender.\textsuperscript{71}

Graph 8. Interviews by age and years teaching.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{71} N=83 interviews with teachers and former teachers.
\textsuperscript{72} N=83 interviews with teachers and former teachers. Average years teaching = 17. Average age = 43. Statewide, nearly 50 percent of teachers are 33-48 years old.
Graph 9. Interviews by level taught.\textsuperscript{73}

Graph 10. Interviews by subject area.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{73} N=83 interviews with teachers and former teachers. Statewide, about 45\% of students attend elementary, 23\% grades 6-8 and 32\% grades 9-12.

\textsuperscript{74} N=34 interviews with teachers and former teachers. Five teachers taught in more than one subject. These numbers do not include elementary teachers who teach multiple subjects. They only include secondary subject area teachers (math, science, English, social studies, foreign language and Physical Education), and teachers in K-12 that teach art and physical education.
Graph 11. Interviews by job title.\textsuperscript{75}

Special needs = speech, school psychologist, special education, reading, ESL and AIS
Special areas = art, gym, library, foreign language
Subject area = elementary and secondary math, science, English, social studies

Graph 12. Interviews: Administrators vs. teachers\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{75} N=83 interviews with teachers and former teachers.
\textsuperscript{76} N=83 interviews with teachers and former teachers.
Graph 13. Interviews by whether the teacher at one time held union office.\textsuperscript{77}

Graph 14. Interviews by whether the teacher at one time worked in a labeled school.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{77} N=83 interviews with teachers and former teachers.

\textsuperscript{78} N=83 interviews with teachers and former teachers.
PART I
CULTURAL NARRATIVES AND POLICY CHANGE

Political scientists recognize that political entrepreneurs and groups draw attention to the negative consequences of existing political arrangements in order to mobilize new interests, expand the conflict and weaken policy subsystems (Schattschneider 1960). In this manner, issue expansion transforms policy subsystems into conflicting interest group networks and fosters political change (i.e., divide and conquer). As discussed in chapter three, interest group mobilization and growing conservatism in society largely resulted in gridlock during the administrations of George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, as members of Congress tried to act on growing, but non-uniform, demands for change. Interest groups on both the right and the left embraced standards and accountability as a means of negotiating these tensions, but ideological and ideational divisions in Congress resulted in gridlock when Clinton tried to reauthorize the ESEA during his second term in office (DeBray 2005; Rudalevige 2003). Thus, by the time George Bush was elected, the debate between Democrats and Republicans had moved beyond whether the federal government should play any role in education. Yet, the proper means and ends of federal education policy were still being hotly contested.

In this part of the dissertation, I use cultural policy analysis to understand how elites used discursive innovations to break this political stalemate and achieve change in the form of NCLB. Both chapters explore how elites communicated ideas (images or frames). However, chapter five focuses on the macro-narratives, meaning the primary stories that were told by President George Bush and members of Congress about the policy problem, its villains and victims, and the recommended solution. Chapter six, on
the other hand, explores how members of Congress constructed policy targets in an effort
to support their definition of the problem and preferred solution.

Overall, I found that policymakers drew on the common frame created by *A Nation at Risk* in order to create a unifying language that opposed the equity regime. This frame was the “narrative of the mediocre status quo.” Equally important, though, this narrative pointed to a policy solution that they were able to discursively frame in very different ways. This allowed both parties to claim political credit, while also appearing like they had not abandoned their political views and constituencies. Nevertheless, this narrative had negative implications for the construction of teachers and public schools, especially in relation to how these groups were characterized in relation to other affected groups.

This dissertation is not making a causal claim that narratives were responsible for policy change. Instead, it shows that both parties converged on NCLB because discursively they were able to frame the policy issue and solution in very different ways even as they appeared to support the same policy. Why should we care about policy change? The central argument of this dissertation is that discourse, like political institutions, affects the behaviors of policy implementers and citizens. Policy rhetoric generates socially constructed identities for policy targets. These social reconstructions are often “strategic,” meaning they are used to accomplish political ends, but have political and social effects. As such, the chapters that follow are important for understanding how words influenced actions at the national level (i.e., policy change in the form of NCLB) and then for understanding how words (policy rhetoric) and actions
(NCLB) influenced the political and social experiences, behaviors, and identities of teachers as citizens and policy implementers.
CHAPTER V
CONSTRUCTING THE MEDIOCRE STATUS QUO

Introduction

Roe (1994) argues that policy elites develop primary narratives in order to organize beliefs in ways that mobilize support for their preferred policy solutions. Their attempts to achieve policy change are often stymied by non-stories and counter-stories. Non-stories do not conform to primary narratives while counter-stories actually contradict them. When this occurs, political elites attempt to create a meta-narrative, which negotiates conflict by converting these contradictory narratives into a new dominant story. During Bill Clinton’s second term in office, there were three disconnected (and increasingly divided) policy networks in education. We still see the narrative effects of these ideological divisions early on during the debates on NCLB. For analytic purposes, I am calling these stories the narratives of failed government, failed promises, and good intentions gone bad. My analysis shows that each of these primary narratives told a different story about the problem in education, as well as the proper federal role in redressing it. At the beginning of his administration, George Bush tried to mediate conflict between these groups through his narrative of failed expectations. In this chapter, I use a content analysis of presidential and congressional discourse to understand how political elites converted these conflicting narratives into policy change in the form of NCLB.

I begin by discussing my analysis of the dominant, but incompatible, narratives that were used to describe the problem and solution early on during the debates on NCLB. Next, I show how policy elites converted these conflicting narratives into a metanarrative about the mediocre status quo. I then describe how this narrative supported
a common policy solution, even though elites continued to describe the problem and solution in conflicting ways. I conclude by briefly discussing how elites used formal and informal institutions to push this (now dominant) meta-narrative, while relegating other narratives, and thus their prescriptive remedies, to nonstories or counterstories told by minorities.

**Background: Primary Narratives and Interest Group Mobilization**

Wilson (1980, 331-337) argues that policies create different types of politics by concentrating benefits and costs in ways that influence the level of contestation from individuals or groups in society. Then, by affecting interest group mobilization, the construction of costs and benefits influences political change. According to Wilson, costs are concentrated when they are levied on a particular firm, industry or locality (e.g., a fee). They are distributed when paid for through a general tax or price increase. Benefits are diffuse when they are bestowed through lower prices, or as a result of improved service delivery, lowered taxes, or reduced fraud, abuse or deception. They are concentrated through subsidies or grants, or by providing special licenses to a specific industry, business or occupation. He combines costs and benefits into four types of politics: client, interest group, majoritarian, and entrepreneurial, as illustrated in Chart 3 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits Diffuse</th>
<th>Costs Diffuse</th>
<th>Costs Concentrated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural price supports</td>
<td>Client politics</td>
<td>Interest group politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax breaks for specific groups or industries</td>
<td>Majoritarian politics</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security</td>
<td>National defense</td>
<td>Clean air legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recycling efforts</td>
<td>Restricting tobacco sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Public smoking bans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chart 3. Wilson’s (1980) typology of interest group politics*
Policies involving client politics, such as agricultural subsidies, are likely to be adopted because they concentrate benefits on one group (e.g. farmers and agricultural industries) while diffusing costs onto a larger population (e.g., consumers or taxpayers). Those paying the costs are unlikely to mobilize for two reasons. First, the burden suffered individually is small and, second, they do not perceive they are a group (e.g., consumers). This changes for interest group politics where the costs are concentrated on one group, while the benefits are concentrated on another. Here, winning is a function of the relative strength of each group. For example, who wins in terms of wage bargaining depends on the relative strength of business and labor. Conversely, majoritarian politics, or the popularity of a policy, determines whether policies providing diffuse benefits with diffuse costs will be adopted (e.g., defense policy). Policies that provide diffuse benefits with concentrated costs, on the other hand, need an entrepreneur to mobilize (diffuse) individuals into a collective. In the case of public smoking bans, for instance, this involved mobilizing citizens to fight smokers, who had more incentive to mobilize and protect their interests. Wilson (1980) suggests that mobilization is more likely when policies increase costs or reduce benefits because people are more attuned to losses than rewards. While he recognizes that costs and benefits may be symbolic as well as monetary, he largely focuses on the distribution of actual rewards. This minimizes how the perception of costs and benefits might be manipulated through the political process.

Unlike Wilson, Stone (1997) specifically focuses on how political actors discursively manipulate the perceptions of costs and benefits in order to mobilize support or opposition for their favored policies. One classic political tactic is to portray one side as weak and in need of assistance, thereby attracting support from neutral bystanders,
including the state. In these cases, the state, which is often viewed as a referee between interests, is an important source of “outside help.” Another tactic is to aggregate potential winners and losers into a much broader class of people in order to make it appear as if the benefits or costs of a policy are diffuse. This was the case, for example, when the government tried to dismantle the federal school lunch program in 1995. By identifying other groups that would suffer, such as small businesses (i.e., bakers, dairies, and farmers), and the employees who would lose their jobs as a result of business distress, defenders expanded the crisis beyond the children who would no longer get school lunch. This is also an example of how social interests are transformed into economic ones and vice versa, which is a third political tactic (Stone 1997).

Schneider and Ingram (2005a) theorize that a fourth common political tactic is to strategically portray those who are affected by a policy (i.e., the target groups) in positive or negative ways. “Winners’ tales” construct a story that preserves the status quo, often by making it appear as if benefits are diffuse, or spread throughout the population, while the costs are concentrated on a small (unworthy) group. Here, “the many” are typically portrayed as deserving of benefits, while “the few” are portrayed as deserving of burdens. “Losers’ tales,” on the other hand, seek policy change by arguing that a small (unworthy) few benefit from the status quo while the large “many” are (inappropriately) paying the costs (Jones and McBeth 2010; McBeth et al. 2007; Shanahan et al. 2011). Policies that concentrate costs on an undeserving or “deviant” minority are especially likely to be adopted because the risk of political backlash is low. First, these groups are typically unable to draw public sympathy by portraying themselves as “victims” of government discrimination. Second, they are less likely to mobilize because it draws attention to the
fact that they are part of a poorly regarded “group” (Schneider and Ingram 2005a).

Regardless of the tactics, the overall goal is to win the allegiance of the largest number of people and thereby achieve favored political outcomes. This chapter uses these ideas to highlight why conservatives and liberals struggled to achieve their preferred policy reforms. It then shows how political elites used the meta-narrative of the mediocre status quo to overcome these barriers and advance policy change in the form of NCLB. The next chapter discusses the consequences of this framing for the construction of different target groups.

**Constructing Primary Narratives**

Stone (1997) argues that the analytical language of politics includes “villains and victims,” "for and against," "supporters and enemies," and "our side versus their side." The most “powerful offensive position” is to portray events as having been purposefully caused. Conversely, those seeking to avoid blame try to persuade the public that an event or action resulted from an accident, a mechanical problem, an unforeseen side effect, or a risk that did not pay off. My analysis reveals that, early on in the debates, conservatives and liberals took a powerful offensive position on behalf of policy change through what I am calling the narratives of “failed government” and “failed promises,” respectively. This section begins by discussing these narratives. I then show how New Democrats used the “narrative of good intentions gone bad” (i.e., unforeseen side-effects) to avoid blame and justify change. I conclude by describing how George Bush tried to resolve gridlock through his narrative of failed expectations. This narrative still implied intentional cause, but was less hostile in terms of assigning overt “blame” than the narrative told by conservatives in Congress. As shown in Chart 4 and discussed in this
section, we can link these primary narratives to Wilson’s (1980) typology of interest group politics to show why and how the language used by Bush and New Democrats would eventually diffuse across political parties under a new meta-narrative about the mediocre status quo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Conservatives Failed government</th>
<th>(Liberal) Democrats Failed promises</th>
<th>New Democrats Good intentions</th>
<th>George W. Bush Failed expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>Intentional Cause</td>
<td>Intentional Cause</td>
<td>Inadvertent Cause</td>
<td>Intentional to inadvertent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villains</td>
<td>Contenders (Public goods)</td>
<td>Contenders (Elites/inequality)</td>
<td>Inadvertent</td>
<td>“The system”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims</td>
<td>Diffuse</td>
<td>Concentrated</td>
<td>Diffuse</td>
<td>Diffuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solution</td>
<td>Block grants</td>
<td>More resources</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eliminate DOE</td>
<td>Target Title I (Robinhood)</td>
<td>Reform</td>
<td>(Block grants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competition</td>
<td></td>
<td>Results (3Rs)</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Concentrated</td>
<td>Concentrated</td>
<td>Diffuse</td>
<td>Flexibly Diffuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>Concentrated</td>
<td>Diffuse</td>
<td>Diffuse</td>
<td>Some concentrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of politics</td>
<td>Interest group</td>
<td>Client</td>
<td>Majoritarian</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial/Interest group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chart 4. Causal stories and interest group politics**

**Conservatives and the Narrative of Failed Government**

The main group that opposed standards-based accountability reforms under President Bill Clinton was a conservative coalition in Congress. Similarly, conservative Republicans took an offensive position during the debates on NCLB through their narrative of failed government, which (by and large) blamed poor public school performance on the pathologies of federalism and bureaucracy. According to this narrative, the real problem in education was that the intrusive federal equity regime had created a culture of compliance instead of performance. The main villains of the story are Democrats, federal bureaucrats and special interests, including teachers’ unions.

According to conservatives, this constellation of interests had increased the number of

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79 One example of this emerging conservative presence in education was the EXPECT Coalition, which was founded in 1998 to organize family groups and education policy groups who felt that they had been excluded during a time of Democratic control in Washington (DeBray 2005; DeBray-Pelot 2007).
federal mandates, thereby creating a bureaucratic maze of rules, regulation and red tape, in order to extract more resources from the federal government and further their control over public education. For example, Congressman Thomas (R-CA) claimed that:

as a result of 40 years of Democratic control of this body, the federal education system takes more than 30 cents of every education dollar to support its own administrative bureaucracy, rather than the needs of our children (Congressional Record, December 13, H10108)

Some also accused teachers and public schools, even if the causal chain more prominently implicated Democrats and the federal bureaucracy. As discussed in chapter three, this narrative constructed teachers and their allies as part of what former Secretary of Education, William Bennett, called the BLOB, or big learning organization bureaucracy. Like Bennett, they charged that the BLOB had pursued its own interests at the expense of parents, children and society.

The minor story within this narrative is that public goods are inferior to private ones. Either way, the victims are taxpayers, whose money is being wasted on inefficient and ineffective programs, as well as families with school age children. Some Republicans also framed disadvantaged children and minorities as victims of (inferior) public schools, or schools that lacked trained or motivated teachers. Others portrayed state and local governments as victims of federal encroachment. Ultimately, though, this narrative portrays society itself as the victim of inefficient and ineffective public programs. To prove their claims, proponents typically discussed declining global competitiveness, as evidenced by standardized tests showing that American students performed poorly when compared to their international peers. Some conservatives, however, also discussed the decline in traditional values. This later story was mostly implicit in narratives about discipline and mental health issues, or violence and drugs in
schools, yet some also used data showing that students lacked basic knowledge about the nation’s history and culture.

Given the prominence of the federal government in the creation of the problem, it is not surprising that the policy prescription was to delimit the federal role in education. This included eliminating the DOE or converting federal categorical grants into block grants. Legislators argued that increased flexibility at the local level would foster innovation and, in the process, result in increased efficiency and effectiveness. These policy prescriptions were sometimes, but not always, combined with accountability in truncated form. Here, it was argued that school choice would stimulate behavioral changes, by removing the public school monopoly, and thereby foster the efficient and effective use of tax dollars.

In sum, the narrative of failed systems portrayed “the many” (i.e., society, taxpayers, and families with school age children) as victims of federal involvement in education. Some also claimed that “the few” who were supposed to benefit from the ESEA (i.e., disadvantaged children) were not being well served. Others (implicitly or explicitly) framed public schools, teachers’ unions, and teachers as the only “real” beneficiaries of federal involvement in education. These groups were accused of using their position of privilege to serve their own interests at the expense of children and society. The solution distributed symbolic costs on federal bureaucrats and public schools in the form of a loss of legitimacy and authority over education, and conferred symbolic and actual benefits on highly mobilized private and public charter school providers (i.e., legitimacy and school choice). As such, their proposals created interest group politics between the education establishment and “new insiders.” Nevertheless,
conservatives were not united around every aspect of this narrative. The next section discusses the counter-narrative told by liberals in Congress.

(Liberal) Democrats and the Narrative of Failed Promises

Like conservatives, Democrats in Congress took an offensive position but they used the narrative of failed promises. Largely expressed by liberal Democrats, this narrative blamed unequal resources for the achievement gap between disadvantaged children and their academic peers, and attributed the problem to a failure of political will on the part of the president, Congress, and sometimes state governments and society.

Rhetorically, legislators used two arguments to back their claim that the government had not fulfilled its promise under the ESEA. First, the ESEA was underfunded as a result of partisanship and because it is a discretionary program at the federal level. These ideas are evident in the following statement made by Congresswoman Jackson-Lee (D-TX):

The children of our nation are our country's greatest asset and should be the top priority of the Congress and the Administration. The lack of will to make critical and sometimes difficult decisions on children and education issues has damaged the ability of the United States to guarantee that the next generation will achieve a higher standard of living than their parents (Congressional Record, May 17, H2306).

Second, limited Title I dollars had been spread across districts in ways that did not mitigate the disparities between them in terms of student needs, fiscal resources, and educational capacity. Here, “localism,” or the need for credit claiming to win elections, had resulted in political bargains, or a “something for everyone” mentality. Some critics further charged, however, that Congress lacked the will to reform Title I because it required politically unpopular solutions. This included increasing taxes, decreasing spending for programs outside of education, or reducing federal aid to some districts in order to provide more to others (i.e., “the Robinhood approach”).
This latter idea brings up a minor narrative that was also used early on during the debates on NCLB. Some legislators implicitly or explicitly accused state governments of failing to redress fiscal disparities between schools. Yet, because most Democrats portrayed federal politics as the villain, the policy prescription (largely) advocated holding the federal government accountable, either through “tinkering” or large-scale reform of the equity regime. Tinkering involved providing more, but better targeted, federal aid. In supporting NCLB, for example, Congresswoman Slaughter (D-NY) said:

Congress, for the first time, has tackled the inexcusable achievement gap between rich and poor students and minority and nonminority students that has plagued our educational system for decades…This is a historic bill because it targets Federal dollars better than ever before to those students who need it most…(and) finally fulfills the promise made in 1965…that all children have an opportunity to learn regardless of income, background or ethnic identity (Congressional Record, December 13, H10083).

Large-scale change, on the other hand, involved revising the federal aid formula to better target funding, as well as broader policy prescriptions, such as improving social programs outside of K-12 education. This included increased federal funding for early childhood education, nutrition, health care, day care and other programs that served disadvantaged children and families. For the most part, these kinds of policy prescriptions involve taking from advantaged groups and giving to dependents or disadvantaged groups. As such, supporters of this narrative struggled to construct benefits and burdens in ways that would engender widespread support on behalf of policy change.

Earlier, I noted that one way to escape policy gridlock is to rhetorically portray costs and benefits in ways that would influence political mobilization. Another is to use policy tools to hide the benefits and costs associated with government sponsorship. Tax incentives, for example, help concentrated groups but the costs are largely hidden from
the general public, who “pays” through less revenue for the general welfare. Budget
deficits, on the other hand, levy taxes on future generations in order to provide present
benefits. For many programs, like housing and public education, it is difficult to hide the
distribution of costs and benefits. In both of these cases, the situation is further
complicated by the fact that the government subsidizes these services for some while
relying on markets to provide them for others according to individual taste, need or
ability to pay. Housing, for instance, is largely distributed according to the ability to pay.
Then, the state subsidizes home ownership for those who borrow, through tax deductions,
while funding public housing for others. Political conflict is minimal for tax deductions
because they are hidden. Meanwhile, the expansion of public housing is less popular
because it overtly benefits a concentrated group (e.g., poor families). Those who
advocate more resources for schools serving large numbers of disadvantaged children
face similar constraints.

The state has historically subsidized suburban schools through tax incentives for
home ownership, but these benefits are hidden. Policies that increase government
compensation to schools that serve disadvantaged children, on the other hand, either
require a highly visible adjustment to the budget or necessitate reducing Title I to some
districts in order to increase it for others. Either way, advocates need to make the case
that disadvantaged children (and their schools) deserve preferential treatment
(concentrated benefits) for some reason.\textsuperscript{80} What further complicates the issue is that

\textsuperscript{80} The early ESEA resolved this issue by portraying poor children as “educationally deprived.” So, rather
than frame disadvantaged children (and their schools) as entitled to federal aid due to structural
inequalities, legislators implicitly or explicitly framed disadvantaged children as dependents because their
families were deviant from the “norm” in ways that affected their educational outcomes. Proponents then
argued that the ESEA would benefit society at large (diffuse benefits) by remediating these issues. As
mentioned earlier, portraying children as “culturally deprived” resulted in negative consequences for
children.
opponents of concentrated benefits often use moral reasoning to stigmatize groups that receive public benefits. In the case of public housing and other welfare programs, for example, the poor have often been portrayed as the “cause” of their problems and thus unworthy of government subsidies. Similarly, in American political culture, educational stratification is often portrayed as “merit based.” The implication, then, is that poor performance is based on a lack of effort rather than structural barriers.

In order to overcome these kinds of structural and symbolic political barriers, (Liberal) Democrats focused on what would become known as “opportunity to learn” (OTL). OTL was a discursive innovation that justified more equitably distributing public resources without stigmatizing state governments for failing to redress the inequitable financing of public schools, or resorting to the language of “cultural deprivation” that had been used to justify federal aid during the debates on the original ESEA. Even so, the language of OTL created the potential for groups to challenge inequitable state finance formulas in state courts. Meanwhile, it focused federal aid on schools that served large numbers of disadvantaged children with less capacity (mostly urban and rural schools) and thus engendered hostile interest group politics. As such, state and local governments, including high resource (mostly suburban) public schools, opposed this solution. Given these issues, it is not surprising that liberals focused on raising the level of Title I funding and distributing the new monies to schools that served large numbers of disadvantaged students. This remedy, however, left Democrats vulnerable to being framed as “tax and spend” liberals, particularly given the fact that opponents used test data to suggest that money (alone) had not been effective. The narrative of good intentions gone bad helped New Democrats navigate these issues.
As previously mentioned, at the end of the Clinton Administration, issue expansion had resulted in policy gridlock when he tried to reauthorize the ESEA. At that time, New Democrats used the Public Education Reinvestment, Reinvention, and Responsibility Act to try and negotiate the political stalemate. Known as the 3Rs, the proposal largely told a story about the unintended side effects of federal policy. The proposal only got 11 votes in the Senate, all from New Democrats. Even so, they continued this narrative during the debates on NCLB. In general, the argument was that the ESEA had failed to redress gaps in achievement because it focused on “inputs,” or what was spent on education, without a concomitant focus on “outputs,” or academic achievement and attainment.

The advantage of this narrative was that it enabled members of Congress to escape blame for the problem because it largely posited policy failure as being the result of unintended consequences. In this way, it supported an expanded federal role in education, so long as resources were combined with accountability for results. Another advantage was that it framed the equity regime as having (unintentionally) diffused costs on society at large in the form of mediocre public school performance. The implication, then, was that the policy prescription would diffuse benefits across society by more efficiently providing a quality education to all children through the use of standards and assessments. By discursively diffusing the benefits, this narrative symbolically altered the political playing field from interest group to majoritarian politics. As previously mentioned, the adoption of these types of policies depends on their popularity. This is important because polls at the time showed that Americans clearly supported a federal
role in education and were increasingly concerned about the performance of public schools (Hochschild 2003 and 2004; McGuinn 2006). Just as critically, this approach allowed members to portray the problem (and who was to blame for it) in different ways while still arriving at the same solution. So, New Democrats could argue that money alone was not the answer. The government also needed to hold schools accountable for “results.” Liberals could stress that money was not the sole solution, but accountability would not work unless the federal government better targeted Title I. And Republicans could focus on reform, such as providing more flexibility through block grants and using school choice to hold schools accountable to parents. In short, this narrative enabled Democrats and Republicans to redress electoral weaknesses.

This last idea is important because, as Hess and McGuinn (2002) show, education as a policy issue had begun to play a prominent symbolic and substantive role in national politics because it enabled both parties to tap into a strong American commitment to equal opportunity and individual responsibility.81 Still, both parties struggled to construct a majoritarian narrative while remaining true to their political views and constituencies. Conservatives embraced individualism, but struggled to extend the “mantle of opportunity” (Hess and McGuinn 2002) because of their support for localism and opposition to an activist government. Democrats, on the other hand, were better positioned to support an activist social agenda, but were confronted by growing middle-class opposition to redistributive social programs. As such, they needed to find new ways to promote government activism without appearing to be “tax and spend” liberals (Hess and McGuinn 2002). By stressing increased flexibility (block grants), accountability and

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81 Many scholars have argued that American political culture favors both individual responsibility and the promise of equal opportunity (Feldman, 1988; Morone 1998).
choice, the 3Rs enabled both parties to link educational opportunity with personal responsibility. This helped Democrats shake the label of tax and spend liberals and Republicans advance compassionate conservatism as the means of achieving an opportunity society.

Strategically then, it was not accidental that the New Democrats’ proposal was (largely) what would be adopted under NCLB. We also see their narrative diffuse across political parties. For instance, Republican Congressman Isakson (R-GA) said:

> I am a subscriber to a great quote: "Our children are a message we send to a time we will never see." The last generation of American politicians, though unintended, sent a mixed message. Our richest and most affluent children have prospered and succeeded and grown, but our poorest and our most disadvantaged have not progressed; and in fact, the gap between them and our best and most affluent has widened (Congressional Record, December 13, H10094).

The rallying cry was more resources combined with flexibility. In return, the federal government would demand “personal responsibility,” or accountability for results. The next section discusses how George Bush largely adopted the New Democrats approach, while also trying to bridge across policy networks through his narrative of failed expectations.

**George W. Bush and the Narrative of Failed Expectations**

Although George Bush took office with unified party control over both houses of Congress, his mandate for education reform was tenuous due to a contested election and the polarized political environment in Congress. In the House, the narrow Republican majority (221-213) was offset by the fact that many conservatives opposed an expanded federal role in education and supported privatization proposals. Meanwhile, Democrats

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82 NCLB encompassed proposals that had been advanced in theory and substance over many decades by Congress and the administrations of Reagan, Bush and Clinton. Rudalevige (2003) and Vinovskis (2009) provide an excellent history of federal standards and accountability legislation leading up to NCLB.
strongly supported the former and opposed the latter. In the Senate, there was a 50-50 split, with Vice President Dick Cheney breaking the tie, but then, on June 5th, Senator Jim Jeffords (R-VT) became an independent who voted with the Democrats. His actions created a Democratic majority and resulted in (liberal) Ted Kennedy (D-MA) becoming the chair of the Senate HELP Committee. In consequence, Bush needed support from Democrats if he hoped to achieve education reform.

Ideationally, he (largely) adopted the New Democrats’ approach. For example, in the 30-page “blueprint” for education reform that he submitted to Congress on January 30, 2011, he expanded the crisis by claiming mediocre public school performance had affected all students, and negatively impacted society by impeding America’s ability to compete in a global technological economy. In order to support his narrative of widespread mediocrity, he cited two achievement gaps. The first was the gap between the performance of poor and minority children and their academic peers on standardized tests. The second was the gap between American students and their foreign counterparts. He also used other data to support his claims. For example, the Blueprint cites that nearly one third of “college freshmen…must take a remedial course before they are able to even begin regular college level courses” (U.S. House 2001a, 6).

Meanwhile, discursively, his narrative of failed expectations bridged the ideological and ideational divide in Congress. Like conservatives, his Blueprint charged that “the system” had served its own interests at the expense of parents, children and society. We see this, for instance, on the front cover, where there is a sketched picture of the White House with the following quote: “The federal role in education is not to serve the system. It is to serve the children.” Yet, similar to New Democrats, he opened up
space for negotiation between conservatives and liberals by appealing to a “third way.”

He states:

In reaction to these disappointing results, some have decided that there should be no federal involvement in education. Others suggest we merely add new programs into the old system. Surely, there must be another way...to a more effective federal role. The priorities that follow are based on the fundamental notion that an enterprise works best when authority and responsibility are aligned, when those responsible are given greatest latitude and support, and...are accountable for producing results (House 2001a, 1-2).

According to this narrative, the system was ineffective due to over-regulation, and a lack of competition and accountability, rather than an inadequate level of resources or structural barriers to educational performance (U.S. House 2001a). Although he does not explicitly state who is included in “the system,” the Blueprint largely implicates Congress, and federal and state bureaucrats. Thus, he acknowledges:

the federal government is partly at fault for tolerating...abysmal results...(by failing to) reward success and sanction failure...(For example) Congress has created hundreds of programs intended to address problems in education without asking whether or not the programs produce results or knowing their impact on local needs (U.S. House 2001a).  

However, his narrative of failed expectations implicates public schools, teachers’ unions, and teachers. The villains and victims in this narrative are further evidenced by who is penalized by his recommended policy prescription, and who is provided “real” authority and resources versus who is only afforded symbolic support. First, he advocates providing more authority and freedom to state and local governments (moral others), while removing it from federal bureaucrats and Congress (the failed system). Second, his

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83 These ideas were also presented by his Secretary of Education, Rod Paige. In a House hearing, Paige claimed: “Federal education policy is not accomplishing its goals despite the investment of $130 billion in the last three and a half decades. More often than not, it is a bewildering array of federal programs that get in the way of...local school performance. These bureaucratic controls promote a culture of compliance where the professionals at the scene are spending much too much of their time dealing with issues of compliance and not real issues of performance nor real issues of accountability measured by improved student achievement. We think it is time to discontinue funding failure and promote a culture of accountability, a culture of performance” (U.S. House 2001b).
policy prescription provides actual flexibility to state governments though block grants, but this flexibility is largely rhetorical for public schools. Meanwhile, he advocates holding all schools accountable for results through federal statute, mandated state exams, and punitive measures for schools that fail to meet performance goals. Third, he offers real and symbolic authority to private and charter schools in the form of state resources and recognition (legitimacy). Rhetorically, he frames these groups as worthy of public resources (moral others) because they are “allies of society,” meaning they are needed to ensure that children are not trapped in failing (immoral) public schools. In short, like many conservatives, his narrative is implicitly about inferior public goods (public servants and public schools). Unlike Conservatives, though, he masks this narrative through the phrase “soft bigotry of low expectations.”

The main benefit of this approach is that it implicitly frames public schools and schoolteachers as part of the problem, thereby opening up space for regulating a highly organized group, and yet does not take them on directly. This supports my earlier argument that, while Bourdieu’s concept of “symbolic violence” typically applies to elite groups in society, it could also be used to understand the cause and effects of state discourse. Bush did not explicitly label teachers “bigots,” but we implicitly understand that their low expectations are the “cause” of the achievement gap, as well as widespread mediocrity. This assertion is supported by the speeches of George Bush and his first Secretary of Education, Rod Paige. Both used the phrase “soft bigotry of low expectations” to silence those who opposed their definition of the problem and therefore the recommended solution. Then, once they had support for their proposals, they framed these groups more harshly to prevent them from mobilizing in opposition.
In terms of Rod Paige, prior to the adoption of NCLB, he (largely) took a conciliatory approach. For example, he reassured (liberal) members of the Senate Education Committee by claiming he would support “what works” rather than push a particular ideology (Vinovskis 2009). After its adoption, he increasingly framed teachers’ unions in harsh ways because he viewed them as an obstacle to policy implementation. In a speech he made to the Commonwealth Club of California, for instance, he noted that research demonstrates teachers underestimate the intelligence of low-income children. Then, he claimed "some of the biggest skeptics (of NCLB) are those whose job it is to believe in children." Next, he reprimanded teachers, saying they needed to “let go of the myths and perceptions about who can learn and who can't" because "teachers who believe that certain social groups are slower to learn -- and react by lowering the bar for performance -- rob those children of opportunities to grow intellectually and achieve their dreams." More negatively, he linked teachers to the bigotry that caused the civil rights movement, opining:

any system and any person that gives up on any child because of what he looks like or who his parents are is no less discriminatory than a jeering mob blocking the schoolhouse door. It is every inch the bigotry that once exiled some people to the back of the bus.

He concluded by claiming that NCLB was adopted to correct the previously pervasive "separate and unequal" public education system, which had taught “some students well while the rest -- mostly poor and mostly minority -- floundered or flunked out." It did so by demanding accountability for results, which prevented people from “making excuses” that “all children cannot learn.” As such, NCLB should be applauded by anyone who is an advocate for disadvantaged children (National Right to Read Foundation). Paige’s

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84 Paige’s strategy worked. His nomination was supported by conservatives, who liked his views on school choice, and teachers’ unions, who viewed him as being committed to public education (Vinovskis 2009).
speech is the perfect example of what Bourdieu calls “symbolic violence.” Here, Paige is not simply blaming teachers for low test scores. He has also constructed them as “bigots” and blamed their attitudes and behaviors for de facto segregation (i.e., the achievement gap between poor and minority students, and their white counterparts). Teachers may only escape being blamed and shamed if they support NCLB. Then, they are part of the solution versus the cause of the problem. Thus, he simultaneously silenced the history of government, business and societal involvement in the problem, and teachers’ voices about how to resolve it.

Symbolic violence is also evident in how Paige framed teachers’ unions. During a meeting with governors, he called the NEA a “terrorist organization.” This language was particularly harsh because the speech took place after the terrorist attacks of September 11th. Although he apologized the next day, it was actually a “non-apology,” since he accused the NEA of using “obstructionist scare tactics” to stymie the implementation of NCLB. Next, he linked the union with bigots by saying that the NEA’s “high-priced Washington lobbyists…made no secret that they will fight against bringing real, rock-solid improvements in the way we educate all our children regardless of skin color, accent or where they live.” He then maintained the link between unions and terrorists by comparing the NEA to the nation’s teachers, who he claimed were the “real soldiers of democracy” (“Another Mistake by Rod Paige”; Pear 2004; Toppo 2004; “Secretary Paige Issues Apology for the Comment about the NEA”). Here, Paige is using a “divide and conquer” strategy by framing teachers as part of the “moral us” and teachers’ unions as the “immoral them.” This framing suggests he viewed unions as the real threat to NCLB. It may also reflect the fact that unions are less highly regarded in
American political culture (i.e., contenders). As such, concentrating symbolic costs on unions is less likely to generate political backlash than focusing on teachers. Teachers are only framed as the problem if their “soft bigotry of low expectations” harms children (i.e., dependents). So long as they supported NCLB, they were entitled allies of society.

Although less explicit, the symbolic politics of NCLB are further evident in the speeches of George Bush. For example, at the annual NAACP convention, he said:

For nearly 200 years, our nation failed the test of extending the blessings of liberty to African Americans…the record placed a stain on America's founding…we have not yet wiped clean…America remains an unfolding story of freedom. And all of us have an obligation to play our part…we share the same goal…an excellent education for every child. Not just some…See, we must challenge a system that simply shuffles children through…without determining whether they can read, write, and add and subtract. It's a system -- see, I like to call it this: We need to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations …We must not tolerate a system that gives up on people… There's an achievement gap…that says we're not fulfilling the promise…And…when we find schools that are not teaching and will not change, our parents should have a different option. If you want quality education you've got to trust the parents…an amazing thing about our society today is wealthier white families have got the capacity to defeat mediocrity by moving. That is not the case for lower-income families. And so, therefore, I strongly believe in charter schools, and public school choice. I believe in opportunity scholarships to be able to enable parents to move their child out of a school that's not teaching, for the benefit of the United States of America (“President Bush Addresses NAACP Annual Convention”).

Here, Bush blames “the system,” which includes teachers and schools that will not teach and “will not change.” He also sets up “moral” (non-public school) others, who need to help minorities because, unlike white families, they cannot “defeat mediocrity by moving.” This ignores the way government programs funded white flight to the suburbs. It further silences how school financing created disparities between schools in terms of resources, and how socio-economic barriers have impeded the progress of some while empowering others. Thus, like Paige, Bush took a conciliatory approach prior to the
adoption of NCLB, but increasingly framed teachers’ unions in harsh ways because he viewed them as an obstacle to school choice and the implementation of NCLB.

Symbolic violence was also evident in terms of the ways Bush framed Democrats and teachers’ unions. In a speech he made in Florida, shortly before the 2004 election, he attacked Senator Ted Kennedy, “the nine White House wannabes,” and teachers’ unions, who opposed “the successes of school choice” and were also one of the biggest sources of special-interest money for the Democrats (Noe 2004). Here, “the system” is not a product of socio-economic inequality or the legacy of oppression perpetuated by the interaction between the state, private sector, and a stratified society. It is teachers and public schools, and the special interest money they use to influence Democrats. In consequence, the solution is to hold schools (teachers and administrators) accountable and use public resources to fund school choice (moral others), thereby forcing the (monopolistic and immoral) public school system to change.

Thus, using the slogan “leave no child behind,” which was a decade-old motto of the Children’s Defense Fund, Bush embraced increased federal spending and activism in exchange for (local) flexibility, accountability and (parental) choice in education. Under the banner of “compassionate conservatism,” Bush hoped to move the Republican education agenda toward the middle and close the credibility gap between Republicans and Democrats on the issue of education (Rudalevige 2003). In doing so, however, he imposed costs on all public schools while extending benefits to charter schools and the private sector in the form of government sponsored school choice and supplemental educational services. Although his proposal is a classic case of what Wilson (1980) calls interest group politics, he symbolically altered the playing field, or served as a political
entrepreneur, through his narrative of low expectations. This narrative hid the costs of his policy prescription by implying that only schools (and teachers) that have failed children, due to the soft bigotry of their low expectations (deviants), bear a burden from his policy prescription. In other words, schools (and teachers) that are “doing right by the kids” are not impacted. In the process, he discursively framed groups in ways that silenced those concentrated interests that opposed his reforms (i.e., teachers and teachers’ unions), while empowering those that supported them (i.e., state governments, charter schools, and the private sector). The former were framed as deviants while the latter were portrayed as moral, and therefore entitled, agents. His narrative also framed society, taxpayers, and all children as beneficiaries. Thus, he expanded the crisis by changing interest group politics into entrepreneurial politics. Tactically, this was important because, as previously mentioned, there was widespread support for a federal role in education and for standards and assessments, even if support for school choice was mixed.

This discussion shows why framing is so important in politics. In this case, language was used in ways that made it appear as if (immoral) special interests were bearing the costs for the diffuse benefits received by society, taxpayers, and children. Less visible were the real costs borne by local school districts and taxpayers as a result of testing and accountability. Also less visible were the real benefits received by private providers of supplemental services; testing and publishing companies; and charter schools. This is because the issue was framed in ways that made it appear as if the choice was between the inefficient and ineffective (mediocre) status quo under the ESEA, or a highly performing, less costly system under NCLB.
Summing up, Stone (1997) argues that the success or failure of a narrative is indicated by whether it becomes the dominant narrative. Earlier, I suggested that another way to study the success of a narrative is whether it gets coopted by the other side in a conflict. My qualitative analysis shows that the narratives of low expectations and unintended consequences meet the second criteria. The narrative of low expectations diffused across parties because it enabled Democrats to impose costs on public schools (teachers and administrators), which are an important part of their political base, without overtly naming and shaming them. Conversely, the narrative of unintended consequences enabled Republicans and some conservatives, like George Bush, to advocate federal intervention even while claiming that the system had failed children. They argued “we should not throw the baby out with the bathwater.” The next section discusses how members of Congress combined the language used by New Democrats and George Bush under the meta-narrative of the mediocre status quo.

*Constructing the Mediocre Status Quo*

Political scientist, Hugh Heclo (1974, 305-06) argues that political elites and intellectuals “power” as well as “puzzle.” He writes:

Politics finds its sources not only in power but also in uncertainty--men collectively wondering what to do...Governments not only ‘power’...they also puzzle. Policy-making is a form of collective puzzlement on society’s behalf... Much political interaction has constituted a process of social learning expressed through policy.

The debates on NCLB clearly show that George Bush and members of Congress engaged in “collective puzzling.” My analysis further indicates, however, that, by the time both houses of Congress debated the Conference Report, this collective puzzling had led to “policy learning.” By that, I mean that the diverse narratives told by Democrats and
Republicans were increasingly consolidated under what I am calling the narrative of the mediocre status quo. This meta-narrative drew on the common frame created by *A Nation at Risk* to challenge the equity regime, but also incorporated the narratives of unintended consequences and low expectations. Meanwhile, it (largely) reduced liberal and conservative arguments to “non-stories.”

The narrative of the mediocre status quo told a story about student apathy caused by poor quality schools and teaching versus a lack of resources or the inequitable distribution of resources. In consequence, money (alone) is not enough. Reform is also needed. The common solution was flexibility, combined with accountability and choice.

For instance, New Democrat Senator Bayh (D-IN) exclaimed:

> this is another step in America’s long journey…(It) began in the mid to late 1800s with the common school movement…Nearly 100 years later, in the 1960s, in the war on poverty, we realized that the dream of a good education for too many poor children was, instead, merely a cruel illusion… So the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was born. Today we gather to recognize that the status quo is no longer good enough. Too many children, particularly poor children, are still at risk of falling behind, and that the failure is not theirs but ours…(failures of) the system which for too long we have been unwilling to fundamentally change. Today we…make progress toward correcting that cruel inequity…No longer will we tolerate the two-track system which embodied…what the President referred to as the "soft bigotry of low expectations," trapping too many poor children in ghettos of ignorance and, therefore, ghettos of poverty. Today we…reemphasize…that every child can learn and that every child should be given that opportunity (*Congressional Record*, December 17, S13331).

The main advantage of this narrative was that it actually allowed speakers to tell two very different tales about the mediocre status quo. The first was what Stone (1997) calls a “narrative of decline,” and the second is what she characterizes as a “narrative of stymied progress.”

Stories of decline argue that a situation was good (or better). Then, the narrator uses data or examples to show that things have gotten worse. Finally, the story predicts
a crisis if something is not done to reverse the situation (Stone 1997). Similar to *A Nation at Risk*, the narrative of decline in education uses the achievement gap between American students and their international peers, or statistics related to literacy, graduation or college attendance rates, to show that public school performance is declining. It then argues that America will be harmed in a competitive global economy if something is not done to foster excellence in education.\(^{85}\)

Narratives of “stymied progress” are a variant on the narrative of decline, but claim that something intentionally or unintentionally interrupted progress, or argue that the situation was always problematic yet (previously) outside human control or perception. In the case of the ESEA, proponents of education reform did not necessarily agree on what interrupted federal efforts to fulfill the promise of equal educational opportunity. Instead, what united them was the portrayal of NCLB as the latest attempt by the federal government to redress socio-economic inequality in general and civil rights issues specifically.\(^{86}\) As evidence, speakers typically used the achievement gap between poor and minority students and their academic peers, but, similar to the narrative of decline, many simply referenced low achievement or used statistics related to literacy, or rates of high school graduation and college attendance.

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85 For example, Senator Jeffords (I-VT) said: “There is no question that we need to improve our Nation's schools… only 1 in 5…of this country's high school seniors are proficient in math and science, and only 2 in 5 are proficient in reading…(And) performance…declines relative to that of students in other nations as students move through the grades of our school system…(Moreover) almost half of all adults have either dropped out of high school or have not pursued any type of post-secondary education. Last year, we had to again raise the cap on the number of H-1B visas because this Nation is lacking…skilled employees” (*Congressional Record*, December 18, S1336667).

86 The best example of this narrative is Senator Kennedy’s remarks during the debates on the Conference Report (*Congressional Record*, December 17, S13322), but the narrative diffused across parties and houses of Congress. For instance, Congressman Boehner (R-OH) noted: “Robert Kennedy once called the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers, and I quote, “a stain on our national honor.” We cannot let this tragedy continue unchecked. The president's plan refocuses federal education spending back toward its original goal of helping America's disadvantaged students” (House 2001b).
Either way, we can construct a quantitative analysis of the debates on the Conference Report to show policy learning, meaning narrative convergence between the two parties. In Tables 1 and 2, I convert my qualitative analysis of the macro-arguments about the cause of the policy problem and how it should be redressed, respectively, into a quantitative analysis. By macro-arguments, I mean an overall qualitative assessment of an individual speech, including direct statements and how the parts of the speech create a holistic impression. The parts in this case include actual statements, but also metaphors, tone, and so forth.

Table 1. Define Policy Problem: System versus Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative (1)</th>
<th>% of Total Statements</th>
<th>% of Statements Dem</th>
<th>% of Dem State</th>
<th>% of Statements Rep</th>
<th>% of Rep State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Speeches (2)</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Narratives are based on a macro-level qualitative analysis of the speeches made during the debates on the conference report. Then, each speech was analyzed as a whole and put into a category based on the overall story that was being told about the problem with the ESEA (resources or the system).

(2) There were 140 speeches that had “content” (i.e., discussed the legislation in some way rather than only thanking the individuals responsible for NCLB). Some speakers (members of Congress) made more than one speech. Some speeches did not fit well into these categories and were left out of this analysis.

In Table 1 above, the variables are whether the overall story about the policy problem focused on resources, the system or both. We see that Democrats were still more likely to describe the problem in terms of a lack of resources, while Republicans mostly blamed the system. Nevertheless, members from both parties adopted the other’s rhetoric, and some used both parties’ narratives even within the same speech. Table 2 on the next page focuses on whether the speaker advocated resources or reform as the policy solution. Here, we see that Republicans were still far more likely to claim that money is

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87 Source: Congressional Record, December 13th, December 17th and December 18th. For purposes of this analysis, Senator Jeffords (VT) is listed as a Republican, but he became an Independent prior to these specific debates on the Conference Report.
not the answer for raising educational performance. Democrats, on the other hand, were more likely to posit that resources were critical. Even so, the narratives of “money alone is not the answer” and “money and reform are needed” provided common ground. Members from both parties also used the language of “tinkering” to express that money was important. Tinkering enabled members to advocate resources by pushing specific federal programs, such as reading or funding for teacher training, without overtly claiming that “money was the answer.”

Table 2. NCLB Policy Solution: Reform versus Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative (1)</th>
<th>% of Total Statements</th>
<th>% of Statements Dem</th>
<th>% of Dem State</th>
<th>% of Statements Rep</th>
<th>% of Rep State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money is not the answer</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money alone is not the answer</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money and reform</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit: Money is the issue</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit: Money is the issue (tinkering)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Speeches (2)</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Narratives are based on a macro-level qualitative analysis of the speeches made during the debates on the conference report. Then, each speech was analyzed as a whole and put into a category based on the overall story that was being told about the policy solution. These are macro-level themes about the importance of resources and reform versus specific policy recommendations.

(2) There were 140 speeches that had “content” (i.e., discussed the legislation in some way rather than only thanking individuals responsible for NCLB). Some speakers (members of Congress) made more than one speech. Some speeches did not fit well into these categories and were left out of this analysis.

Tables 3 and 4 use the same methodological technique, but focus on narratives about the ESEA. Table 3 explores primary narratives about why the ESEA failed. We see that both parties adopted cultural arguments, including the culture of public schools (low expectations) and the culture of politics (throw money at the problem). Still, Democrats were far more likely to argue that resources caused the problem. This includes the ill effects of too few resources, the inadequate targeting of Title I resources, and an inequitable distribution of resources between schools. Again, “tinkering” was

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88 Source: Congressional Record, December 13\textsuperscript{th}, December 17\textsuperscript{th} and December 18\textsuperscript{th}. For purposes of this analysis, Senator Jeffords (VT) is listed as a Republican, but he became an Independent prior to these specific debates on the Conference Report.
used to express that money was important by advocating programs without discussing resources.

Table 3. Primary Narratives: Why ESEA Fail?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>% of Total Statements</th>
<th>% of Dem State</th>
<th>% of Rep State</th>
<th>% of Dem Statements</th>
<th>% of Rep Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture schools:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low expectations</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture politics:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throw money at the problem</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of money or program</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of money or program (tinkering)</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title I not targeted</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor schools lack resources/program</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Statements (1)</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were 140 “speeches” that had “content” (i.e., discussed the legislation in some way rather than only thanking individuals responsible for NCLB). Some speakers (members of Congress) made more than one speech. The total number of statements does not add up to the number of speeches because some speakers made no statements while others made more than one.

Table 4 on the next page examines the evidence that was used to demonstrate policy failure. By evidence, I mean both statistics and causal dialogue, which includes narratives that discursively link cause and effect. We see that most causal arguments linked policy failure to mediocre public schools versus inadequate resources. This included test score data showing achievement gaps, but also other evidence, such as graduation rates.

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89 Source: Congressional Record, December 13th, December 17th and December 18th. For purposes of this analysis, Senator Jeffords (VT) is listed as a Republican, but he became an Independent prior to these specific debates on the Conference Report.
Table 4. *Causal Evidence that the ESEA Failed*\(^90\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narratives</th>
<th>% of Total Statements</th>
<th>% of Dem State</th>
<th>% of Dem States</th>
<th>% of Rep States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources (1)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement gap (2)</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational outcomes (3)</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social promotion (4)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global performance gap (5)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math and science (6)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading (6)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural/historical (6)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Statements (7)</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) This narrative uses evidence about the distribution of “resources” (money, trained teachers, and so forth) to describe policy failure.
(2) This narrative discusses the achievement gap between disadvantaged children or minorities, and their (non-disadvantaged/white) peers. It mostly involved performance on standardized tests.
(3) This narrative uses educational outcomes, such as graduation rates, to discuss policy failure.
(4) Social promotion is the process of advancing students to the next grade despite poor performance. Some speakers used the language of “meaningless degrees.”
(5) This narrative discusses the achievement gap between American students and their international peers. It mostly involved performance on standardized tests.
(6) These categories either used descriptive (a discussion) or statistical evidence to show that students and/or public schools performed poorly (mediocre status quo) in these areas.
(7) There were 140 “speeches” that had “content” (i.e., discussed the legislation in some way rather than only thanking individuals responsible for NCLB). Some speakers (members of Congress) made more than one speech. The total number of statements does not add up to the number of speeches because some speakers made no statements while others made more than one.

Together, Tables 1-4 show that, by the debates on the Conference Report, very few speakers discussed the inequitable distribution of resources as evidence for why the ESEA had failed to close the achievement gap. Those who used this line of reasoning were all Democrats. In terms of causal evidence, Table 4 indicates that the vast majority focused on educational outcomes, including the achievement gap but also performance in specific areas, such as math, science, and reading. Very few focused on history or other subject areas. Although members of both parties discussed social promotion and meaningless degrees as evidence of policy failure, this was a minor narrative.

Summing up, my qualitative and quantitative analysis shows there was a rhetorical convergence in terms of the cause of the problem, but only in terms of macro-

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\(^{90}\) Source: *Congressional Record*, December 13\(^{th}\), December 17\(^{th}\) and December 18\(^{th}\). For purposes of this analysis, Senator Jeffords (VT) is listed as a Republican, but he became an Independent prior to these specific debates on the Conference Report.
level arguments. Republicans were still more likely to explicitly or implicitly blame bureaucratic red tape, federal mandates, public schools and teachers. Democrats, on the other hand, stressed inadequate resources. When Democrats adopted the narrative of low expectations, it was symbolic, meaning they typically did not clarify who was included in “the failed system.” Conversely, Republicans used the narrative of “good intentions gone bad,” but often combined it with other narratives about “the failed system.” For example, Senator Gregg (R-NH) claimed that legislators agreed:

the laws which we placed on the books 35 years ago to help low-income kids were very well-intentioned, but they had not worked. We have spent $130 billion over that period of time, and yet we see that our low-income children are falling behind…This has not changed… (And) There was a genuine desire…across party lines…philosophical views…geographic areas…to do something…because we all understand that the American dream and the capacity to pursue the American dream is dependent upon education. The engine of the American dream is the public school system. Regrettably, for the low-income child, that public school system is not firing on all cylinders…Equally important…the failure to educate generation after generation of low-income children, especially children from minority backgrounds, was dividing our country. We were balkanizing ourselves based on education and the failure of…certain large cultural segments of our population, to be economically…or socially successful, and who were finding themselves isolated within our culture. That is not constructive to a nation…As we become larger…and more diverse, we must transcend our diversity in a positive way through educating people and making sure everyone has an equal shot at the American opportunity through quality education (*Congressional Record*, December 17, S13326-27).

Senator Gregg’s speech demonstrates how member of Congress used policy learning over the course of a long and protracted debate on NCLB to reconstruct what had been very diverse narratives into a new whole. My analysis suggests that the reason for doing so was to appeal to one another and to mobilize support for their “preferred” policy solutions, while still being true to their core ideological and ideational beliefs. In this case, preferred denotes what they thought was possible versus what they would have demanded if they had a clear majority for their positions. In this narrative, for example,
Senator Gregg has not abandoned his ideological position. This is primarily a narrative about the pathologies of public goods. Here, he links public education, rather than the nation’s socio-economic system or historical social injustices, to the balkanization of the nation. He is also blaming minorities for their own isolation by linking “certain large cultural segments” with the failure to be educationally, economically or socially successful.

In terms of the preferred policy solution, in the next section, I show how the narrative of the mediocre status quo was also critical because it pointed to a common solution, which political elites were able to discursively frame in very different ways. This policy solution allowed both parties to claim political credit even as it enabled them to appear like they had not abandoned their political views and constituencies.

**Constructing Policy Solutions**

Stone (1997) contends that five values dominate the language of policy discourse: equity, efficiency, security, liberty and community. By that, she means that each is commonly used to justify government action or inaction, as well as assess government programs. Meanwhile, each is associated with “taken for granted” meanings that are actually subject to diverse interpretations. This ambiguity provides entrepreneurs with tactical opportunities to transform heated political struggles into collective action by uniting people around taken for granted language. Behn’s (2001) analysis suggests that accountability, as a political concept, works in a similar manner. Inter-subjectively, democratic accountability means that government is responsible to the citizens it serves, but cognitively it is linked to other values, such as fairness, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness. This makes accountability tough to argue against. First, each of these
concepts is subject to individual interpretation. Second, those who argue against accountability appear to oppose democracy, or the need to minimize waste, fraud, discrimination or abuse in government. My analysis suggests that all of these tactics were used during the debates on NCLB.

During the summer of 2001, the legislation came under fire from all sides. The delayed reaction related to the fact that interest groups had (largely) been left out of early discussions on the bill but, once both houses adopted their own versions, realized Congress was serious about adopting accountability reforms. Then, it was reported that the adequate yearly progress (AYP) provisions would result in large numbers of schools being identified as failing. These findings renewed arguments on the left and right that the policy was too punitive and vastly expanded the reach of the federal government. Even George Bush began backing away from rigorous accountability requirements (Bumiller 2002; Sack 2001; Schemo 2001). My analysis shows that proponents of NCLB used another discursive innovation to mediate these concerns. This innovation, which was a medical or clinical narrative about the need to diagnose and treat problem areas, enabled a bipartisan political coalition to define accountability in quite different ways, even as it united them around the argument that accountability would foster efficiency and effectiveness in public education. This section uses a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the debates on NCLB to show how accountability as a political concept was defined quite differently. I then show how the clinical language of “diagnostic testing” united political elites. Meanwhile, it too was subject to the same diverse constructions.
The Narrative of “Tough Love” (Personal Responsibility)

The primary way accountability masked differences within overall taken for granted meanings was that, as a prescriptive remedy, it actually incorporated two very different policy tools. One policy tool involves using testing and public reporting requirements (i.e., naming and shaming). The other uses competition for public resources. Both of these are designed to improve performance. Naming and shaming, however, directly encourages teachers and administrators to alter their behaviors in order to avoid being stigmatized, and their schools reconstituted or taken over. “Choice,” on the other hand, works through third parties. It only works if parents whose children attend “failing schools” seek supplemental services, or transfer their children to other public and public charter schools within the district. Then, public schools are pressured to improve in order to stop the flow of resources to outside providers.

My analysis shows that this complexity enabled legislators to evade those aspects of the legislation that they did not support while emphasizing those they agreed with. Democrats, for example, argued that accountability was needed in order to expose problem areas, and then provide needed resources for remediation, so that all children had an equitable opportunity to learn. Republicans, on the other hand, stressed that state and local governments were being provided with more flexibility in return for producing results. Many Republicans combined this narrative with parental choice to show how NCLB provided more freedom in return for accountability. Either way, the hero in this narrative is Congress, who is coming to the aid of children, society, and state and local governments by fostering efficiency and effectiveness in public education. Others simply used the phrase “improved accountability” because it has a positive construction
in American political culture. This enabled members to appear like they were agreeing, even when they were telling radically different stories.

This discussion is not suggesting that all members of Congress framed accountability as a benign policy tool. Some members explicitly portrayed accountability as “the stick,” or a punishment for “failing schools.” However, these narratives posed problems for both Democrats and Republicans. Democrats were vulnerable to liberals defecting because accountability as a policy tool disproportionately punishes schools that serve large numbers of disadvantaged children. Meanwhile, public schools, teachers and administrators are also an important source of support for the party. Republicans were vulnerable to conservative arguments that flexibility is a façade given the onerous new testing and reporting requirements. Just as problematically, the charge that testing disproportionately harms schools that serve disadvantaged children impacted their ability to pose as compassionate conservatives, which as Hess and McGuinn (2002) show, was part of their strategy for closing the credibility gap in education.

Unsurprisingly, then, most legislators did not stress the punitive nature of accountability. Instead, what we see emerge over the course of the debates is the narrative of tough love. In its most benign form, this narrative argued that we should provide state and local governments with more resources and flexibility in return for demanding results. As Senator Carper (D-DE) said:

Sometimes on our side of the aisle we are viewed as just wanting to throw money at every problem. We are all love. Sometimes those on the other side of the aisle are viewed as just being tough, as not willing to provide the resources that are needed in a loving way. The beauty of this legislation…is that it takes the toughness and it mixes it with a measure of love…greater funding and greater flexibility in exchange for greater accountability for results (Congressional Record, December 17, S13337).
This narrative was often combined with the language of “keeping score.” The idea was that testing would help schools and teachers do their jobs better by providing them with information about performance so that they would know which areas were in need of improvement. For example, Rod Paige said “If you want to win the football game, you have to first keep score” (“Remarks before the American Council on Education”). This analogy diffused across parties.\(^9\)

In its less benign form, the narrative of tough love tells a story about “personal responsibility.” Here, public schools (administrators and teachers) had abdicated their moral responsibility and therefore deserved punishment. As Congressman Castle (R-DE) stated:

> Let me state unequivocally that any effort to strike or weaken the test provisions of the H.R. 1 would play into the hands of the keepers of the status quo, effectively preserving a failed system that does not ask if children are learning… H.R. 1…seeks to address the current lack of accountability for education failure…(it) recognizes that some schools, by virtue of mismanagement or chronic neglect, have not only failed to increase student achievement but have actually retarded educational progress. For these schools, we require a substantial restructuring \((Congressional Record, May 22, H2407)\).

Congressman Castle is a Republican, but Democrats also used this narrative. So, conservative Democratic Senator Landrieu (D-LA) exclaimed: “We say if you are going to run a school, run it right. If not, we are going to reconstitute it so that every child has a chance” \((Congressional Record, December 18, S13373)\). Senator Carper (D-DE), on the other hand, linked the narrative to the military campaign in Afghanistan where Congress demanded accountability for results in return for more funding and flexibility. Similarly, NCLB said:

\(^9\) For instance, Senator Carper (D-DE) exclaimed: “One of our sports heroes…Vince Lombardi…used to say about football: Unless you are keeping score, you are just practicing” \((Congressional Record, December 17, S13337)\).
We will not throw good money after bad. We want results. There will be consequences for those schools that do well and consequences for those that do not. That is the basic compact at the heart of this legislation_greater funding and greater flexibility in exchange for greater accountability for results. Beyond this, we have added measures to target federal dollars where the need is the greatest…We have also included report cards for parents…(to) give them the information they need to assess the performance of the schools their children attend…(and) empower parents to make choices for their children…we want to bring market forces to bear, competition to bear, within our public schools. 
*(Congressional Record, December 17, S13336)*

Here, tough love involves using public information and market forces (competition) to spur public schools to improve. Although this discursive innovation helped many members in Congress portray accountability in benign ways, it is clear that Congress collectively struggled to socially construct the purpose of testing in positive ways. By the time Congress debated the Conference Report, however, we see policy learning in the narrative of diagnostic testing.

**The Narrative of Diagnostic Testing**

During the House hearings on NCLB, Congressman Ted Strickland (D-OH), a psychologist by training, claimed that the purpose of testing was “diagnostic” and “prescriptive.” It should be used “to determine what learning impediments might exist” and prescribe “what methods might be best to help a particular student learn better.” Nevertheless, he was using these ideas to discuss why testing should not be used as “a measure of accountability or a factor in decisions about how much money a school district wins as a bonus or loses as a sanction.” He begins by describing how high stakes testing had resulted in widespread issues in Ohio, where:

teachers and students spend weeks…cramming in test-taking strategies in specific subject matter they believe are most likely to be covered on the test. Pressure to perform on the test has been so great on students and teachers that there have been scattered reports in Ohio of organized cheating and test tampering. In several Ohio school districts, breakfast is served to every student during the week of the
test and only during the week of the test. I think that tells us...We already know what works...we aren't willing to fund it.

He then explained how test scores reflected much “more than the quality of education being provided by the school and the teacher.” For instance, they reflect “socioeconomic status, parental involvement, the educational background of the parents, and the level of economic investment in the student.” He concluded by proposing other programs that would improve educational performance, such as providing school breakfast and smaller class sizes, and excoriating Congress for punishing schools through monetary sanctions while failing to provide them with the resources they need to promote more equitable educational opportunities. He further admonished those legislators who supported imposing “life-altering decisions on a child as a result of a test,” saying he hoped they would be willing to submit to a test and have their “scores published in the local newspaper” (U.S. House 2001c).

Despite his impassioned opposition, during the debates on the Conference Report, his arguments were co-opted by both parties in ways that supported testing as a non-punitive accountability tool. Even then, however, members used the term diagnostic testing quite differently. Again, we can use a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis to show how accountability in general and diagnostic testing specifically were constructed during the debates. Tables 5 and 6 both show how members of Congress constructed accountability. Table 5 focuses on accountability in general while Table 6 examines those speeches where members explicitly used some variation of the words diagnose and treat. Both charts show that members advocated holding all levels of government accountable. Still, testing (diagnostic or otherwise) was largely perceived as a way to hold schools, administrators and teachers accountable.
Table 5. Accountability Tales: The Purposes of Testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Group, Narrative and Valence</th>
<th>% of Total State</th>
<th>% of State Dem</th>
<th>% of State Rep</th>
<th>% of Rep State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Levels of Government: Valence Negative (1)</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathologies of Testing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Levels of Government: Valence Positive (1) (2)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic Testing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Governments: Valence Negative</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Held accountable for setting and enforcing high standards, including improving the focus of teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public schools: Valence negative</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to be accountable for the use of federal money</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to be held accountable for improving performance, including student achievement and/or closing the achievement gap</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need “external” incentives or pressure to improve school performance, including “exposure,” or public reporting of test scores, and choice</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td></td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need consequences when they fail to perform, including exposure and/or punishment for “bad apples”</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td></td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to stop “masking” (i.e., hiding poorly performing subgroups within overall performance averages) or ignoring disadvantaged and poorly performing subgroups</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers/Administrators: Valence mixed (3)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children: Valence positive but mixed for schools (4)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents: Valence positive but mixed for schools (4)</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Statements (5)</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Event (6)</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Narratives about “diagnostic testing” were applied to all levels of government, but were most often used at the federal and state levels. Meanwhile, concerns regarding the pathologies of testing tended to be directed toward schools and teachers.

(2) Testing to provide a ruler, gage or to measure; testing to diagnose and treat problems; testing to better target resources or provide technical help.

(3) Need information about their students in order to provide help or improve their teaching.

(4) Need information to ensure children receive help, are not left behind, do not fall through the cracks, or receive a quality education.

(5) There were 140 “speeches” that had “content” (i.e., discussed the legislation in some way rather than only thanking individuals responsible for NCLB). Some speakers (members of Congress) made more than one speech. The total number of statements does not equal the number of speeches or speakers because some members made no statements (a non-event) while others made more than one.

(6) A non-event is a non-statement. Some speakers did not tell a narrative about accountability. This counts as a single non-event.

In Table 5, for example, close to a third of the narratives portrayed testing as a tool to hold state and local governments accountable. Even so, these tales were mostly about the need to hold public schools (teachers and administrators) accountable. Even when states were the target group, the narratives largely focused on holding states accountable for setting and enforcing high standards. This involved holding schools

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92 Source: Congressional Record, December 13th, December 17th and December 18th. For purposes of this analysis, Senator Jeffords (VT) is listed as a Republican, but he became an Independent prior to these specific debates on the Conference Report.

93 Determinations of valence are based on a qualitative assessment of the narratives.
accountable for the use of federal money (or else they might misappropriate it) and for improving performance (or else they might pursue their own interests at the expense of parents, children, and society).

Meanwhile, the vast majority of narratives explicitly or implicitly portrayed public schools as needing external incentives or externally imposed consequences in order to “do right by the kids.” This included exposing “bad apples” and exposing “bad apples” to competition. These latter narratives portrayed public schools, and by association teachers and administrators, as deviant. Some argued, for instance, that schools were being required to report test results by subgroup to prevent them from “masking,” or hiding the poor performance of disadvantaged groups within overall test scores. Similarly, testing was often portrayed as a way to empower parents as “system changers” or to help beleaguered parents and children. Both of these narratives portrayed testing as part of an “information regime.” The former advocated parents as “eyes on the street” to ensure schools “did right by the kids.” The latter helped parents ensure their children were not “trapped in failing schools.” Either way, the valence was positive for parents and children, but negative for public schools.

Like Table 5, Table 6 indicates that testing was largely portrayed in ways that were punitive rather than therapeutic. By that, I mean testing (diagnostic or otherwise) was constructed as a tool to hold schools, administrators and teachers accountable, not as a means of providing remediation to students. It also was portrayed as a tool to help teachers and administers do their jobs better. The valence of this narrative depended on how it was being used. When combined with the description of testing as a diagnostic tool, it carried a positive valence. Here, testing provided teachers with a gage to measure
student performance, and then diagnose and treat any deficiencies. When linked to narratives that portrayed teachers and administrators as beleaguered, or in need of state assistance to perform their jobs, the valence was mixed and sometimes quite negative. When combined with language about “masking failure” among poor and minority students within overall test scores, or the need to have external pressure to do right by the kids, then the valance was wholly negative.

Table 6. *Congressional Narratives: “Diagnostic Testing”*[^94]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Testing Narratives Linked to Target Groups</th>
<th>% of Total State</th>
<th>% of State Dem</th>
<th>% of Dem State</th>
<th>% of State Rep</th>
<th>% of Rep State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Federal government:</strong> Serve as a ruler, gage or measure</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Federal and state governments:</strong> Better target resources or provide technical help</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State governments:</strong> Held accountable for setting and enforcing high standards, including improving the focus of teaching</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public schools:</strong> Held accountable for the use of federal money</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide “external” incentives or pressure to improve school performance, including “exposure,” or public reporting of test scores</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide consequences when they fail to perform, including exposure and/or punishment for “bad apples”</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stopped from “masking” (i.e., hiding poorly performing subgroups within overall performance averages) or ignoring disadvantaged and poorly performing subgroups</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers/Administrators:</strong> Provided with information about their students in order to offer help or improve their teaching</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children:</strong> Identified to ensure they receive help, are not left behind, do not fall through the cracks, or receive a quality education</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents:</strong> Provided with information about their children and their children’s schools so they can secure outside help</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Statements</strong> (1)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[^94]: Source: *Congressional Record*, December 13th, December 17th and December 18th.

Qualitatively, however, my analysis suggests that the term diagnostic testing enabled many legislators to symbolically mask the punitive nature of accountability.

This was especially true for Democrats, who described the need to identify struggling schools and students in order to provide resources and ameliorate the issues. Many also
mentioned that it helped parents “diagnose” whether their child was struggling in order to
get help individually or make choices where to send their child to school. As
Congressman Davis (D-FL) described it:

the principal purpose of testing should be diagnostic…to help teachers teach and
students learn…Testing should determine where my child is at the beginning of
the school year and what he needs to work on to get where he should be at the end
of that school year. Testing should tell my child, his teacher, my wife and me
what we need to know to help him improve as a student.

He then elaborated on how testing had been abused in Florida. First, state tests were used
to “grade…schools and implement high stakes penalties or rewards” rather than “see
where… students need help to boost their performance.” Second, teachers, principals,
parents and students did not get information from the tests to identify where they needed
help and how they might improve. He argued that diagnostic testing would redress these
issues (Congressional Record, December 13, H10090 and H10101).

In this discussion, I am not claiming that no one discussed issues with testing.
Certainly members expressed concern early on in the debates. When doing so,
Democrats were more likely to discuss the pathologies of testing while conservatives
were more likely to discuss the pathologies of federal control. Nevertheless, in both
cases, these narratives were often used to express opposition to “accountability” without
naming it. Even then, however, many of the narratives were actually negative tales about
the behaviors of public schools and public servants. Some focused on the behaviors of
teachers and administrators under existing state-level accountability regimes. This
included “teaching to the test” or narrowing the curriculum by teaching only tested
content or subjects. Others focused on outright cheating.
The main point of this discussion is that the negative repercussions of testing were largely silenced by the time Congress debated the Conference Report. Moreover, when members discussed issues with testing, they still often argued in favor of it. For instance, Congressman Castle (R-DE) acknowledged that testing put pressure on children to perform. He then argues it was critical if we were to narrow the “stubbornly persistent achievement gap between all students” (Congressional Record, May 22, H2527).

Expressing concern and then arguing in favor of something is a discursive strategy, and often indicates that something is going on beneath the surface. This is also true when we see silences in the discourse. Both tactics may indicate, for example, that the speaker supports or opposes something, but does not wish to say so because it is controversial with constituents or within their party’s base. It may also mean that he or she is supporting or opposing something only because of a necessary political compromise. As shown in Table 5 earlier in this section, Democrats were more likely to tell no narrative about testing (i.e., testing was a non-event), but a third of Republicans did the same.

In sum, the narrative of diagnostic testing united Democrats and Republicans even though there was considerable disagreement about what this meant. In general, though, the narrative of diagnostic testing framed test scores as a form of clinical authority. Stone (1993) defines “clinical reason” as a form of political authority that looks for problems within individuals versus social structures. It uses “imaging techniques,” both literally and figuratively, to render “hidden” individual characteristics visible, including, for example, police tests of blood alcohol levels or school exams that test student competencies. Problem areas are then identified through comparisons with statistical norms, with deviations from “statistical normality” typically portrayed as “pathological.” Stone argues that clinical
reason has become the dominant mode of exercising social control and political “gatekeeping” because it appears to provide an independent source of knowledge. Meanwhile, it has become an “attractive escape” for societal gatekeepers and other arbiters of disputes for two reasons. First, it confers legitimacy on political and social actors by appearing to insulate their decisions from overt, covert, or unintentional manipulation by individuals. Second, it defuses “intense political conflict” because it appears to be non-political and objective.

Similarly, the narratives suggest that Congress used clinical language to increase the legitimacy of testing as a tool of accountability. Again, we can support these ideas through a quantitative analysis of the congressional debates on the Conference Report. Table 7 on the next page examines what metaphors were used during the debates. Clinical metaphors, such as “diagnose and treat,” dominated the debates followed closely by business metaphors, such as “the bottom line” and “education as an investment.” In the case of NCLB, tests were constructed as a “neutral” means of evaluating schools, administrators, teachers and students. Largely left unacknowledged were the ways that assessment regimes overtly and implicitly codify knowledge, skills, and behaviors that are unevenly distributed across social classes and social groups. In consequence, testing institutionalizes the effects of class, race, ethnicity, and gender on the performance of children, and therefore the performance of teachers. The last section of this chapter discusses the lessons from this analysis about how narratives helped construct political change.
Table 7. NCLB Metaphors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>% of Total Statements</th>
<th>% of Statements Dem</th>
<th>% of Dem State</th>
<th>% of Statements Rep</th>
<th>% of Rep State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety valve (1)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical/Clinical (2)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business (3)</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitive (4)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical/Rationalist (5)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological (6)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art/Craft (7)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War (8)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Statements (9)</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Children (and parents) are trapped in failing schools and need a safety valve (choice).
(2) We can diagnose and treat educational problems.
(3) Education is an investment (versus a journey); the need for incentives and to focus on the “bottom line”; and the use of market metaphors.
(4) The need for “tough love,” to look at the “cold hard truths,” to “keep score,” and foster personal responsibility.
(5) Metrics or the need to measure; machine metaphors (e.g., “the engine of the American dream” and “the whole is better than the moving parts”); and, tools and building blocks.
(6) Fragile, complex systems need vigilance and care.
(7) Developing human beings and education as a journey.
(8) Balkanization into two hostile Americas; September 11th and the War on Terror; and battles needing to be fought and won.
(9) There were 140 “speeches” that had “content” (i.e., discussed the legislation in some way rather than only thanking individuals responsible for NCLB). Some speakers (members of Congress) made more than one speech. The total number of statements does not add up to the number of speeches because some speakers made no statements about a target (a non-event) while others made more than one.

Discussion: Institutions, Narratives and Political Change

Stone (1997) argues that political elites use ideas, values, and discourse, not just institutions, to achieve their favored political outcomes. When combined with chapter three, this chapter shows that ideas, values, and discourse helped shape political outcomes in four ways:

- First, they were used to delegitimize existing institutions (the ESEA) and justify new ones (NCLB). This supports Stone’s (1997) argument that political elites need to construct a new narrative in order to sell a new policy solution or contest an existing one.

95 Source: Congressional Record, December 13th, December 17th and December 18th. For purposes of this analysis, Senator Jeffords (VT) is listed as a Republican, but he became an Independent prior to these specific debates on the Conference Report.
• Second, they were used to evoke emotional responses and thereby sell favored political solutions. Here, the research supports Stone’s (1997) contention that political elites use evocative language to delimit critical responses. In this fashion, they obscure larger issues, minimize conflict and achieve change.

• Third, they reconstituted how political actors perceived their interests. Earlier, I referred to this process as policy learning. In this case, I am arguing that policy learning is discursive, not just institutional. Over the course of a long and protracted debate, political actors adopted one another’s language, as well as their preferred policy tools. Even so, the research suggests that political elites remained true to their broader values and ideologies. Some members clearly did alter previously held positions, but most reframed the problem and solution in ways that would build coalitions, even as they adapted the language to fit their previously held positions on the cause of the problem and the appropriate role of the federal government in redressing it. This suggests that policy learning was strategic more than ideological.

• Fourth, ideas made collective action possible by reducing uncertainty. For the most part, uncertainty was reduced as members collectively puzzled over how to redress their concerns while framing policy change in ways that did not harm them politically.

This section illustrates all four of these findings through the narratives of the mediocre status quo, diagnostic testing and low expectations.

As just mentioned, Stone (1997) argues that political elites need to construct a new narrative in order to sell a policy solution or contest an existing one. Often, political elites use language that will evoke emotional versus critical responses in order to obscure larger issues and achieve change. The perfect example is *A Nation at Risk*, where evocative language was used to demonstrate the need for federal action in education. By linking education to national defense and declining economic competitiveness, political elites created a widespread crisis that required a national response. In the meantime, they obscured questions about whether academic achievement is even linked to economic productivity, and whether our system of education could or should be run like a business, with its focus on efficiency and effectiveness, as opposed to a human service, with its focus on autonomy, participation, and other social values. Similarly, legislators obscured
the punitive nature of accountability through the narrative of “diagnostic testing.” This narrative described test scores as a “neutral” means of rating and ranking teachers, students and schools, thereby justifying the use of test scores for diagnosing and treating problems areas, and punishing “repeat offenders” (i.e., schools that are labeled in need of improvement). When combined with the narratives of the mediocre status quo and low expectations, the narrative of diagnostic testing converted socio-economic inequality into a non-story, and thereby assigned blame for educational failure to individual schools, teachers, and students. These ideas were a necessary precursor for contesting the equity regime and selling an accountability regime in education.

The link between education and global economic performance proved to be a successful frame for challenging the equity regime for three reasons. First, by implying that public education as a whole was in a crisis, political elites expanded the conflict, or mobilized previously apathetic groups, and put those who supported the equity regime on the offensive. Second, it did so in a way that enabled proponents to claim they supported educational equity. Specifically, they argued that accountability would “raise all boats” by closing the achievement gap. Third, accountability as a political tool was difficult to argue against. As previously mentioned, it is an elastic concept, meaning it is linked to broader democratic values that are interpreted quite differently. Meanwhile, opponents could not falsify the claim that standards, tests, public information and choice would improve performance because they had not been adequately tested. Just as importantly, there was broad agreement that federal funding had not produced results. As such, those who advocated increased funding or opposed accountability appeared to favor “mediocrity” and wasteful federal spending.
In short, the language of accountability could be used to both delegitimize the ESEA and justify its replacement. It worked because it provided a common vocabulary that could actually be interpreted in very different ways depending on the speaker and the audience. For example, some (mostly Democrats) combined the language of accountability with diagnostic testing in order to justify more resources. This narrative stressed “freedom to,” or the ways that federal funding would help public schools improve the performance of their most vulnerable students. Others, (mostly Republicans) combined the language of accountability with flexibility for state and local governments, and choice for parents, to stress freedom from government. Thus, neither abandoned their political ideologies even as they used the same language. In this manner, accountability made coalition building possible.

I would further suggest, however, that the narratives of the mediocre status quo, diagnostic testing, and low expectations also changed how political actors perceived their interests by helping them address political uncertainties. First, they portrayed the benefits of NCLB as diffuse and the costs as being borne by the (unworthy or immoral) mediocre few. In the process, political elites silenced those who opposed testing and/or the increased privatization of public education by linking them to the mediocre status quo, which was portrayed as harmful to children and society. Second, they united disparate interests around the solution of more flexibility and federal resources (equal opportunity) in return for increased accountability (personal responsibility). As values, equal opportunity and personal responsibility resonate within the broader American political culture. They also helped Democrats and Republicans to redress electoral weaknesses. As just mentioned, Democrats linked diagnostic testing to the need for more resources for
remediation, but then used the language of accountability to avoid being labeled “liberal spenders.” Republicans, on the other hand, linked diagnostic testing with Neo-liberal discourse in order to justify choice. This discourse framed individual schools and teachers as expendable if they failed to meet market expectations. However, their claim that accountability would (mostly) help disadvantaged children and minorities, while punishing the immoral few, enabled them to pose as compassionate conservatives. Just as importantly, neither side needed to abandon their primary narrative about the policy problem in order to support the same solution (i.e., the narratives of failed government, low expectations, good intentions gone bad, and failed promises). Consequently, both parties could claim political credit for NCLB without appearing to have abandoned their political views and constituencies.

Finally, like A Nation at Risk, the mediocre status quo was accompanied by compelling images that evoked emotional more than cognitive responses. The idea that our nation was falling behind in a competitive global economic race due to mediocre public schools was evocative in its own right, but especially after the terrorist attacks of September 11th. This claim is evidenced by the fact that legislators from both parties linked the terrorist attacks to NCLB and used this discursive connection to justify their support for NCLB. For example, Senator McCain (R-NM) said:

Unfortunately, we can no longer take for granted that our children are learning to master even the most basic skill of reading. A recent survey reported that less than one-third of fourth-graders in America are "proficient readers." In fact, 40 million Americans cannot fill out a job application or read a menu in a restaurant much less a computer menu. In this high-tech information age, these Americans will be lost…In addition, American children lack basic knowledge of their Nation's cultural and historical traditions…and had no understanding of the aims of American foreign policy…Since the tragic events of September 11, the American people, especially our young citizens, have demonstrated through their courage and generosity that they are prepared to meet the challenges that face our Nation.
But we must help them in their quest for knowledge and instruction. We must work to ensure that our students do not continue down the path of cultural illiteracy and educational under-performance (*Congressional Record*, December 18, S13385).

Here, it is patriotic to help young Americans in their quest for knowledge, but we need to be vigilant in ensuring federal funds reach the “front lines” (local public schools) rather than “being lost in a (federal) bureaucratic black hole.” Thus, he has not abandoned conservative views even as he supports an increased federal role in education.

Bush, Paige and members of Congress also clearly used the events of September 11th to put pressure on their colleagues. This involved encouraging them to support NCLB, silencing those who opposed an expanded federal role in education, and embarrassing those who proposed more extreme, or partisan, measures of reform. We see these ideas in the following quote from Senator Kennedy (D-MA):

> our objective…is to make sure these tests are not punitive, they should be used to find out what a child knows…(to) ensure that every child…receives a good education. But they won't work alone… Accountability is only the measure of reform, it is not reform itself. We must provide the necessary support and resources to see that schools can achieve their goals…We are setting high standards for children…for schools, and…for parents. We ought to set high standards for the Congress to make sure we give the resources so these programs will work, and we ought to set the standards for the States to make sure they are going to meet their responsibility…They are the ones that provide the principal resources for the children…We know and we saw once again from the tragic circumstances of September 11, Americans do their best when they are challenged. That was certainly true of those at the time and place of the disaster in New York and at the Pentagon and the field in Pennsylvania, the individuals who performed with such extraordinary bravery and heroism, and how our service men and women are performing today. Americans respond best to challenges. That is the essence of this legislation, high standards and support (*Congressional Record*, December 17, S13324).

In this quote, he pits “moral Americans,” who did their best when challenged by “the tragic circumstances of September 11,” against those who “lack high standards.” The latter included those who claimed the reforms were too tough or punitive, or who worked
to subvert or undermine education reform. It also included those who opposed giving schools more resources. In this way, he advocates holding the president, members of Congress, and state governments accountable if they undermine an equal opportunity to learn by failing to provide enough resources.

In short, both parties used the events of September 11th to symbolically construct the need for change by evoking emotions among political elites and constituents. Sometimes this was done through the use of war metaphors. This included, for example, the “battle for literacy” and claims that parents needed to be “armed with data…options and choice.” These claims are evidenced by Table 7 in the previous section, where war metaphors are a close fourth behind medical, business, and machine metaphors. Other times, it was achieved through the language of “bipartisanship.” The discourse suggests that political elites believed Americans wanted their government to work across party lines to redress the nation’s domestic and foreign policy problems. Thus “bipartisanship” served both as a tool for shaming those who did not toe the line and reminding others that it was against their political interests to oppose “bipartisan” legislation like NCLB.

Even so, the debates suggest that policy convergence was not ideological. Liberals were still more interested in the level of resources and conservatives continued to favor localism over federal control. Moreover, the vast majority of Democrats refused to authorize private school vouchers, and many Republicans advocated using market forces to improve public education and save taxpayer dollars. Republicans also

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96 Although written before 9/11, George Bush stated in his Blueprint that “Systems are often resistant to change – no matter how good the intentions of those who lead them. Competition can be the stimulus a bureaucracy needs in order to change. For that reason, the Administration seeks to increase parental options and influence. Parents, armed with data, are the best force of accountability in education. And parents, armed with options and choice, can assure that their children get the best, most effective education possible” (House 2001a, 18).
(generally) opposed funding for salary increases or class-size reductions unless they were block-granted. Democrats, on the other hand, clearly supported both of these initiatives and only supported their inclusion in a block grant as part of a political compromise. Just as importantly, Democrats and Republicans continued to tell different narratives of opposition. Again, we can use a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis on the debates on the Conference Report to analyze these differences.

Table 8 on the next page displays the narratives of opposition told by those who did not vote for NCLB. The table shows that Democratic opponents expressed three main concerns with NCLB. First, they argued that the federal government was not fulfilling its promise. This narrative largely claimed that NCLB was setting schools up for failure due to a lack of resources. Second, they contended that the “cure was worse than the disease.” This narrative included a variety of villains but, for the most part, focused on the fact that it was an unfunded mandate that would do more harm than good. Third, they talked about the pathologies of testing, which I discussed earlier in this chapter. Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI) combined these narratives saying:

I strongly support maintaining local control over decisions affecting our children's day-to-day classroom experiences. The Federal Government has an important role to play…Every child…has the right to a free public education. Every child. That is an awesome responsibility, and one that should not…be shouldered by local communities alone. The States and the Federal Government are partners…(but) I remain opposed to the new federally-mandated annual tests in grades 3-8. I am concerned that adding another layer of testing could result in a generation of students who know how to take tests, but who don't have the skills necessary to become successful adults…I fear that this new annual testing requirement will disproportionately affect disadvantaged students.

He then discussed how the Conference Report stripped the “Senate provision that would have guaranteed full funding of…IDEA” (education funds for disabled children). When combined with the new testing mandates, he was concerned that federal actions would
stretch “local education budgets to the breaking point” (Congressional Record, December 18, S13381-82).

Table 8. **NCLB: Narratives of Opposition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narratives (1)</th>
<th>% of Total Statements</th>
<th>% of Statements Dem</th>
<th>% of Dem State</th>
<th>% of Statements Rep</th>
<th>% of Rep State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal government has not fulfilled its promises (2)</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cure worse than disease: unfunded mandate, slippery slope (3)</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCLB will not fix the problem: More of same: throw money, mediocrity, pathologies of federalism (4)</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathologies of testing (5)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Statements (6)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) These are narratives told by dissenters. Other members of Congress used some of these narratives but voted for NCLB anyways.

(2) This narrative argues that NCLB is setting up schools for failure because (like the ESEA and IDEA) it does not fulfill federal promises.

(3) This narrative includes a variety of villains, but Democrats mostly claimed NCLB is an unfunded mandate and Republicans that it will create a “slippery slope” for more federal involvement in the future.

(4) This narrative claims that NCLB, like the ESEA, throws money at the problem, and will foster mediocrity due to the pathologies of federalism. One sub-narrative claimed that NCLB will not fix the problem because “systems are resistant to change” unless they are put under pressure from competition (i.e., the private sector). NCLB, on the other hand, only allowed public school choice, including public charter schools.

(5) This narrative describes the pathologies of testing and goes along with the “cure is worse than the disease” narrative.

(6) This total is larger than the total number of those who spoke out against NCLB during the debate on the Conference Report. Some dissenters used more than one narrative.

Republicans told similar narratives, but were more likely to frame NCLB as “more of the same,” meaning, just like the ESEA, it would not fix the problem. First, it continued to “throw money at schools” without real reform, such as school choice.

Second, it would foster inefficiency and ineffectiveness as a result of federal mandates and bureaucratic red tape (pathologies of bureaucracy). Third, it was an unconstitutional mandate (pathologies of federalism). For example, Congressman Ron Paul (R-TX) said it was time:

> Congress stopped trying to circumvent the constitutional limitations on its authority by using the people’s own money to bribe them into complying with unconstitutional federal dictates…(this bill) will lead to de facto, if not de jure, national testing. National testing will inevitably lead to a national curriculum as

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97 Source: Congressional Record, December 13th, December 17th and December 18th. For purposes of this analysis, Senator Jeffords (VT) is listed as a Republican, but he became an Independent prior to these specific debates on the Conference Report.
teachers will teach what their students need to know in order to pass their mandated “assessment.” After all, federal funding depends on how students perform on these tests! Proponents of this approach dismiss these concerns by saying “there is only one way to read and do math.” Well then what are the battles about phonics versus whole language or new math versus old math about? There are continuing disputes about teaching all subjects as well as how to measure mastery of a subject matter. Once federal mandatory testing is in place, however, those arguments will be settled by the beliefs of whatever regime currently holds sway in DC (Congressional Record, May 23, H8872).

He then urged his colleagues to think about “how comfortable they would feel supporting this bill if in five years proponents of fuzzy math and whole language were writing (the tests).” This statement shows how conservatives tried to influence other Republicans by alluding to the possibility of a Democrat in the White House. It was said in response to the public statements of other Republicans, who tried to make Conservatives more comfortable with the legislation by noting that George Bush was in charge of the DOE.

Despite these narratives of resistance, the paucity of arguments in opposition to NCLB, combined with the widespread support it received from both parties, suggests that the legislation was put together into a whole that was difficult to argue against. Even so, actors and institutions were clearly both important in terms of achieving policy change. Certainly, Bush’s decision to depart from the conservative policies of the Reagan era, by embracing federal standards and accountability, opened up ideological and ideational space for reform-minded members of Congress to puncture the policy stalemate in education. In fact, members of Congress from both parties noted that policy change in the form of NCLB would not have been possible if not for Bush’s bipartisanship. Just as importantly, the convergence of both parties on NCLB would not have been possible without the active participation of Republican and Democratic leaders in both houses of

98 See, for example, the statements made by Senators Bingaman (D-NM) and Kennedy (D-MA) (Congressional Record, December 18, S13418; S13328-29).
Congress. Together, they used formal and informal institutions to “power,” or silence opposing viewpoints, and “mobilize bias” (Schattschneider 1960) in terms of how the problem was defined and therefore resolved.

Informally, Bush engaged in what his chief negotiator, Sandy Kress, would later call “alliance politics.” This involved reaching out to New Democrats, such as Joe Lieberman and Evan Bayh, and inviting a bipartisan group of legislators to his ranch in Texas to discuss education reform, even before he formally assumed office. Bush viewed this alliance as critical for two reasons. First, by adding New Democrats to the 50 Republicans in the Senate, he hoped to reach the 60 votes he needed to break a Senate filibuster. Second, he hoped that this informal working group would bring ranking HELP Democrat, Ted Kennedy, into the fold (DeBray 2006; De-Bray-Pelot 2007; Rudalevige 2003).^99^ His strategy worked. Realizing that some form of education legislation was going to be adopted by Congress, and preferring not to be shutout from its development, Senators Kennedy (D-MA) and Dodd (D-CT) joined the informal working group. It was this working group that eventually translated Bush’s Blueprint into legislation (DeBray 2006; Rudalevige 2003).

Just as importantly, by submitting a Blueprint and using an informal working group, Bush relegated the DOE to a minor role in terms of designing the actual legislation. In the process, he demoted the traditional education lobby, which had worked closely with the DOE on all previous efforts to reauthorize the ESEA. This included

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^99^ Senator Carper (D-Delaware) actually commented on the fact that Senator Kennedy (D-MA) was left out of the initial discussions but became a leader in the adoption of NCLB (Congressional Record, December 17, S13335-36). Joe Lieberman was not invited to the initial meeting at Bush’s ranch in Texas due to the contested election, but was part of the working alliance. This alliance was particularly beneficial when Jim Jeffords quit the Republican caucus and became an independent voting with the Democrats. By that point, Ted Kennedy, who became the ranking majority member on the Senate HELP Committee, was already deeply involved in the negotiations.
lobbyists for public schools, school boards, administrators, and teachers, as well as the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and the National Governor’s Association (NGA). By the time these groups fully mobilized, the legislation had already reached the Conference Committee. By then, they were (largely) unable to influence the substance of the agreement because congressional leaders agreed to keep the discussions private in order to delimit interest group interference and achieve bipartisan consensus (DeBray-Pelot 2007). Thus, by changing the rules of the game, Bush froze out opposing viewpoints early on in the process. He also sent a message to those who did not toe the line that they would be bypassed in legislative-executive negotiations on the eventual bill.

Members of Congress clearly understood his message. DeBray-Pelot (2007, 83) tells a story about how, early on, Senator Kennedy (D-MA) tried to quell the protests of the NEA, but also read them “the riot act,” by saying “You may not have noticed but we don’t control the White House, the Senate, or the House. I’m doing my best but I’m not going to let you stop this.” She heard that Kennedy personally called the NEA and demanded it not oppose the bill. In the end, the NEA took no position on it. She writes, “Having decided that he was going to compromise with the Republicans and the White House, Kennedy could not meet the group’s demands, so he minimized contact with them.” The end result was that, like conservative interests, teachers’ unions (the NEA and AFT) were relegated to the role of “veto player,” meaning they were able to block some of the most controversial provisions of the bill, but were unable to influence the general course of the legislation.100

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100 Two of the more controversial provisions they helped block were vouchers and the Straight A’s block grant. They also ensured that there was an alternative to competency testing, which allowed teachers to prove their competence by an alternative professional assessment if they failed the competency test (DeBray-Pelot 2007).
It is important to note, however, that Bush’s behaviors also froze out conservatives in Congress who were at odds with his proposal. During the debates, we also see evidence that Bush and Republicans put considerable pressure on conservatives to toe the line. For instance, Congressman Mark Souder (R-IN) says:

I remember as a kid, I heard… Nixon say we are all Keynesians now…(well) we are all liberals now in education…not…many conservatives… are going to stand up under the pressures that we are under, and against the polls, and oppose this bill… but… some of us… are going to say… there are still Republicans who are conservative on the education issue (Congressional Record, May 22, H2410).

During the same debate, Congressman Ballenger (R-NC) tried to put conservatives at ease as follows:

(For many of) my colleagues on this side of the aisle… private school choice is an issue which is a sticking point, and I also support private school choice. However, I ask that we look at the reforms this bill does provide and not what it does not. Do not throw the baby out with the bathwater. H.R. 1 allows public school choice. It allows children in failing schools to obtain tutoring by private or religiously-affiliated educators. It allows local schools to transfer up to 50 percent of their Federal funding to programs that they believe are best for their needs. These are major reforms… Also, just a few minutes ago, the Assistant Secretary told me that my conservative friends should remember that the management of the Department has changed, and their ideas will have some influence there (Congressional Record, May 22, H2398).

In other words, the DOE is “ours now” and we can count on them to respect our concerns. Although he was specifically addressing testing, Souder then responds by opining that the “next president will not be George W. Bush” and we may “have someone who is going to ram this stuff down our throat…and rue the day that we pass a bill with less flexibility, more money, more bureaucracy, and now national testing” (Congressional Record, May 22, 2001, H9008). Thus, similar to Congressman Ron Paul (R-TX), Souder tried to influence other Republicans by alluding to the possibility of a Democrat in the White House and in control of the DOE.
Just as interesting, we see these behaviors on the left. New Democrats, for example, used newly mobilized civil rights groups, such as the Education Trust, to put pressure on liberals to support accountability in the form of testing and choice (McGuinn 2006; Rhodes 2011). Then, we see liberals trying to convince conservatives to respect previously held ideational boundaries in order to prevent the legislation from being adopted. These claims are evidenced by the following comments from liberal Senator Paul Wellstone (D-MN):

I must say with a smile that I am amazed that so many of my colleagues are now supporting a Federal mandate …saying…every school district, every school, you will test every child, grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8…I think this oversteps, if not the authority, the sort of boundaries of congressional decisionmaking on education. Here I am, a liberal Senator from Minnesota, but…I am just amazed that so many Senators have voted for this, especially my conservative friends (Congressional Record, December 18, S13368).

All of these remarks demonstrate that Congress was powering as well as puzzling. Just as importantly, they indicate that Congress powers through discourse, not just through institutions, meaning the formal and informal rules of the game.

Primarily though, Congress used hearings and the rules of the game to freeze out opposing viewpoints. Congressional hearings mobilize bias through who is called to testify, and how members frame the witnesses and their testimonies. My analysis reveals that the hearings were designed to reinforce George Bush’s definition of the problem, and therefore his proposed solution. There were four national hearings, one in the Senate and three in the House. The only witness that testified in the Senate was Bush’s Secretary of Education, Rod Paige. Paige was also the sole witness in the first House hearing. In the second, members of the House testified. This hearing had the most diverse testimony, which suggests that, at least early on, there was stratification among political elites. The
final House hearing called only six witnesses. Four of the six were from outside the “education establishment.”

Throughout the hearings, the private sector was consistently framed as a “moral other,” while public schools, administrators, and teachers were often framed as part of the problem. This was particularly evident in how the committee treated the testimony of Randi Weingarten, President of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), when compared to Dr. Gail Foster. Dr. Foster was the founder of the Toussaint Institute Fund and served on the Board of the Black Alliance for Educational Options. The former was described as an organization that was created in response to the “pleas of low-income and struggling working-class families” in need of access to good schools. The latter was characterized as a “national organization, which seeks to create, promote and support efforts to empower black parents to exercise choice in determining options for their children’s education.” As evidenced by the two quotes below, Dr. Foster was lauded while Randi Weingarten was framed as “part of the problem”:

Mr. Schaffer (R-CO): “Dr. Foster…I think your testimony, of all those who have come here today, speaks directly to children and looking at children first, and institutions perhaps… later” (U.S. House 2001d)

Mr. Hoekstra (R-MI): Dr. Foster “…thank you…(for) standing up for America's families…for our parents…for our kids…your organization is awesome…Your statement …was awesome …Listening to Ms. Weingarten talk about…(taking over) 40 schools …congratulations. And you are ready to take over 40 more. What happened to the kids in those schools for this year?…Those kids were locked into that school for this year with no opportunity…(and so Dr. Foster) I just applaud the voice that you are bringing…in speaking eloquently not as a Democrat or a Republican…but speaking up for…parents” (U.S. House 2001d)
In these narratives, teachers’ unions look out for their own interests and, in the process, “lock children into” failing schools. Private schools, on the other hand, stand up for the rights of poor and minority children, and provide them with opportunities.

This theme of “David versus Goliath” was a common narrative told by those who supported choice. The argument was that the private sector and public charter schools (David or moral others) were needed to protect children from teachers’ unions and the public school monopoly (the bully Goliath or deviant others). They also were in need of state protection and sponsorship (David) because the educational establishment (Goliath) targeted them in order to prevent outside competition for public resources. David versus Goliath was also used by those who opposed more resources for schools that (disproportionately) served disadvantaged children. In this case, the children (David) are victims of the public school monopoly (Goliath), but resources alone will not help them. Instead, teachers and public schools need to be held accountable so that they “do right by the kids.”

Not everyone agreed with this portrayal of non-public schools as “victims” of the self-interested educational establishment, as evidenced by the following soliloquy between Congressman Payne (D-NJ), an African American, and Dr. Foster:

Mr. Payne: I have heard a tremendous amount of advertising…in Washington, D.C…are you connected with the group that is running these ads?
Ms. Foster: Yes, the Black Alliance for Educational Options.
Mr. Payne: How much have you spent?
Ms. Foster: I don’t know…I am not the person to ask.
Mr. Payne: I would really be interested, because I have never seen so much…interest in poor inner-city people by some anonymous group…this tremendous amount of money…to talk about some poor black kids just about education, when, as you know, the health care, the housing, the police protection, even the quality of food they buy at local stores, are all disparate…(Yet) this great philanthropic group…decides that it is ready to save inner-city kids…where is all of this money coming from? Is it to end the public school systems in the inner
cities as we know them? Are there money makers at the end of the day that have companies that come in and...it is a big business, because education is probably the last public entity in this nation where billions and billions and billions of dollars are spent. I would just like to...meet these philanthropic people who are very, very concerned about some poor black kid...because it is like an anomaly...

Ms. Foster: With all respect...you sound a little like me when I ask all the public officials who support not allowing low-income parents to escape poor-performing schools... fighting and funding the fight against school choice...

Mr. Payne: Okay...there is nobody fighting it. There are no ads...Believe me, you have got the airways all by yourself. There is no organized effort...Interesting part is that practically all of these Congressmen...who are pushing for vouchers...don't talk about vouchers in their community, because people in their community don't want vouchers. They will run them out of town. What do we need vouchers for? We have good public schools...why can't we do in our inner cities what you have out there...I think that we have to improve the public school system.

Payne then links her complaint that public schools (Goliath) fight those striving to provide choice to poor and minority parents (David) to Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Raven*. He tells her “I hear a tapping at my chamber door. Maybe it's the wind, and nothing more” (U.S. House 2001d). Across-the-board, though, it was clear from the line of questioning that the witnesses were asked to testify in order to establish that “money alone” was not the solution to educational problems.

Political elites also clearly used the formal rules of the game to silence opposing viewpoints. Congressman Boehner (R-OH), for example, facilitated agreement in committee by asking members to withhold submitting amendments until the debates on the House floor. Then, he used the rules to structure the House debate in ways that favored those initiatives supported by Bush and silence those he opposed. Some amendments that were not debated included funding for class size reduction and school construction. Another amendment addressed targeting for Title I (*Congressional Record*, May 17, H2308). Meanwhile, the debate included Republican amendments dealing with vouchers and Straight A’s, which was a proposal to block-grant Federal monies. The
anger and betrayal felt by many Democrats is suggested by Congresswoman Slaughter (D-NY), who said:

I oppose this rule…and…the duplicity by which this rule came about. Nearly 150 amendments were submitted for this major legislative initiative, and only a handful have been made in order...(and) this week…the bipartisan bill has been hijacked by extreme elements of the majority's party...(that) are intent on reinserting vouchers into the underlying bill, a move that would undermine public education. Moreover, efforts to block-grant Federal money, a proposal referred to as Straight A’s, are underway and would also undermine the specific targeting of poor school districts that exists in Federal law (*Congressional Record*, May 17, H2299-300).101

Perhaps more importantly, however, the debate on accountability in education was restricted to a single testing amendment, which would have eliminated the proposed new tests altogether. Basically, this forced members to vote for or against accountability, by voting for or against testing, even as it silenced legitimate concerns about testing.102

In explaining how he was able to bring opposing groups to the table and force them to compromise, former Congressman Philip Burton said: “If you show them the depths of hell, everything else looks pretty good” (Jacobs 1995, xxi). Similarly, Boehner’s tactic to use the rules of the game to exclude debate on most of the amendments that were submitted by Democrats, while allowing debate on the more controversial Conservative amendments, paid off. Many Democrats said they voted for NCLB, in spite of the fact it included measures they opposed, due to what was not included in the legislation. The more controversial measures included Straight As (block

101 There were many speeches made against the rule. Some members even tried to shame Republicans by linking the rule to global perceptions of the U.S. For example, Congresswoman Mink (D-HI) said “this is the world-renowned legislative body that everybody looks to in terms of being able to come to grips with the major issues of our times.” She is suggesting that American democracy will be negatively perceived if opposing viewpoints were silenced before they could be debated (*Congressional Record*, May 17, H2302).

102 Many members complained about this situation. For instance, Congressman Tierney (D-MA) accused the Republican majority of preventing debate on “some of the most crucial elements” of testing, such as “the validity or concept of testing,” “whether we provide sufficient resources to schools to administer fairly and comprehensively these tests” and “whether or not this type of testing is even good for our students” or the best way to hold state and local governments accountable (*Congressional Record*, May 17, H2303-05).
grants), private school choice, and abolishing the federal DOE. The less controversial
measures were public school choice and funding for private and public tutoring.\textsuperscript{103} The
former were left out of NCLB while the latter were included in the legislation.

We also see members from both parties urging their colleagues to support the legislation
by using the language of pragmatism, or the idea that legislators need to consent to parts
they disagree with in order to support the interests of society. Senator Mikulski (D-MD),
for instance, said she was voting for NCLB because she is “a pragmatist” and does not
want this legislation to “be an example of the perfect is the enemy of the good”
\textit{(Congressional Record, December 18, S13370)}.\textsuperscript{104} Meanwhile, Congresswoman Davis
(D-CA) acknowledged that “each of us would like to see changes in language or
additions to the program,” but then warned that it was “important to respect the restraints
of these compromises and reject attempts to commit major surgery that would kill the
patient” \textit{(Congressional Record, May 22, H2406)}.\textsuperscript{105} Senator Bayh (D-IN), on the other
hand, gave a political science lecture:

the art of legislating is not the same as being in a political science classroom. It is
not the same as having an ideological debate. The end of the debate is what
matters…what we can…accomplish to help the people of our country in this
case, the schoolchildren…The progress we mark today is a victory of
bipartisanship and good public policy. Both sides in this debate have been
required to put aside long-entrenched ideological positions. There were too many
on the one side who believed that the only thing wrong with our public education

\textsuperscript{103} See, for example, the testimonies of Congresswoman Slaughter (D-OH) and Congressman Etheridge (D-
NC) \textit{(Congressional Record, December 13, H10083 and H10099)}.

\textsuperscript{104} This is a perfect example of policy learning where you see members adopt one another’s arguments.
For example, Mr. Blumenauer (D-OR) argued: “We are moving in the right direction, not necessarily
allowing the perfect to be the enemy of the good. There is something in this legislation for everyone”
\textit{(Congressional Record, December 13, H)}. Mr. Moore (D-KS) said: “While this legislation is not perfect,
we should not let the perfect be the enemy of the good \textit{(Congressional Record, December 13, H10106)}.

\textsuperscript{105} Congressman Ballenger (R-NC) said: “Now, I know many of my colleagues on this side of the aisle
believe H.R. 1 does not live up to the President's plan. I understand that private school choice is...a sticking
point, and I also support private school choice. However, I ask that we look at the reforms this bill does
provide and not what it does not. Do not throw the baby out with the bathwater. H.R. 1 allows public
school choice. It allows children in failing schools to obtain tutoring by private or religiously-affiliated
educators” \textit{(Congressional Record, May 22, H2398)}.
system was the need for more dollars. And there were too many on the other side who believed that improving the public education system was beyond all hope and that, instead, it should be abandoned in favor of private school vouchers. Instead, we have forged a new way, a third way, a better way (Congressional Record, December 17, S13330-31).

Others used the logic of “it could have been worse” or “at least we got some of what we wanted.” Still, not everyone agreed with this logic. Congresswoman Rivers (D-MI), who rose in opposition to H.R.1, exclaimed “Less bad is not good. It is not legitimate to argue for passage of a flawed proposal on the basis that it could be worse” (Congressional Record, May 22, H2404). It was clear, though, that gaining some of what they wanted made many members willing to put up with things they had previously strongly opposed.

**Conclusion**

Summing up, Stone (1997, 11) criticizes the “rationality project,” or the conventional view of politics, which “hypothesizes a rational connection between means (the instruments of programs) and ends (policy goals and intentions).” She argues that this approach fails to capture “the essence of policymaking in political communities,” which is “the struggle over ideas.” In this chapter, I showed how political elites used ideas to puzzle as well as power. Political elites debate amidst uncertainty. They use ideas to engage in political learning and promote collective action. In the case of NCLB, they increasingly drew on the frame of widespread mediocrity to construct a narrative about the need for political change. This narrative obscured the link between socio-economic inequality and educational performance by portraying mediocrity as the result of low expectations. In the process, it enabled legislators to frame the benefits of policy change as diffuse while the costs were borne by the (unworthy or immoral) mediocre
few. In short, they changed what had been hotly contested interest group politics into majoritarian politics, and thereby promoted political change in an environment where public opinion polls showed there was strong support for a federal role in education and growing concerns about the performance of public schools. The next chapter uses a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the congressional debates on the Conference Report to examine how the framing of target groups also helped construct change in the form of NCLB. My analysis suggests that members of Congress politically and culturally reconstructed teachers and public schools in ways that justified accountability as a form of social regulation.
CHAPTER VI
CONSTRUCTING VILLAINS AND VICTIMS

Political scientists and sociologists recognize that public policies and political rhetoric generate socially constructed identities for policy “targets,” who are the victims or perpetrators of policy problems and the objects of policy solutions (Ingram and Schneider 1991; Schneider and Ingram 1993; Stone 2005). Through these characterizations, the state may raise the standing of previously disadvantaged groups, such as the aged and disabled, or create “groups” that without the force of law would not have existed or would not have borne a negative stigma, such as “drunk drivers” (Stone 2005). Sometimes, changes in how a group is socially and politically constructed result from shifting mores. For example, there has been a shift from portraying alcoholism as a behavioral choice (deviancy) to a disease (dependency). Frequently, though, changes in how political elites construct different groups are designed to achieve political ends (Stone 2005). This chapter explores how Congress constructed various target groups during the debates on NCLB. I begin by briefly summarizing current theory on how the social construction of target groups affects policy designs. I then use these ideas to show how Congress constructed different groups in ways that would help them achieve their policy ends. I conclude by discussing the broader implications for how social constructions change as a result of political processes.

106 See, for example, Gusfield (1981) for a discussion of the cultural construction of drunk driving as a policy problem and Nelson (1984) for the construction of child abuse as a social and political issue. 107 The authors are not suggesting that “real” differences do not exist. Rather, target group theory claims that social constructions magnify differences beyond what would emerge through a “neutral observation of facts” and that the perception that differences are “positive” or “negative” is often the product of political processes (Stone 2005).
Background: Social Constructions and Policy Designs

Ingram and Schneider (1993) argue that the framing of policy targets depends on two variables. The first is the group’s relative political power. This includes, for example, whether the group is large, united, mobilized, wealthy, or otherwise well positioned. The second is its social or cultural valence, meaning whether a group is perceived as virtuous, respectable, attractive or likeable. From these two dichotomous variables, they construct four “ideal” policy types: contenders, the advantaged, dependents and deviants (Figure 7). These policy types impact how citizens and groups are constructed by political discourse and served through public policies. In the process, they influence the political and social experiences, behaviors and identities of citizens and policy implementers.

Advantaged groups (e.g., small businesses, scientists, the military, the middle class, and white people of European descent) have a high degree of political power. They are also assigned positive identities in society, and these serve as a symbolic resource even when the group is not mobilized. As such, they are (typically) portrayed as entitled to government assistance and rarely (overtly) assigned policy burdens. In contrast, contenders (e.g., Wall Street bankers, wealthy individuals, big labor, and the gun lobby) are politically
powerful, but often ill-regarded socially due to perceptions that they have “gotten more than their fair share,” gained their positions of power through unfair, underhanded or self-interested actions, or abused their power in some way. In spite of this poor social regard, they maintain strong group loyalty (social cohesion), and are typically well organized and easily mobilized. In consequence, they are more likely to suffer symbolically, than substantively, from policy burdens. They also are less likely to be the overt targets of government assistance. For example, they may be provided hidden benefits through tax incentives, lucrative contracts, or the privatization of public programs. Alternatively, the state may reduce former burdens through deregulation (Ingram and Schneider 1993).

Unlike advantaged groups and contenders, dependents and deviants lack political resources. Meanwhile, when provided, government assistance is typically justified using moral reasoning rather than portrayed as an entitlement of citizenship. Despite these similarities, the logic connecting government actions to their social conditions is not the same. Dependents (e.g., children and the mentally ill) are framed as deserving of government largess, so long as they are not viewed as the cause of their problems. Even then, they are frequently characterized in positive, but uncomplimentary ways. This includes describing them as poor, needy, or incapable of resolving their own problems due to a lack of capacity, skill, character, or discipline. This was the case, for example, with Title I of the ESEA. Political elites justified federal intervention by arguing that poor children were “culturally deprived.” Conversely, deviants (e.g., criminals and drug addicts) are portrayed as deserving of punishment. Because they are viewed as dangerous or of no value to society, policies designed to control their illegal, immoral or irresponsible activities are typically backed by sanction or the force of law (Ingram and Schneider 1993).
One further difference deserves mention. Structural causes are sometimes acknowledged in terms of dependency, but rarely in terms of deviancy. Still, both groups typically face significant barriers to full inclusion in society, including limited material resources, and restrictions on political participation and representation. For instance, voting restrictions have historically been applied to felons (i.e., deviants), as well as to children and the mentally disabled (i.e., dependents). Yet, minorities, young people and the poor have also been targeted by legal restrictions on voting and registration (Piven and Cloward 1988). Similarly, government policies and gerrymandering have clustered minorities and Native Americans into minority-majority legislative districts, which affects how they are represented in state legislatures and Congress (Ingram and Schneider 1993).

This chapter uses a qualitative analysis of how Congress constructed target groups throughout the legislative debates on NCLB, and a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the congressional debates on the Conference Report, to examine how the framing of target groups was used to construct change in the form of NCLB. Overall, I show that Congress framed various groups in ways that shifted blame for the problem onto some groups while absolving others. I begin by discussing the federal government and bureaucracy, since the bureaucracy was clearly the most reviled villain. I then contrast these groups with state and local governments. Next, I explore the construction of target groups at the local level, including public schools, private and charter schools, teachers, administrators, parents and students. After bureaucrats, the analysis suggests that teachers and public schools were mostly likely to be framed in ways that were not complementary (contenders bordering on deviants), especially when compared to victims (children as dependents) and non-public others (entitled heroes). This was true even
when considering the testimonies of their allies (Democrats), who were more likely to frame teachers and public schools as beleaguered dependents than entitled allies of society. These constructions were consistent with the meta-narrative that public servants and schools were largely to blame for the mediocre status quo. As such, this framing supported the recommended policy solution, which was to hold public servants and public schools accountable for student performance.

**Federal Government and Bureaucracy**

Throughout the legislative debates on NCLB, Democrats and Republicans both constructed the bureaucracy in negative ways. As shown in Table 9 on the next page, this was also true during the debates on the Conference Report. The table, which provides a comparative analysis of how members of Congress framed the education bureaucracy, the federal government and local governments during the debates on the Conference Report, indicates that federal and state bureaucrats were never constructed as allies of society (an entitled group). Instead, most narratives framed bureaucrats as a visible part of the failed system, and therefore an untrustworthy, but necessary, actor in any effort to resolve the problem. Sometimes bureaucrats were linked to inefficient government through discussions about a maze of rules, regulations, and red tape. Other times they were framed as contenders verging on deviants, meaning they served the system (i.e., their own interests) at the expense of children, taxpayers and society. Claims that bureaucrats “do not know their local communities,” and should therefore have limited power over policy implementation, were the closest legislators came to portraying bureaucrats in a positive manner.
Table 9. NCLB Target Groups: The Federal Government, Education Bureaucracy and Local Governments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Federal Dem</th>
<th>Federal Rep</th>
<th>Bureaucracy Dem</th>
<th>Bureaucracy Rep</th>
<th>Local Dem</th>
<th>Local Rep</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of Total (State)</td>
<td>% of Total (State)</td>
<td>% of Total (State)</td>
<td>% of Total (State)</td>
<td>% of Total (State)</td>
<td>% of Total (State)</td>
<td>% of Total (State)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allies of Society (1)</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>68% (40%)</td>
<td>32% (12%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathologies of localism: Unequal Finance</td>
<td></td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>80% (28%)</td>
<td>20% (6%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathologies of localism: Ignore, mask, hijack test (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>71% (24%)</td>
<td>29% (8%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathologies of federalism: Mandates/lack flexibility</td>
<td></td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>66% (52%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathologies of federalism: Limit choice, or don’t know parents or local communities</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29% (21%)</td>
<td>71% (36%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathologies of bureaucracy: Bureaucratic maze/red tape</td>
<td></td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>19% (45%)</td>
<td>81% (55%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathologies of bureaucracy: Serve the system</td>
<td></td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>33% (55%)</td>
<td>67% (32%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathologies of bureaucracy: Don’t know local communities</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Statements (3)</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>40% (100%)</td>
<td>60% (100%)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>22 (100%)</td>
<td>78% (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) For local governments, these narratives portrayed them as entitled or in need of flexibility and discretion. Conversely, these narratives portrayed the national government as having an important role to play.
(2) Mostly, this narrative argues that locals (public schools) ignore disadvantaged students or “mask failure.” It was typically used to justify reporting test scores for educational “subgroups,” such as minorities or the disabled. Yet, some argued that states needed to be regulated to ensure they set high standards and that tests were diagnostic.
(3) There were 140 “speeches” that had “content” (i.e., discussed the legislation in some way rather than only thanking individuals responsible for NCLB). Some speakers (members of Congress) made more than one speech. The total number of statements does not add up to the number of speeches because some speakers made no statements about a target while others made more than one.

Similarly, the federal government was largely portrayed as part of the problem and therefore a necessary, but untrustworthy, actor in its resolution. Most blamed the inefficient and ineffective provision of public services on federal mandates, which restricted local innovation. Others charged that federal mandates had delimited parental

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108 Source: Congressional Record, December 13th, December 17th and December 18th. For purposes of this analysis, Senator Jeffords (VT) is listed as a Republican, but he became an Independent prior to these specific debates on the Conference Report.
freedom and choice. Many also claimed that the federal government was too far from local communities to understand the needs of citizens. Across political parties, Republicans were far more likely to blame federal mandates and “faceless bureaucrats” for the problem. Senator Bond (R-MO), for instance, argued:

Too many children in America are segregated by low expectations, illiteracy, and self-doubt. In a constantly changing world that demands increasingly complex skills from its workforce, children are being left behind. Over the years, we have empowered the Federal Government and faceless bureaucrats while burying our educators and schools in regulation, red tape, mandates, and endless paperwork. As a result, we have disenfranchised educators and slowly eroded the opportunity for creativity and innovation at the local level. At last count, the Federal Government had 760 different education programs operating within 39 different agencies, boards, and commissions. Each was launched as a step toward reform, but each new program comes with added regulation and paperwork. By one estimate, compliance consumes 50 million hours each year, the equivalent of 25,000 full-time employees just to process the forms.

He then stated that the federal government needed to empower “teachers and local schools” with more “freedom and flexibility to do the job” (Congressional Record, December 18, S13371).

Even so, by the debates on the Conference Report, members from both parties (mostly) acknowledged that the federal government had a role to play. Typically, they used the language of “cooperative federalism” or the need to “strike the right balance” between the federal, state and local governments. Some softened the language by acknowledging that the federal government was a “junior partner” in education. Others claimed that state and local governments were closest to the people, but needed federal support.109 My qualitative analysis suggests that this language was used to avoid the

109 See, for example, the statements of Senator Bayh (D-IN) (Congressional Record, December 17, S13331), Senator Bond (R-MO) (Congressional Record, December 18, S13372), and Senator Bingaman (D-NM) (Congressional Record, December 17, S13329).
argument that NCLB would create a “slippery slope,” meaning it would encourage more federal involvement in the future.

Still, some conservatives and liberals continued to express concerns about the potential abuse of federal power, and the unintended side-effects of a one-size fits all remedy. Liberal Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) expressed concern that NCLB would replace Vermont’s efforts to turn around struggling schools with a federal package that was aimed at urban schools (Congressional Record, December 18, S13378-79). Conversely, Senator George Voinovich (R-OH), one of the three traditional conservatives who voted against NCLB, used the metaphor of a “slippery slope” to express opposition to NCLB (Congressional Record, December 18, S13382-83). Lynn Rivers (D-MI), on the other hand, called NCLB a “power grab by the federal government” who was trying to “leverage” their 7 percent of the funding into “control of the entire K-12 system.” She further claimed that the bill was “a mirage,” or an “illusion of reform” (Congressional Record, May 22, H2404).

In spite of these negative portrayals, my analysis indicates that bipartisan support for NCLB was fostered by the overall policy design, which combined increased resources, with local flexibility and accountability for results. This solution enabled members to argue that NCLB would neither stifle local innovation, nor place an undue burden on state and local governments, for two reasons. First, the federal government was mandating results (measuring), not specifying how to achieve those results. Second, NCLB contained significant new federal mandates in the form of testing and accountability, but also provided significant new resources. These characterizations are discussed in the next section.
State and Local Governments

Narratives about the pathologies of federalism and bureaucracy are also stories about state and local governments. My qualitative analysis reveals that congressional narratives mostly portrayed state and local governments as “entitled” allies of society, or an advantaged group. Metaphorically, state and local governments were portrayed as (beleaguered) soldiers, diligently serving on the “front lines” of public service provision and shouldering the burdens of federal political choices. As shown in Table 9 in the last section, Republicans most frequently told these narratives, but Democrats also made these arguments.

In spite of the bipartisan convergence on this narrative, the language of state and local entitlement was not uniform. By that, I mean it had different component parts and was used to both support and oppose NCLB. Some legislators argued, for instance, that state and local governments were entitled by the U.S. Constitution. Most frequently, this narrative was told by conservative opponents of NCLB. Others claimed both groups were entitled because they were “closest to the people” and therefore best able to serve them. Congresswoman Pryce (R-OH), for instance, expressed support for NCLB because it “recognizes that communities know more about their children than Washington bureaucrats” (Congressional Record, December 13, H10082). Some members also combined efficiency and effectiveness arguments with the language of democracy. Here, local governments served as “laboratories of democracy” but were stifled by an array of bureaucratic rules, regulations, and red tape. This latter argument was often accompanied by statements about the need for freedom and flexibility at the state and local level, but

110 See, for example, the testimonies of Congressman Paul (Congressional Record, May 22, H2417-18) and Senator Voinovich (Congressional Record, December 18, S13382-83).
freedom was constructed in different ways. Republicans focused on (state and local) freedom from the federal government (block grants) and parental freedom from the public school monopoly (choice). Alternatively, Democrats stressed freedom to perform better through the infusion of more and better-targeted federal resources (more equitable opportunities).

My qualitative analysis suggests that NCLB was an effective counter to all of these arguments, largely because supporters could argue that the federal government was providing state and local governments with more resources, freedom and flexibility so that they could better target resources to the needs of their individual communities. In return, the federal government was (responsibly) stressing accountability for results. Meanwhile, those who were concerned that NCLB imposed significant new mandates could rhetorically focus on the fact that Congress had provided significant new resources. Congressman Hoekstra (R-MI), for example, opined that:

The mandates and the testing requirements in this bill are not balanced with the remainder of the President's bill, the parts that empower parents and free schools from the Federal bureaucracy. New mandates should not be the first step in education reform...(However, at least) States…only have to implement new testing requirements if the Federal Government steps up and fully funds this new mandate (Congressional Record, December 13, H10087).

Here, he tries to balance new mandates with the rhetoric of “at least we are funding the tests.”

Very few legislators framed state and local governments in negative ways. My qualitative analysis suggests that this positive portrayal was strategic, meaning it reflected the fact that both are powerful actors in politics and are viewed positively when compared to the federal government. This is especially true within the Republican Party. These ideas are evidenced by the fact that members of Congress rarely took these groups
on directly when negatively framing them. We see this, for example, in the following statement by Congressman Boehner (R-OH):

(This) is the beginning of the process. The writing of the rules, the implementation of this bill in each of our 50 States is going to be a Herculean battle… I urge my colleagues to not only vote for this bill today, but to keep up their vigilance at home to get this bill implemented correctly because at the core of it, what we are trying to accomplish here is to ensure that every child in America has a chance at a good education, and…the American dream (Congressional Record, December 13, H10104).

In this speech, he is expressing concern about state and local intransigence in terms of policy implementation. Thus, his narrative moves state and local governments out of the entitled category and constructs them as contenders, bordering on deviants if they fail to implement a law that helps children achieve the American dream. Even so, he does not “name” them. Instead, he talks about “implementation in the 50 states.” We understand he is advocating that Congress hold state and local governments accountable, but he is not overtly naming and shaming them. Another rhetorical strategy was to refer to “state and local governments” as a unit when discussing the pathologies of localism. In this fashion, members did not specifically name and shame one particular group.

Interestingly, when members separated “local” into state governments and local governments, they were not uniform in how they framed the component parts. Early on in the debates, Democrats were far more likely to portray state governments as part of the problem. This narrative mostly implicated them in the problem as a result of inequitable state financing formulas. This was also true during the debates on the Conference Report. By that point, though, fewer legislators used these arguments and those who did often focused on the need to better-target Title I rather than portraying states as fostering
a culture of inequality. This is evident in the speeches made by Congressman Fattah (D-PA) throughout the legislative debates. Early on, he said:

(There) is a lot of talk about accountability, holding students accountable and teachers and schools. There is one entity that is never mentioned, even though States are responsible for the certification of teachers, the setting of curriculums, the entire determination about how schools are going to be provided resources. There is nothing anywhere about trying to get States to be responsible…for the education of poor children …States have failed poor children. I would hope that we would have a rule that would allow us to seek more accountability (Congressional Record, May 17, H2308).

Then, during the debates on the Conference Report, he stressed the need to better target federal funds to ensure that “poor children do not end up with a poor quality instructor and poor quality textbooks and educational materials” (Congressional Record, December 13, H10101-02). This shift in rhetoric makes sense given the fact NCLB did not address inequitable school financing.

Conversely, Republicans were more likely to portray all things “local” as good, but then separate public schools from “local governments.” This enabled them to portray “public” as inferior but “local” as superior to “federal.” As the next section shows, this narrative was typically used to justify school choice by linking public schools with the inferior (monopolistic) system. It was also implicitly or explicitly used to link teachers to the mediocre status quo. In this manner, Republicans were able to portray state and local governments as (entitled) moral others, while still arguing that public schools (and teachers) needed to be held accountable as a result of (a history of) mediocrity. Thus, local is good but public is bad.

Public Schools

Similar to George Bush, members of Congress faced mixed political constraints when implicating public schools in policy failure. Public education carries positive
constructions within the larger political culture, and polls taken at that time indicated voters believed their own schools were doing a good job even if they were concerned about the performance of public schools in general (McGuinn 2006). Politically, then, it made sense to explicitly frame public education in positive ways even when implicitly or explicitly linking public schools to the failed system. My analysis suggests that this was largely accomplished through the narratives of the mediocre status quo and failed expectations, although some members of Congress also implicated public schools by negatively comparing them to “moral others,” meaning private and public charter schools. These findings are evident in Tables 10 and 11.

Table 10 provides a quantitative analysis comparing legislative narratives about public schools, disadvantaged schools, SINI schools, and non-public school others (private and public charter schools). Table 11 portrays the different ways legislators framed public education. Together, the tables show that legislators characterized public schools in uncomplimentary ways, but public education as a societal resource. Roughly half of the speakers made no qualitative statements about the role of public education in society (a non-event). Among the other half, all of the speakers framed public education in ways that constructed it as a societal resource. Qualitatively, public education was framed as vital to a healthy nation because it promoted democracy, civil rights, and socio-economic equality. It also fostered the opportunity society, and enabled the U.S. to compete economically abroad. In short, public education was a “public good” (an ally of societal interests) but public schools were a “public bad” (mediocre contenders).
Table 10. NCLB Target Groups: Public, Public Poor/SINI and Private/Charter Schools¹¹¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heroes, allies of society:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(State)</td>
<td>(3%)</td>
<td>(1%)</td>
<td>(5%)</td>
<td>(5%)</td>
<td>(28%)</td>
<td>(54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral, but beleaguered dependents:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valence mixed (1)</td>
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<td>74%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(State)</td>
<td>(39%)</td>
<td>(18%)</td>
<td>(35%)</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
<td>(6%)</td>
<td>(43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beleaguered (mediocre) dependents:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Valence negative</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(State)</td>
<td>(33%)</td>
<td>(35%)</td>
<td>(23%)</td>
<td>(34%)</td>
<td>(34%)</td>
<td>(3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contenders:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valence negative (2)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(State)</td>
<td>(16%)</td>
<td>(35%)</td>
<td>(18%)</td>
<td>(18%)</td>
<td>(61%)</td>
<td>(1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deviant:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valence negative (3)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(State)</td>
<td>(9%)</td>
<td>(11%)</td>
<td>(18%)</td>
<td>(14%)</td>
<td>(3%)</td>
<td>(3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Statements (5)</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Event</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹¹¹ Source: Congressional Record, December 13th, December 17th and December 18th. For purposes of this analysis, Senator Jeffords (VT) is listed as a Republican, but he became an Independent prior to these specific debates on the Conference Report.
Table 11. *NCLB Debates: Tales about Goals/Ends of Public Education/Federal Policy*¹¹²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>% of Total Statements</th>
<th>% of Statements Dem</th>
<th>% of Dem State</th>
<th>% of Statements Rep</th>
<th>% of Rep State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Future Nation: Democracy (1)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Progress: Civil Rights (2)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Society: Socio-Economic Equality (3)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity Society (4)</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International: Global Economic Competitiveness (5)</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International: “City on a hill” (6)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International: National Security (7)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Statements (8)</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Event (9)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Education is important for democracy, and for transcending divisions in a democratic society.
(2) Education is the means to achieve Civil Rights.
(3) Education is a means to achieve socio-economic equality or provide the same opportunities (at the societal level).
(4) Education is a means of providing a better quality of life for individuals (individual socio-economic equality), or enabling individuals to reach their potential or achieve the American Dream.
(5) An educated society is important for competing in a globalized economy.
(6) Other nations are watching. America needs to be a “beacon of democracy” by demonstrating fairness, economic opportunity, and so forth.
(7) An educated society is important for our national security.
(8) There were 140 “speeches” that had “content” (i.e., discussed the legislation in some way rather than only thanking individuals responsible for NCLB). Some speakers (members of Congress) made more than one speech. The total number of statements does not add up to the number of speeches because some speakers made no statements about a target (a non-event) while others made more than one.
(9) A non-event is a non-statement. Some speakers did not tell a narrative about the goals/ends of education. This counts as a single non-event.

The tables also show that the valence in terms of how members framed public schools somewhat reflected partisan loyalties. Democrats, for example, were far more likely to portray public schools as allies of society (entitled), or as moral others. Still, these narratives made up only 2 percent of their statements about public schools. They were also far more likely to characterize public schools as beleaguered (dependents). The latter narrative was typically used to justify providing more federal assistance.

Meanwhile, both parties were equally likely to characterize public schools as

¹¹² Source: *Congressional Record*, December 13th, December 17th and December 18th. For purposes of this analysis, Senator Jeffords (VT) is listed as a Republican, but he became an Independent prior to these specific debates on the Conference Report.
beleaguered, but mediocre agents (dependents verging on deviants). While uncomplimentary, this narrative was typically used to justify more federal resources combined with flexibility and accountability. Both parties were also equally likely to portray public schools as deviant in some way. Some incorporated narratives about how public schools “mask” failure by reporting overall successes, while allowing disadvantaged and minority students to slip through the cracks. Others told stories about social promotion, or the process whereby schools move children to the next grade despite poor performance. Both of these narratives were used to justify accountability in general, but also the need to disaggregate test scores by subgroups to ensure public schools better served disadvantaged children. Some legislators (mostly Republicans) also used these narratives to justify the need for competition from (moral) non-public school others. Republicans were also more likely to portray public schools as drug-infested or violent spaces. Nevertheless, this was not a dominant narrative. When used by Republicans, it was mostly used as a means of discussing American values, but members of both parties also used it to discuss the need for school counselors. This is an example of what I called “tinkering” in chapter five, where members push particular programs.

The silences in the narratives were equally important for understanding partisan political strategies. The vast majority of legislators did not discuss non-public school others, which suggests that “choice,” even in its public charter school guise, still remained largely outside the mainstream. Meanwhile, legislators talked about public schools more than SINI schools, even though SINI schools were supposedly the real target group of this legislation. This supports my earlier suggestion that legislators expanded the crisis by implying public schools in general were mediocre versus
acknowledging that there were gaps in the educational programs afforded to different groups in society. When speakers focused on SINI schools or schools that served large numbers of disadvantaged students, their narratives were far more likely to overtly frame them in both positive and negative ways. My analysis suggests this was done to support helping them (e.g., more resources) or penalizing them through punishment, competition, or denying them more public resources.

More positively, some legislators portrayed SINI schools as unable to promote high standards due to inadequate resources. This included monetary resources, but also poor quality teachers, textbooks, and physical facilities. Implicitly, these narratives blame society or politicians for failing to provide equitable opportunities to poor and minority children. Explicitly, they were used to justify more resources for public schools that serve large numbers of at-risk children. Even so, these narratives are certainly not flattering. Alternatively, some legislators portrayed SINI schools as monopolistic bureaucracies (contenders) that would not change unless compelled to do so. These narratives were used to support accountability in general and choice specifically. However, some legislators also advocated disaggregating test scores by racial and other subgroups in order to prevent schools from hiding the poor performance of some within overall test scores (deviants). Mr. Kildee (D-MI) said:

> No longer will subpar results for minority, low-income, disabled, and limited-English proficiency children be masked by the higher performance of the majority (*Congressional Record*, December 13, H10094).

As suggested by this narrative, when linked to discussions about civil rights or equal opportunities, public or SINI schools were clearly portrayed as “deviants” who have actively harmed the most vulnerable members of society. Here, “masking” was part of a
larger narrative about the “two-track” educational system for disadvantaged children and their advantaged peers. Republicans typically used these narratives to move the policy prescription from accountability, defined in terms of public information, to accountability defined as the need for competition. They argued, for example, that advantaged groups in society already had school choice (moving), but minorities and poor children were “trapped in failing public schools.” Some also used this narrative to implicitly or explicitly demand punishment.

In sum, members of Congress framed public education as an ally of society, but portrayed public schools in general and SINI schools specifically as contenders, dependents and deviants. Public education was entitled to taxpayer dollars because it benefits the nation, while public schools needed accountability to ensure they “do right by the kids.” Despite these differences, when discussed, the societal benefits associated with each were largely framed in the same ways. By far, public education and public schools were most frequently framed as important for meeting individual and collective economic ends, with the individual ends typically described in socio-economic terms. Many also argued, however, that public education was important for furthering social-democratic goals, including extending opportunities to the disadvantaged. For example, Senators Boxer (D-CA) and Clinton (D-NY) spoke highly of universal public education in the U.S. and compared it to other countries where children are tracked at an early age. Senator Boxer exclaimed “Our public schools are what make our country different from most other countries because they give us all a shot at the American dream...(It would be a) huge mistake” to pull taxpayer dollars away from public schools and send them to private schools “where 5 percent of the children go” (Congressional Record, June 12,
Still, both advocated accountability to ensure, as Senator Clinton said, all children “have the opportunity to live up to their God-given potential” (Congressional Record, June 12, 2001, S6075). The next section compares public, private and charter school narratives.

**Public Schools (Insiders) vs. Private and Charter Schools (Beleaguered Outsiders)**

The administration’s proposal for NCLB included a large private-school voucher component, which George Bush claimed would help children escape from “failing public schools.” It was removed before the House and Senate committees reported their bills. The compromise was the “supplemental services” component of NCLB, which allowed students in persistently “failing schools” to obtain tutoring from private and religious providers. Students were also allowed to transfer to better performing public schools, including public charter schools, within the district. Even so, Congress debated both private and public school choice. Therefore, we can use these debates to understand how they portrayed public, private and public charter schools, in addition to how they portrayed public school choice and the supplemental services provision of NCLB.

The qualitative analysis revels that many legislators negatively framed public schools in comparison with private and public charter schools. However, Republicans were far more likely to frame the latter as (entitled) “moral others” to convey that public schools needed enforcement from outside (the public school monopoly) in order to perform. Many of these narratives focused on the safety of children. For instance, Congressman Schaffer (R-Colorado) argued that:

> the real debate here should be about school choice, allowing parents to choose the school that is safe for their children. The President proposed school choice in his package…but that provision was left out of the bill. So it is incumbent upon us now to discuss the safety of the children who are left in those schools and trapped
in government-owned schools throughout the country (Congressional Record, May 23, H2585).

In this narrative, he refers to public schools as “government-owned” as if they do not belong to local communities, taxpayers, parents and children. This language was used to spatially divide markets (private and charter schools) from the state (public schools). When Democrats supported choice, on the other hand, it was typically in conjunction with public charter schools. These narratives suggest that the political parties remained far apart in terms of school choice, which is why private school choice was immediately removed in committee.

Another way to explore how these groups were framed is to examine the metaphors and descriptive words that were used during the debates. Metaphorically, public schools were often described in ways that brought to mind the prison system. Students were “sentenced to,” “quarantined in” or “trapped in government-owned schools” that were unsafe and full of drugs. Thus, non-public school others were portrayed as a needed “safety valve” to ensure children were able to participate in the American dream. Congresswoman Pryce (R-Ohio) enthused:

H.R. 1 provides immediate public school choice for children in schools identified as failing after just 1 year. That is public school choice. This provision will give parents the freedom to choose a better-performing public or charter school to educate their children. The bill also allows parents to seek supplemental educational services, such as tutoring, after-school services, and summer school programs for their children if they are enrolled in a school that has been identified as a failing school for more than 3 years. This measure will act as a necessary safety valve to allow students to seek outside educational support for any state-approved provider using Federal title I dollars (Congressional Record, May 17, 2001, H2299).

Both parties used metaphors of enslavement and imprisonment to justify public school choice, although it was more commonly used by Republicans who also used it to justify
private choice. For instance, Senator Gregg (R-NH) proposed a “portability amendment,” which would have funded a federal demonstration project on school choice.

He claimed the amendment was needed to help:

a group of people in our country who have been left behind in our educational system. It doesn't deal with the wealthy…with those of moderate income. It really deals with low-income people, most of them in urban schools, who find the school systems their children are put into are failing…their children are being left behind…You cannot participate in the American dream unless you are well educated, unless you can compete and participate in our society, and that requires a quality education. So when you go through a school which does not teach, which is filled with violence or…drugs…every day a child who goes to that school is falling further…behind…because that school is not able to teach…and denying that child the opportunity to participate in the American dream.

He then notes that those who “have a fairly decent income…can leave the public school system and go to a private school,” but single, mostly low-income, mothers “do not have that option.” In consequence, children of the poor “are sentenced to” failing schools.

Next, he links choice to the civil rights movement. He concludes by claiming that we quarantine “poor…mostly minority children in schools affluent families would never tolerate.” In doing so, “we do not preserve the institution of public education. We dishonor its guiding ideals” (Congressional Record, June 12, S2062-63).

Senator Gregg does not mention how middle class and wealthier Americans “escape” poorly performing public schools by moving and attending highly performing public schools. He says they exit the public school system and attend private schools. My analysis suggests that this is because this narrative is largely about inferior (monopolistic) public services as compared to superior private ones. The private sector is superior because it enables market competition. He brings this point home later in his narrative when he compares educating a human being with making a Big Mac or a Whopper, saying:
It is fairly obvious...through...looking at the situation...and from intuition, that if you create competition you usually improve a product. The reason somebody chooses McDonald's over Burger King is because they think the product is better...Regrettably, our public school systems have not ever had the competition necessary to improve the product. The purpose of choice, of course, is not to undermine the public school system; it is just the opposite. It is to create an incentive for reform in the public school system which improves those systems... (And) the bottom line...goal is to take these kids who have been locked in a failing school...and give them an opportunity (Congressional Record, June 12, S2063-64).

There is no acknowledgment in this narrative that schools are educating human beings rather than making a product, or that we may need to serve children differently from how we serve customers who buy a Big Mac. Public service values have no place in this story.

Mostly, though, the metaphor of the “safety valve” was used to link public schools to the mediocre status quo without naming them, and thereby justify providing public resources to non-public school (moral) others. Although Republicans were far more likely to tell this story, Democrats also used it, albeit mostly in conjunction with public charter schools. For example, Congressman Carper (D-DE) said:

charter schools provide wonderful educational opportunities for children in some of the most disadvantaged communities in America. However, we do not provide much help to charter schools to finance their facilities. We ought to. It is the number one challenge facing charter schools today—preventing new charter schools from opening and preventing successful ones from expanding. With this legislation, we provide some help at the Federal level to assist charter schools in accessing the credit markets and leveraging private capital. We also provide new incentives to encourage States to treat charters like other public schools and provide them with equitable funding for facilities (Congressional Record, December 17, S13337).

Here, he is arguing that charter schools need help, in the form of taxpayer dollars, because they provide needed opportunities to disadvantaged children but are treated inequitably by the (monopolistic) public school system.
The differences between how legislators characterized public schools and their non-public school counterparts, however, were most obvious when comparing the descriptive words used for each. The latter were robust, competitive, successful, a safety valve for parents, and so forth. Conversely, public schools were beleaguered and in need of “reinvigoration” from outside the system. More negatively, public schools did not care about parents or children. They were mediocre, unsafe, and full of drugs, and used their public monopoly to mask failure and trap children. As Senator Sessions (R-AL) claimed:

We have too many schools where children are locked into a failing system, and they have been falling behind. Nobody even knows or cares that they are falling behind. They can't go to any other school. They are required by law to attend this dysfunctional school. And that is just not good (Congressional Record, December 18, S13394).

These kinds of arguments were mostly used to justify accountability through standards and testing, but were also a means of justifying competition (i.e., choice) as a form of accountability.113 New Democrat Senator Bayh (D-IN) said:

This legislation contains within it a robust commitment to parental choice and the inclusion of market forces within our public education system, while still retaining the genius of a public education, which is the implicit guarantee of a good education for everyone, not just those who would do well in a purely market-based system…We have public school choice for every parent where a school has not done well enough in making progress within 2 years. There are supplemental services after 3 years, giving parents a choice for afterschool, summer school, and weekend tutorials to make sure the kids get the education they need. And finally, there is a meaningful, determined commitment to charter schools, making them an integral part of the public education system, to give more vitality, more innovation, and more accountability to public schools through charter schools (Congressional Record, December 17, S13331-32).

He claims that competition will preserve the “genius” of public education by ensuring it provides a good education to everyone, which is not what a purely market-based system

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113 See, for example, Senator Lieberman’s speech in support of NCLB where he framed public schools as being in need of reinvigoration (Congressional Record, December 18, S13398).
would do. Markets provide quality services to those who can afford the price. Then, he uses the words “implicit guarantee of a good education” to convey that a good education is neither a right nor a guarantee, and links the idea to a “meaningful, determined commitment to help charter schools.” This is interesting language coming from a Democrat.

The counter to these arguments framed the private sector as acquisitive and self-interested because it was driven by the profit motive. Even so, this narrative was (mostly) told in conjunction with things that were deemed harmful to parents. For example, it was used to discuss the Student Privacy Protection Act, which required schools to provide parents with information about any data that was collected for commercial purposes. Here, parents were the victims of public schools who had allowed private companies to access students.114

This discussion is not claiming that no one portrayed school choice in a negative light. Table 10 in the previous section shows that Democrats were far more likely to characterize non-public school others as contenders, or special interests that would drain or siphon off funding from public schools. We see this language in Senator Reed’s (D-RI) argument that he opposes a voucher pilot for private schools because “it diverts scarce federal resources from…public schools.” He then criticizes private enterprise, saying:

Frankly, the nature of private education is they exclude students. …because they are not smart enough…do not fit in with their approach to education…are difficult or have discipline problems. Public education cannot do that…(It) has to be inclusive…to reach out and embrace every child…private schools will exclude again and again and again. That is the nature of…private enterprise. That…some might argue, is one of their strengths. They can ensure all the children are part of

114 See, for instance, the testimony of Senator Shelby (R-AL). He argued that “bottom line is that parents have a right and a responsibility to be involved in their children's education” (Congressional Record, December 18, S13373).
their patent, that they fit in. That is not a luxury… public education has (Congressional Record, June 12, S6073).

Similarly, Congresswoman Eshoo (D-CA) said she was “pleased” NCLB did not include vouchers for private schools because they “siphon off” funding from public schools who serve “90 percent” of our nation’s students (Congressional Record, May 22, H2406). The main point is that public schools were implicated in the mediocre status quo as a means of justifying NCLB. The next section discusses the narrative portrayals of administrators, teachers and teachers’ unions.

**Administrators, Teachers and Teacher Unions**

Administrators and teachers were typically framed in sympathetic, but uncomplimentary ways. These narratives were far more prevalent for teachers, even among Democrats who include teachers in their political base. Again, we can use a quantitative analysis of the legislative debates on the Conference Report to analyze the overall framing of both groups. Table 12 on the next page shows that 91 percent of legislators made no comment about administrators (i.e., they were a non-event) compared to between 40 and 45 percent for teachers. When discussed at all, legislators portrayed administrators as beleaguered dependents or allies of society. The former was uncomplimentary in that it stressed the need for professional training, but it was (largely) used to advocate more resources rather than portray administrators as mediocre. The latter frames them as a societal resource or as professionals in need of discretion. The remainder of this section discusses teachers and their organizations, since they were of more concern.
Table 12. NCLB Target Groups: Teachers and Administrators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative and Valence</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th></th>
<th>Dem</th>
<th>Rep</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th></th>
<th>Dem</th>
<th>Rep</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Total Statements</td>
<td>% of Total (% State)</td>
<td>% of Total (% State)</td>
<td>% of Total (% State)</td>
<td>% of Total (% State)</td>
<td>% of Total (% State)</td>
<td>% of Total (% State)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allies of societal interests: Valence positive (1)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>40% (10%)</td>
<td>60% (19%)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>40% (25%)</td>
<td>60% (60%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral, but beleaguered agents: Valence mixed (2)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>40% (6%)</td>
<td>60% (13%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beleaguered dependents: Valence negative (3)</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>66% (68%)</td>
<td>34% (47%)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>75% (75%)</td>
<td>25% (40%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contenders: Valence negative (4)</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>50% (16%)</td>
<td>50% (21%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Statements (5)</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>57% (100%)</td>
<td>43% (100%)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>62% (100%)</td>
<td>38% (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Event (6)</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. This category includes narratives that described teachers as an important resource, or professionals in need of discretion. Republicans were more likely to stress the need for discretion as part of a “government off our backs” discourse.

2. This category includes narratives that portrayed teachers as “stifled by the system” or beleaguered as a result of societal problems or lacking resources, but they characterized teachers as needing the government’s help rather than portraying them as autonomous agents.

3. This category stresses that teachers need professional training, development and assistance. Democrats were more likely to stress assistance for training and development (resources) versus help from outside the “educational establishment.” Nonetheless, the rhetoric gives the appearance that teachers are in need of improvement even if the focus is on resources. The narratives are mixed in terms of teaching shortages, with both parties discussing recruitment from outside the “educational establishment” (non-traditional routes into teaching).

4. These narratives in some way portray teachers as part of the problem, either because they are part of the educational establishment or have low expectations, or because they need regulation, accountability or competition to ensure improved performance.

5. There were 140 “speeches” that had “content” (i.e., discussed the legislation in some way rather than only thanking individuals responsible for NCLB). Some speakers (members of Congress) made more than one speech. These columns include statements and non-statements (non-events) that were made about the targets. The total number of statements does not add up to the number of speeches because some speakers made no statements about a target (a non-event) while others made more than one.

6. A non-event is a non-statement. Some speakers did not tell a narrative about every target group. This counts as a single non-event.

Similarly, members of Congress (largely) did not take on teachers and their unions directly during the debates on NCLB. Instead, like George Bush, they used the narrative of low expectations to implicate these groups, but only if they spoke out against the legislation. Then, they were proponents of the mediocre status quo. When we see teachers’ unions directly discussed, it was largely because legislators were advocating

115 Source: Congressional Record, December 13th, December 17th and December 18th. For purposes of this analysis, Senator Jeffords (VT) is listed as a Republican, but he became an Independent prior to these specific debates on the Conference Report.
school choice and viewed unions as a threat to their proposals. Here, they were portrayed as “bullies” (i.e., Goliath), but the construction of “David” was not uniform.

Most typically, legislators constructed poor and minority children as “David.” In this case, disadvantaged children were the real beneficiaries of school choice if the state (i.e., Goliath) took on teachers’ unions and their Democratic allies (i.e., Goliath) who opposed competition. For example, in discussing his portability amendment, which would have created a pilot project, Senator Gregg (D-NH) said:

One of those images that stands out from when I was a kid…(was Governor) Faubus, from Arkansas…(and the) National Guard…standing in the school door saying he was not going to let this child…in the school. I could not understand it. Of course, we learned this was wrong. And we changed our Nation because of it. Today what we have are people standing in that school door not letting kids out, locking them in those schools which are not teaching them. And why? Why are they doing that? Because the bureaucracy and the labor unions fear the option of giving parents a choice. It is that simple. This is not about education. This is about the power of political groups to influence the process. When you have lost generation after generation of kids to schools that are failing…and you know that every child who goes through that school is not going to have a chance to participate in the American dream…a civil right is…absolutely being denied to those children_simply because they do not have the wherewithal to get out of that school and get a decent education…We have an obligation…to first give that child an option to get a decent education and, second, to put real pressure on that public school system to improve…And for a small amount of $50 million…targeted solely on the child who comes from a low-income family and who is stuck in a school that has failed for 3 consistent years. I can't see how this amendment can be opposed, other than on the grounds that it affronts the power politics of Washington, DC, which are structured around bureaucracies and labor unions that will at all costs defend their turf, even if that cost involves a child's education (Congressional Record, June 12, S6064).

Yet, many of these narratives also portrayed charter and private schools as “David.”

Here, both were portrayed as the last line of defense for those who wished to flee mediocre public schools, but could not do so without the benefits of public funds. Meanwhile, teachers’ unions (i.e., Goliath) restricted programs that advanced choice because they felt threatened by competition.
Taxpayers were also a common victim in this narrative. In this case, inefficient and ineffective public schools (Goliath) were able to waste taxpayers’ (David) money because teachers’ unions (Goliath) prevented competition from outside the public school monopoly. In supporting Senator Gregg’s Portability Amendment, Senator Hutchinson (R-AR) opined:

Taxpayers deserve to get results from funding that goes to public schools. After 35 years and $120 billion in Federal funding, it is time we hold schools accountable for enabling our children to reach high standards…We should not buckle under to the teachers unions and those who are wedded to the status quo…I ask my colleagues to support this amendment because it fosters competition and innovation. I believe competition between private schools and public schools benefits all children in this country (Congressional Record, June 12, S6065-66).

Some even posited that teachers and administrators were being bullied into silence by teachers’ unions. Senator Ensign (R-NV) exclaimed:

This program does not take money away from any school. This amendment creates a demonstration program and authorizes new funding to pay for it…School choice, be it private or public, has been proven to drive reform…Because competition breeds reform. How can a school be expected to rise above mediocrity if it is not challenged? In my opinion a lack of competition breeds mediocrity. If you look around us today, I will bet you that everyone here has sought out the best schools for our children … This amendment will help those who cannot afford to…Parents strongly support public school choice; and yes, even vouchers… I have had conversations with public school superintendents, principals, and teachers who support vouchers…But, they are afraid of stating their support publicly because of the teacher unions. In fact, public school teachers send their own children to private schools at a higher rate than the general population (Congressional Record, June 12, S6077).

In this narrative, poor children are clearly the victims of the public school monopoly. However, he claims that members of Congress, as well as parents, teachers and administrators, support choice but are “afraid of stating their support publicly because of teacher unions.”
In terms of teachers, only a small percentage of legislators described them in ways that portrayed them as allies of society or professionals in need of discretion. When positively framed, teachers were portrayed as deserving of respect and help because they were a “societal resource.” For example, Congressman Gilchrest (R-MD) argued that the “pillars of the next generation rest upon teachers” (*Congressional Record*, May 22, H2412). This is very different from arguing that teachers are entitled to discretion as a result of their professional training and their commitment to caring for children. An example of this latter narrative is Congressman Hutchinson’s (R-AR) statement that he supported NCLB because it “acknowledges that teachers are the heart and soul of our education system and should be rewarded and encouraged for their efforts” (*Congressional Record*, May 22, H2406). Interestingly, Republicans were far more likely to tell these kinds of stories. However, this was largely a rhetorical device that was used by conservatives to advocate less federal involvement in education. For example, Congressman Gilchrest (R-MD) exclaimed:

> Teachers receive degrees. They are licensed to teach in a State. They are professionals. They represent the broad diversity of the country. Now we summarily assume that the aristocracy of Washington and the State capitals are smarter and wiser (*Congressional Record*, May 22, H2528).

In contrast, Democrats were far more likely to portray teachers as moral, but beleaguered agents. My qualitative analysis suggests that the purpose of this narrative was two-fold. First, Democrats used it to advocate providing more resources to public schools in general, and high need, low resource schools specifically. Here, teachers were beleaguered because they were serving an increasingly needy population of students with too few (state) resources. Second, they used it for “credit-claiming,” or conveying that they had delivered resources to a highly mobilized and important constituency. Even so,
by stressing teacher training, these narratives implied teachers were mediocre. For instance, Congresswoman Sanchez (D-CA) told a story about a visit she made with then-Vice President Al Gore to a school. When a 12 year old was asked “what was the most important thing she was looking forward to in her classroom,” the student replied “everybody knows…the quality of the teacher is the most important thing for a child to learn.” Then, Sanchez adds “I am excited that we are doing something about teacher training.” (Congressional Record, May 22, H2409).

In terms of valence, sometimes these narratives were positive. Congressman Gilman (R-NY), for example, argued:

If we are to expect our children to achieve great academic success in elementary and secondary school, it is vitally important that their teachers are ready and able to meet the challenges of everyday instruction in the classroom…our Nation's teachers are called upon to act as surrogate parents, counselors, confidants, and security officers, in addition to their basic responsibilities of educating students on a daily basis. With many teachers choosing to leave the profession, we need to help retain them and by providing the necessary funding for training and professional development, as well as a teacher mentoring program, hopefully we can retain the best and brightest in their profession and prevent a massive shortage which is anticipated in New York State.” (Congressional Record, May 22, H2419)

Here, he acknowledges that teachers confront difficult issues every day in the classroom. In consequence, many leave the profession. Even here, though, the remedy is more training and assistance.116

116 Similarly, Senator Kennedy (D-MA) noted “Turnover in the first few years is particularly high because new teachers are typically given the most challenging teaching assignments and left to sink or swim with little or no support. They are often placed in the most disadvantaged schools, and assigned the most-difficult-to-teach students with the greatest number of class preparations. Many of them are outside their field of expertise with a slew of extracurricular activities with no mentoring or support. There is little wonder that so many give up before they have really learned to teach” (Congressional Record, December 17, S13337).
More frequently, these narratives had negative undertones. We see this in the following narrative told by Congressman Miller (D-CA). Miller said he supported NCLB because it:

- gives us an opportunity to ensure that all teachers, in all classrooms, in front of all students, are fully qualified. Nothing is more shameful than having America's children shortchanged by uncertified teachers or unqualified teachers to teach the subject matter for which they have been hired. Study after study continues to show the impact that unqualified teachers have on the education of our children. The final conference report needs to reverse this troubling trend by investing additional funding in professional development, in teacher training, while ensuring that Federal funds are only used to pay fully qualified teachers (Congressional Record, July 18, H4122).

Although Congressman Miller’s narrative does not frame all teachers as part of the problem, it is clearly not positive. Other legislators, however, more explicitly framed teachers as supporters of the mediocre status quo. For instance, New Democratic Senator Lieberman (D-CT) exclaimed:

- We are saying we are no longer going to tolerate failure for our children and from the adults who are supposed to be educating them…we believe, as a matter of faith, that every child in this country can learn at a high level. And we are…redoubling our national efforts to help realize those expectations of excellence and raise academic achievement for all of our children. This new educational equation could be summed up in six words: Invest in reform; insist on results (Congressional Record, December 18, S13398).

Meanwhile, teachers in high need, low resource schools were routinely portrayed as subpar. We see this in Congressman Fattah’s (D-PA) narrative when he claims that NCLB was a giant step forward, but “still a long way from making sure that poor children do not end up with a poor quality instructor…textbooks and educational materials” (Congressional Record, December 13, H10101-02).

Most of these narratives do not portray teachers as “deviant,” but the consistent portrayal of teachers as being in need of professional training, development and
assistance constructs them as (intentional or unintentional) perpetuators of the mediocre status quo. In the former they are “deviants,” using their public school monopoly to pursue their own interests at the expense of children and society. In the latter, they are “dependents” in need of outside help to fix the problem (i.e., bring in the state). Again, the purpose of these narratives was to justify providing more funding to public schools. Still, they give the impression that “those who can’t, teach.” This argument is further evidenced by the fact that many advocated the need to recruit from “outside of the profession” in order to fix the problem.¹¹⁷ For example, Senator Bunning (R-KT) opined that “teachers have one of the hardest, most important jobs in the world.” Then, he celebrates NCLB because now:

> schools will have the ability to help teachers do their jobs better, whether it is reducing class size, providing training or recruiting new teachers. We all know good teachers are one of the keys to a good education. Now school officials are going to have more tools at their disposal to help teachers do their job.

He concludes by exclaiming that he is particularly “glad this bill contains the important Troops to Teachers Program” because there “are no better role models for kids than men and women who have sacrificed for our country” (Congressional Record, December 18, S13366). This narrative appears benign, but is not complementary by any means. The overall theme is that teachers need help to do their jobs. Thus, we need to “bring in the troops” because there “are no better role models for kids.” This implies teachers are not good role models.

¹¹⁷ Another common narrative was that math and science teachers needed training from outside of teaching, especially from the private sector, in order to do their jobs. See, for instance, the speech made by Congressman Smith (R-MI) during the debates on the Conference Report (Congressional Record, December 13, H10086).
Other legislators framed teachers as allies of the government when they supported NCLB, but as part of the problem if they did not. Congressman George Miller (D-CA) said:

We have had some serious discussions about accountability…I am optimistic that we can set high standards that drive our public school systems toward that goal. Make no mistake about it: There will be, and there already is, a great deal of pressure from those who resist change, those who want to maintain the status quo, those who want to make sure that nothing ever changes in this system, but those are the same people that have given us the results that Americans find so repugnant. We need to change the system…There are those that say they cannot get students proficient in 12 years. All I can say is, thank God they were not in the room with President Jefferson when he launched Lewis and Clark…(or) with John Kennedy when he launched the program to put a man on the moon…Their response to this bill is that they are going to dumb down tests…to teach to the tests. That is the response of the American education system in this country? I hope not (Congressional Record, July 18, H4122).

Although he is not explicitly shaming teachers, he is implicating them. Later on, he clearly shames teachers when he notes that many said the 10-year requirement for 100 percent proficiency was “impossible.” He then exclaims he was “shocked to hear it from so many educators. Maybe they are in the wrong field” (Congressional Record, December 13, H10103).

Many members also used George Bush’s narrative of low expectations to implicitly or explicitly frame teachers as contenders, meaning they were part of what former Secretary of Education Bill Bennett called the BLOB or the educational establishment. In doing so, they linked teachers to the mediocre status quo. Therefore, just like public schools, teachers need regulation, accountability or competition to ensure they “do right by the kids.” Once framed in this manner, teachers then also become implicated in the narratives about David and Goliath. Here, the public school monopoly (now including teachers and their unions) harmed children, taxpayers and society in order
to serve their own interests. They also harmed those who tried to break the public school monopoly, meaning private and public charter schools, by lobbying to ensure their exclusion from state funding.

My analysis suggests that the framing of teachers partly resulted from the fact that funding for teacher training and recruitment fit with the overall narrative about how accountability was not designed to punish schools. Instead, testing was “diagnostic.” It was designed to see where help was needed and then provide resources for remediation, including funding to improve teacher training and development. Then, if schools failed to use those resources well (i.e., improve performance), NCLB imposed more punitive measures. A second factor, though, was that the legislation really does not do very much for teachers. In consequence, there was not a lot of room for “credit-claiming,” especially by Democrats who include teachers’ unions in their political base. This is because funding for those things teachers care about, such as salary increases and smaller class sizes, were block granted, which allows states to choose where to invest the money.¹¹⁸ Legislators appear to recognize this issue. Some, like George Bush, tried to address it by advocating tax relief for teachers. During the hearings on NCLB, for example, Senator Warner (R-VA) exclaimed:

> I was absolutely astonished…(by a study that showed) how often teachers…reach into their own pockets or pocketbooks…to buy what…(what is essential for the classroom… that's a significant contribution -- charitable, in a sense -- that they're making on behalf of education…So I've introduced a piece of legislation giving

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¹¹⁸ Politically, flexibility was important for building a bipartisan bill. For instance, Senator Sessions (R-AL) said NCLB provided important flexibility by eliminating “the class-size reduction program “ and giving “school districts the option to choose whether they want to use federal teacher dollars to recruit or retain teachers, reduce class-size or to provide additional training to teachers already in the classroom. States would also be able to spend Federal teacher dollars on merit pay, tenure reform, teacher testing and alternative certification. The point is to allow flexibility for school districts to address the needs most important to the local community, instead of simply dictating what should be done from Washington (Congressional Record, December 18, S13396).
them a $1,000 tax credit (Senate 2001). He proposed tax relief as a means of redressing this issue.

However, the amendment, which was proposed by Senators Warner (R-VA) and Collins (R-ME), was not included in the Conference Report (*Congressional Record*, December 18, S13375).

Other members rhetorically expressed support for salary increases and other programs teachers supported. These narratives portrayed teachers as deserving and entitled without acknowledging that these programs had been block granted. For example, Congressman Owens (D-NY) said: “Teachers should not be held in contempt and treated as if they are at the bottom of the professional ladder. They need decent salaries and benefits (*Congressional Record*, December 13, H10088). Some members even acknowledged that the legislation focused on teachers because many of the factors that influence student performance are outside of legislative control. As Congressman DeWine (R-OH) noted:

> We cannot fix broken homes or solve the issue of poverty overnight, but we can use finite and limited Federal dollars…to help close that education gap and give these children opportunities. I believe the best place to begin…is by restoring accountability and achievement with the single most important resource in the classroom…the teacher… Nothing is more important than that teacher in the classroom…good teachers are second only to good parents in helping children learn. So any effort to restore confidence and improve quality in education must begin with a national recommitment to teaching as a profession…First, we…need to make it easier, not harder, to recruit future teachers from the military, from industry, and from research institutions_people with established careers in real world job experiences who want to go into teaching…Second, we have a provision giving support for teachers seeking to improve subject matter knowledge or classroom skills…I also believe we need to prioritize our limited Federal funding to recruit and retain good teachers in our high-need urban and rural school districts. One way to do that is by recruiting teachers from the military through the Troops to Teachers Program (*Congressional Record*, December 17, S13340-41).
Nevertheless, his narrative is not positive in terms of how he constructs teachers in comparison to other professionals, who have had “established careers in real world job experiences,” and the military, who are an important resource for teacher recruitment. Again, teachers need training and help from outside the teaching profession in order to improve performance. We can make a similar comparison to how other school professionals were characterized throughout the debates. Administrators were framed in uncomplimentary ways but, as previously mentioned, were for the most part a non-event. As a whole, my analysis indicates that teachers were more prominently viewed as both the source of the problem and its resolution. This point is further evidenced by how teachers were framed in comparison to parents and students. As the next two sections show, both of these groups were largely a non-story in the narratives about public school performance.

**Parents versus Parents of Disadvantaged Children**

Similar to public education, parenthood mostly carries positive constructions within the larger political culture. We can construct a quantitative analysis of the debates on the Conference Report to analyze if this altered how parents were socially constructed. In Table 13 on the next page, we see that parents were largely framed as a non-event in the story about education. When discussed at all, they were mostly portrayed as entitled (moral) agents. My qualitative analysis reveals that legislators told two types of moral tales. The first portrayed parents as “beleaguered” victims of failing schools. They are moral agents because they care about their children while teachers and public schools care about their jobs or the system. As such, parents were entitled to state assistance in
the form of information, choice and supplemental services. Second, parents are moral
agents because they served as “system changers.”

Table 13. **NCLB Target Groups: Parents, Children, and Disadvantaged Children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Disadv.</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>% of State</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>% of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroes: Valence positive (1)</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>41% (76%)</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beleaguered dependents (society):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valence mixed (2)</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23% (14%)</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beleaguered dependents (familial):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valence negative (3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contenders/Deviants: Valence negative (4)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>57% (10%)</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Statements (6)</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>52% (100%)</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Event (6)</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) These narratives imply that the target group is an “ally” of societal interests in some way. For parents, they are typically described as “system changers,” meaning that their freedom to choose or participate puts pressure on schools to perform. For children, they are the “future of our democracy,” or the “engine of our economy.” Disadvantaged children were mostly portrayed as needing opportunities rather than the future of our democracy or the engine of our economy.

(2) Targets are portrayed as victims of society in some manner. Parents and children (poor, disadvantaged or otherwise) are portrayed as in need of resources or help, often because they are “trapped in failing schools” or the victims of low expectations (victims of the public school monopoly/teachers’ unions). Children need help also because of mental health issues, or violence and drugs in society or at school.

(3) This was mostly used for disadvantaged children and portrayed them as being “at-risk” in some way as a result of their families or backgrounds.

(4) The targets are implicitly portrayed as deviant through the use of language that discusses personal responsibility in some way. For example, it might tell a narrative of the need for parents to participate, children to work hard, or “we will give you the tools and opportunities, but you need to use them.”

(5) There were 140 “speeches” that had “content” (i.e., discussed the legislation in some way rather than only thanking individuals responsible for NCLB). Some speakers (members of Congress) made more than one speech. These columns include statements and non-statements (non-events) that were made about the targets. The total number of statements does not add up to the number of speeches because some speakers made no statements about a target (a non-event) while others made more than one.

(6) A non-event is a non-statement. Some speakers did not tell a narrative about every target group. This counts as a single non-event.

When told by Republicans, this language was often used to justify school choice.

For instance, Senator McCain said:

This bill…works to ensure that parents are better informed about the public education system by providing pertinent information regarding their child’s school…Parents are our first teachers. Our first classroom is the home, where we learn the value of hard work, respect, and the difference between right and

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119 Source: *Congressional Record*, December 13th, December 17th and December 18th. For purposes of this analysis, Senator Jeffords (VT) is listed as a Republican, but he became an Independent prior to these specific debates on the Conference Report.
wrong...the home is the most important Department of Education. Parental involvement is the best guarantee that a child will succeed in school. I am genuinely excited when I think of the many reforms taking place across the country, namely school vouchers and charter schools, that are wisely built on this premise: Let parents decide where their children's educational needs will best be met...School choice stimulates improvement and creates expanded opportunities for our children to get a quality education. (*Congressional Record*, December 18, S13385).

Senator Gregg (R-NH), on the other hand, exclaimed that choice is good for parents, but “is an equally big incentive for the school systems to get their house in order” (*Congressional Record*, December 17, S13328). Democrats, on the other hand, framed parents as system changers because they served society by keeping their “eyes on the street,” meaning they served as a watchdog to ensure public schools and teachers “do right by the kids.” In short, parents need choice and state-provided information (i.e., test scores) to ensure that their children do not “languish” in failed public schools.

Parents were rarely portrayed as responsible for their children’s performance in school. When applied to parents, the narrative of personal responsibility was usually implicit and included phrases such as “we give parents the tools, but they need to use them.” For example Senator Domenici (R-NM) claimed that NCLB “sets the stage...to give parents more choice if parents are willing to be part of it, help with transportation and other things” (*Congressional Record*, December 17, S13335). When parents themselves were implicated in the mediocre status quo, my qualitative analysis shows that the narrative typically encompassed parents of disadvantaged children. As Senator Gregg (D-NH) proclaimed, NCLB empowered:

parents to assist their children when they have a child who is in a failing school and who is being left behind and is from a low-income background. We have given them a whole panoply of new tools to do that, including much more information...In most instances when talking to parents of a low-income child, it is not parents but parent. They usually come from single-parent families. That is
unfortunate, but that single parent is usually struggling to make ends meet and really does need to have some options available to her, usually it is a "her," when she is trying to address the education failures of the school her child attends” (Congressional Record, December 17, S13327).

Here, the description implicitly portrays single mothers as the cause of poor educational performance. His tone is somewhat sympathetic, but the language is clearly paternalistic. For the most part, though, parents were portrayed as entitled agents while low-income parents were portrayed as beleaguered dependents, meaning their children were “trapped in failing schools” and in need of state help. As the next sections shows, this was also true in terms of children.

**Children versus Disadvantaged Children**

As Table 13 in the last section indicates, the narratives about children were less cohesive than those used to describe their parents. When children were framed as allies of society (the advantaged), they were characterized as the “future of our democracy” or the “engines of our economy.” Even here, they were typically portrayed as deserving of opportunities rather than framed as entitled citizens. For example, many claimed that Congress was providing opportunities, but children needed to work hard or take personal responsibility. As Senator Landrieu (D-LA) proclaimed:

> This bill works…to strengthen our schools and to build on a promise that every child deserves a quality education and… that every child should have an opportunity—not a guarantee but an opportunity—to be all that God created them to be and all their parents and loved ones hope for them to be…It outlines some new goals and objectives that are going to be difficult and challenging. But we need to lift those expectations for our children…to challenge our Nation (Congressional Record, December 18, S13372).

Although Landrieu is a conservative Democrat, liberal Democrats also linked the narratives of opportunity and personal responsibility. Congressman George Miller (D-CA) stated:
this bill…is built upon a deep and uncompromising belief…that all of America's children can learn. We believe that an impoverished child does not mean a child that cannot learn…(it redirects) resources to dramatically enhance the opportunities for success by America's children. The opportunity for success. We cannot guarantee the success, but we can provide the opportunity (Congressional Record, December 13, H10102-03).

These narratives support Hess and McGuinn’s (2002) analysis that Democrats tried to shake the label of “tax and spend liberals” by linking more federal funding with accountability for results, rather than portraying it as an entitlement.

In fact, Democrats were far more likely to characterize children in sympathetic, but uncomplimentary ways. This included portraying children as beleaguered victims and dependents, who were at-risk of mediocrity due to failing schools and socio-economic disadvantage. Again, my qualitative analysis suggests that this was (largely) a rhetorical device to justify more spending rather than a belief that children in general and poor children in particular were culturally deviant. Still, these portrayals were not complimentary. Republicans, on the other hand, were more likely to explicitly portray children as deviant rather than dependent. Mostly, this framing was implicit in discussions about drugs, violence in school, and growing issues with mental illness. My analysis suggests that these narratives were designed to convey larger cultural issues rather than attack children.

Even so, across political parties, the consistent focus on how disadvantaged children performed well below their advantaged peers, especially when discussing minorities, made them appear to be less capable. This was true even when legislators intended to convey that children were the victims of low expectations or poorly performing schools. As Senator McCain said:
Our public school system has many good schools, but there are many schools that are broken. Instead of serving as a gateway to advancement, these schools have become dead-end places of despair and low achievement. In urban settings, the subject performance of 17-year-old African-American and Hispanic students is at the same level as 13-year-old-white students. This is an unacceptable and embarrassing failure on the part of our public schools (Congressional Record, December 18, S13385).

Like many Republicans, McCain’s narrative was more prominently about inferior public goods than minority children. So, he describes public schools as “broken…dead-end places of despair and low achievement.” Still, by linking minorities to “unacceptable and embarrassing failure,” he is framing minorities as poor performers. This narrative demonstrates how testing as a technology, by providing the means to disaggregate test scores by subgroup, also provided the means to explicitly and implicitly name and shame disadvantaged groups, even as political elites cloaked themselves in the scientific language of statistics.

Across-the-board, both qualitatively and quantitatively, the implicit and explicit narratives about minorities and disadvantaged children were mostly unflattering. Congresswoman Pryce (R-OH) opined “we know that over 60 percent of children living in poverty are reading below the very basic level. We cannot expect these children to exceed with this handicap” (Congressional Record, May 17, 2001, H2299). The language of “handicap” is not accepted for the disabled but here it is linked with poor children. Congressman Isakson (R-GA), on the other hand, exclaimed:

Robert Browning was once asked, the great philosopher and writer, what his definition of education was and what it meant to a human being. His answer was very simple: education makes a people easy to lead, difficult to drive; easy to govern and impossible to enslave…the poor and most disadvantaged children in America's public schools are in fact enslaved today by ignorance (Congressional Record, July 18, H4124).
In this narrative, he uses the language of “enslavement” to justify NCLB. My qualitative analysis indicates that this was strategic. As briefly discussed in the last chapter, it was part of an overall narrative that linked NCLB to the next phase of the civil rights movement.

Similar to George Bush, many Republicans in Congress tried to use education reform as a means of portraying themselves as advocates of civil rights. One way to do so was to adopt the language of liberalism, even as they proposed reforms that would not resolve inequality. For example, Senator DeWine (R-OH) stated:

tragically, our society is becoming more and more divided…along economic and educational lines. This division is certainly nothing new. Scholars and sociologists have been warning us for many years that this was where our Nation was headed, particularly if we didn't properly educate our children. Tragically, we have not heeded these warnings. As a result, our Nation today is…split into two Americas: One where children get educated and one where they do not. This gap in educational knowledge and the gap in economic standing is entrenching thousands upon thousands of children into an underclass and into futures filled with little hope and little opportunity… So how do we bring society back together? That is our challenge. How do we bring about equality and opportunity so that all children in this Nation have the chance to lead full, meaningful, and productive lives as adults. We do this in the same way that we have always done it, and that is through education…education should provide all children, regardless of their economic circumstances or family backgrounds, with the tools they need to make it as adults in our society….to rise above individual situations of poverty and instability… hopelessness and despair. It truly has been, for generation after generation of Americans, their ticket out of poverty, their ticket out and away from despair…to opportunity (Congressional Record, December 17, S13339-13340).

Here, he is linking (mediocre) teachers and public schools to the problem of “two Americas,” which is a phrase used by liberals to denote social stratification. He then proclaimed that NCLB restores opportunity through accountability, funding for teacher training and development, and by recruiting teachers from other professions, especially the military.
Also similar to George Bush, Republicans linked teachers and public schools to segregation through the narrative of low expectations. Congressman Castle (R-Delaware) said:

Prior to 1965, many poor and minority students were denied access to a quality education…this country had a two-tiered educational system, one with low expectations for poor and minority students and high expectations for others. Then Washington got involved. Now, after 35 years and more than $130 billion of well-intentioned Washington spending, we have yet to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their more affluent peers. We have allowed ourselves to believe that some children are simply beyond our reach. As a result, this Nation has suffered. Today…we have rededicated ourselves to the notion that all children can learn…that no child is limited by a high school education that does not provide him or her with the necessary skills to read and write well (Congressional Record, May 22, H2406).

Again, the solution was not to redress socio-economic inequality, or provide more equitable opportunities to learn. Instead, the problem was the soft bigotry of (teachers’) low expectations. Therefore, the solution was to hold schools (and teachers) accountable.120

In sum, children were rarely portrayed as entitled to government largesse. When they were portrayed in this manner, it was because they were an important resource for the nation rather than entitled citizens. This was especially true of disadvantaged children. Here, however, the rhetoric often implicitly or explicitly argued it would take courage or heroism to “take a gamble” on behalf of poor children. Conversely, anyone who opposed reform lacked courage, did not want to support poor children, or opposed

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120 Mr. Fletcher (R-KY) stated that “only 36 percent of minorities…read on grade level by the fourth grade…this initiative…will help address…a problem that…has been largely ignored over the last several decades…We have not offered the kind of help in education to empower minorities…I think it is a reflection of some soft discrimination that lowers expectations, that we need to make sure…is stopped and that we raise expectations …to make sure that the minorities close that gap…to be all that they can be” (Congressional Record, May 22, H2410-11).
extending the American dream to all children. As Congressman Boehner (R-OH) exclaimed:

This process...is marked...by a willingness on the part of those involved to take a gamble on behalf of our poorest students. It has been marked by the courage of legislators on both sides of the aisle to challenge conventional thinking and party orthodoxy for the sake of meaningful change...we should recognize the role of our President. Without his courage in proposing these reforms and his courage in continuing to press for them...none of this would have been possible...President Bush, during his campaign last year, took a courageous stand... It was a bold and courageous move... It took a great deal of patience and listening, and it took a great deal of trust to actually bring this product to where we are today... Members on both sides of the aisle are committed to the concept that every child in America can learn...Every Member...understands that without a sound, basic education, the chance at the American dream does not exist. For 35 years we have promised...we would help the poorest of our children. We failed, and we failed miserably (Congressional Record, December 13, H10092 and H10103-04).

Other members of Congress used the narrative of personal responsibility, which implicated children in their own mediocrity. Once again, this implied they were not “entitled” to equal outcomes, only the opportunity to succeed. This narrative was particularly important for Democrats because it enabled them to shake the label of “tax and spend” liberals.

Discussion: Target Groups and Political Change

Schneider and Ingram (2005c, 639) suggest that the social construction of target groups may change over time as a result of processes that are internal or external to a particular target group. External processes include dramatic events, such as war or economic shocks, but may also be generated by institutions, such as public policies. For instance, the political attractiveness of an advantaged group may change if they become the beneficiaries of too many rewards from public policies. Then, their constructions may “shift from ‘deserving’ to ‘greedy’ or selfish, with a corresponding change in the kinds of policy designs they will receive.” Internally, a group may gain or lose resources
in ways that change their ability to affect how they are socially and politically constructed. This includes actual resources, such as a group’s organizational capacity (i.e., its size, monetary resources, and other factors that affect mobilization and collective action), as well as symbolic ones, meaning public perceptions about the group and the group’s ability to mobilize. Either way, political entrepreneurs strategically manipulate events and perceptions in order to alter the construction of target groups and thereby achieve their political objectives. Together, chapters five and six suggest that all of these processes were at play in terms of the construction of teachers and public schools during the debates on NCLB. When combined with chapter three, however, this research further indicates that this was not a short-term process.

Political elites and the media began socially and politically reconstructing public education in the 1970s. Much of this occurred as a result of events within the larger cultural political economy. As discussed in chapter three, these included external political and economic shocks, such as political scandals, the war in Vietnam, stagflation, and declining economic competitiveness abroad. At the same time, American political, economic, and social institutions were also being socially and culturally reconstructed in ways that impacted public education. For instance, the family as an institution was changing as a result of women joining the labor force in large numbers. Meanwhile, the organization of public schools was also undergoing reconstruction due to legal actions challenging de facto segregation, inequitable school financing, and restrictions on civil liberties. All of these fostered conservative mobilization and culminated in the election of President Ronald Reagan. Economically, Reagan pursued a new and competing approach to resolving economic problems. Ideationally, he argued that a dynamic,
private market would foster economic growth, and that the resulting prosperity would eventually trickle down in ways that obviated the need for redistributive policies (i.e., re-slicing the economic pie). Politically, he advocated devolving national programs, especially those dealing with social and economic assistance, back to the states.

When combined with broader economic trends, these policies sharply increased income inequality, at a time when the safety net for low-income families was being truncated, and contributed to a growing wealth gap between blacks and whites (Katz 1990; Katzenelson 2005; Phillips 1990). In education, New Federalism resulted in a retrenchment in funding for the ESEA. This occurred even though there was strong bipartisan support in Congress for federal programs that served disadvantaged children. In consequence, fewer disadvantaged children were served under Title I in the 1980s than in the 1970s (Jennings 2001; Cross 2004). Just as problematically, after a period of decline between 1959 and 1969, child poverty rates continued to grow from a low of 14 percent to 22 percent in 2011 (Children’s Defense Fund 2011). This is important because studies find that poverty is correlated with educational achievement, regardless of race, or the school a child attends. Meanwhile, African American and Hispanic children are three times as likely to be poor (38.8 and 34.1 percent, respectively) as white children (12.5 percent) (Children’s Defense Fund 2011). Unsurprisingly, then, studies show that the achievement gap widened as a result of growing income inequality, and that the problem disproportionately impacted minorities (Reardon 2011). It also impacted the schools and teachers that disproportionately served these groups.

Despite these trends, political elites mostly blamed public schools and teachers for policy failure under the ESEA. Throughout the debates, teachers and public schools were
(largely) framed in uncomplimentary ways (i.e., as dependents and contenders bordering on deviants), especially when compared to the victims (i.e., society, taxpayers, and children) and entitled heroes (i.e., non-public school others). This was true even when considering the testimonies of their allies (Democrats), who were more likely to frame teachers and public schools as beleaguered dependents rather than entitled allies of society. These narratives clearly raised the standing of non-public school others while stigmatizing bureaucrats, teachers and public schools. The stigma associated with the mediocre status quo restricted teacher mobilization, by creating a situation where opposing the policy solution meant supporting mediocrity. In this manner, those who sought change materially and symbolically altered the playing field in their favor.

Earlier, I argued that political elites co-opt one another’s narratives but then use them in different ways. This enables them to tap into taken for granted meanings, build coalitions and generate support for their preferred political solutions. In the 1970s, Marion Wright Edelman established the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) as a research and advocacy group for children in order to counter the effects of growing poverty. The CDF’s slogan was “Leave No Child Behind.” Thirty years later, this same slogan was used to justify moving from an equity regime to an accountability regime. The argument was that, by holding schools, administrators, and teachers accountable for student performance, excellence (for all) would disproportionately help disadvantaged children. In the process, a “rising tide will lift all boats.” Certainly, actors, events and institutions played a role in this development, but, as shown in the last two chapters, rhetoric was also critical.
Conclusion

In sum, events within the larger cultural political economy affected the mobilization of groups on the right and the left in ways that affected the educational polity. Yet, during the administrations of George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, interest group mobilization and growing conservatism in society largely resulted in policy gridlock as members of Congress tried to act on growing, but non-uniform, demands for change. Interest groups on both the right and the left increasingly embraced standards and accountability as a means of negotiating these tensions, but were unable to bridge ideological and ideational divisions in Congress (DeBray 2005; Rudalevige 2003). In the last chapter, I showed how George W. Bush and Republicans and Democrats in Congress negotiated this stalemate. Although they clearly used formal and informal institutions to do so, discursive innovations were also important. Both of these enabled them to “puzzle,” as well as “power” and achieve political change. In this chapter, I revealed the implications of these tactics for the political and social construction of different target groups. The next section of this dissertation examines how this discourse, and the political change it engendered, has impacted the political and social experiences, behaviors, and identities of teachers as citizens and policy implementers.
PART II
NCLB AND POLICY FEEDBACK

Earlier, I argued that the ESEA and NCLB were part of two competing public service paradigms. These paradigms have associated political and economic systems, but also preferred forms of social regulation. As such, I predicted that the change from one to the other is likely to result in value conflict. In the next part of this dissertation, I use narrative policy analysis, and open-ended interviews with 83 teachers and former teachers, to examine how political discourse and political change, in the form of NCLB, have impacted teachers’ political and social experiences, behaviors and identities.

As previously mentioned, Stone (1997) argues that political elites need to construct a narrative in order to sell a new policy solution or contest an existing one. Often, political elites use language that will evoke emotional, versus critical, responses in order to obscure larger issues and achieve change. In Part I, I showed how political elites used the narrative of the mediocre status quo to convert socio-economic inequality into a non-story, and thereby assign blame for educational failure to individual schools, teachers, and students. Legislators also obscured the punitive nature of accountability through the narrative of “diagnostic testing.” This narrative described test scores as a “neutral” means of rating and ranking teachers, students and schools. States could then use test scores to diagnose and treat problem areas, and punish “repeat offenders” (i.e., schools that are labeled in need of improvement). Discursively, political elites characterized testing as a form of clinical reasoning, which Stone (1993) defines as a form of political authority that looks for problems within individuals.

This research suggests that, as a form of clinical reason, diagnostic testing “un-normalized” hierarchical accountability and “normalized” market principals and logic
precisely because it looks for problems within individuals rather than social structures. Thus, discursively and institutionally, NCLB “normalized” a longer-term development to transpose business-economic or market ideas to public education. By normalized, I mean that the discourse and policy solutions were disconnected from interests and ideologies in ways that made both appear to be “common sense.” Meanwhile, both favored some ideas and interests while distancing others (Fairclough 1989). In the case of NCLB, business interests and Neo-liberalism were brought to the foreground while traditional educational interest groups, as well as traditional conservative and liberal ideas and proposals, were moved to the background. This individualized conceptualization of accountability was defined through narratives of personal responsibility, which rendered the hierarchical and bureaucratic nature of accountability under NCLB invisible. As such, it enabled members of congress to negotiate intense political conflict over the means and ends of public education in general, and the national role in public education specifically.

There is a long history of applying business and corporate models of governance to public education, including the organization and management of teachers and students, the physical design of school buildings, and even the curriculum itself (Cuban 2007; Tyack 1974). By portraying educational behaviors as biologically determined, NCLB promoted a technical interpretation of teaching and learning, or portrayed both as “rational” processes that are measurable, and therefore controllable, at the individual level (i.e., school, teacher and student). This technical and individualized conceptualization of teaching and learning rendered public education controllable through test scores and other forms of public information, even as it conferred legitimacy upon state and federal political actors for imposing sanctions by assigning “blame” in
ways that imply intention on the part of teachers and students. In the process, NCLB elevated “expert knowledge” at the expense of the knowledge, perceptions and interpretations of teachers. In short, it was hierarchical but shifted the locus of control in terms of which groups were being held accountable to whom for what.

In point of fact, accountability has long been a central theme in politics, public administration and public policy due to its importance for maintaining positive relationships between state and society. Traditionally, five different types of accountability have co-existed in public education: political, legal, bureaucratic, professional, and market accountability (Darling-Hammond 1991). Political accountability involves control via legislative oversight and school boards, who defer to constituents. Legal accountability involves control through contractual relationships, meaning courts hear complaints about legislative and district policies and actions. Bureaucratic accountability involves hierarchical control by state education departments and school districts, both of which establish rules and regulations to govern behavior. Professional and occupational accountability (largely) involve self-regulation, or deference to professional and occupational norms, standards, and expertise. Administrators and teachers, for example, must acquire specialized knowledge, pass certification exams, and uphold standards of practice. Then, through socialization, they learn the informal norms that guide day-to-day practice, and are monitored by group members who also enforce compliance. Finally, administrators and teachers are constrained by market accountability. Parents and students choose to live in certain communities based on the level of services provided by schools, and will exit one community for another when unhappy (Darling-Hammond 1991; Gormley and Balla
Public schools historically relied most heavily on a combination of bureaucratic and professional accountability. This is also true of the ESEA. In contrast, NCLB uses a combination of political and market accountability (i.e., voice and choice). We can link these modes of accountability and their corresponding strengths and weaknesses to Hood’s (1998) analysis to show how each reflects different ways of organizing and regulating social relations.

Bureaucratic accountability is linked to hierarchy. Policies are made at the top and carried out by administrators and teachers through standard operating procedures (SOPs) (Hood 1998). It is premised on the idea that it is possible to find "the one best system" to educate students (Tyack 1974). Proponents of hierarchy argue that only the state has the resources to ensure that children are provided with equal educational opportunity. Meanwhile, standardization through SOPs minimizes costs. One downside is that teachers and administrators are not held accountable for educational performance or for meeting the individual needs of students. Instead, they are held accountable for following SOPs (Darling-Hammond 1991). Hood (1998) adds that hierarchical accountability, if pursued to the extreme, may foster opportunism among workers by eliminating a collective ethos. In these cases, players learn that management keeps moving the goal posts when they meet objectives and so they slow production, engage in shirking, or meet objectives in ways that are feasible but not welfare enhancing (i.e., neglect). In teaching, this includes “teaching to the test.”

Professional and occupational accountability are linked to egalitarianism (Hood 1998). The justification for professional accountability is that those who have been trained and socialized into a profession or occupation are best able to judge the
performance of other members. Advocates further argue that these groups need to remain relatively free of outside social or market pressures in order to innovate and remain true to their professional and occupational norms, ethics and practices. The latter is difficult to do when professionals are concerned about being scapegoated (Freidson 1975). One strength of professional accountability is that it may increase the efficiency of organizations by reducing the need for hierarchical controls. Another strength is that it may increase effectiveness by encouraging practitioners to individualize services. Moreover, professionalism standardizes training, which increases the likelihood that all students are taught by teachers who are highly knowledgeable, competent, and committed to good teaching. In other words, the system is focused on student progress, but also the preparation, certification, selection, and evaluation of teachers (Darling-Hammond 1991). The downside of professional accountability is that professionals may be unwilling to police one another due to egalitarian collegiality (Freidson 1975). In these cases, the group silently accommodates unacceptable behaviors rather than train, sanction or expel members from the group. The group may also use its social cohesion to inappropriately reject top-down or outside interference. Conversely, they may use their social cohesion to (unfairly) target weaker members. Either way, collegiality impedes performance, and may lead to long-standing, simmering feuds.

Within teaching, proponents of professionalism claim that teachers have the incentive to sanction colleagues because poor performance, teacher malfeasance and teacher misconduct damage schools as organizations and public institutions. These behaviors also affect the reputation of the occupation and, if they lead to tighter hierarchical controls over teachers’ work, result in a loss of autonomy. Nevertheless,
teachers’ performance and behaviors have never solely been controlled through professional accountability. Formally, teaching is hierarchically governed by rules and regulations, including salary schedules, and rules governing tenure and disciplinary actions. Informally, teaching is governed by occupational norms. These norms are not formally written down but research suggests that teachers recognize them and that there are social consequences for disobeying them.

Finally, market accountability is linked to individualism. The strength of market accountability is the promise of better performance through consumer choice. Here, parents and students as "customers" ensure that administrators, teachers, and other school staff work hard by taking their business elsewhere if they are unhappy. Poorly performing schools are then exposed through under-subscription, which serves a signaling function to policymakers that they need to take action (i.e., hierarchical controls). The downside of this form of accountability is that it poses the potential for social justice issues related to information asymmetries and the ability-to-pay, especially if both are systematically related to race and class (Darling-Hammond 1991). This more typically occurs in highly stratified societies, where the ability to pay and the capacity to gain and use information is stratified as well, and thereby delimits choice. This form of accountability is also problematic because it does little to create mechanisms for ensuring what Hirschman (1970) calls “voice.” Thus, it provides few options for parents who wish to remain loyal to a school but would like to see change. In terms of bureaucratic behaviors, market accountability may result in positive outcomes if it motivates those who would otherwise shirk or play it safe. On the negative side, competition may weaken trust and the collective ethos that encourages people to work together to achieve
common ends (Hood 1998). Teachers, for example, may be unwilling to share their information and expertise with fellow teachers if their pay is based on how they perform relative to others.

As mentioned, education has typically combined all of these forms of accountability, but the original ESEA relied more heavily on bureaucratic and professional authority. It was based on the idea that equity issues, such as resource allocation and guarantees of equal access, need to be resolved by higher units of governance, rather than leaving them up to the decision of individual teachers or the parents of an individual school district. Nevertheless, it recognized that learning is a highly individualized process. This means that policies to standardize services may negatively impact individual students. Meanwhile, concerns about productivity are difficult to resolve through bureaucratic regulation. Under the organizational settlement, TPA resolved these issues by setting broad goals to ensure service quality while using professional accountability to meet varying school and student circumstances. NCLB, on the other hand, uses a combination of market and political accountability. The claim is that voice and choice will reduce the need for hierarchical rules and regulations, while also improving educational performance. As shown in Part I, policymakers constructed parents as “consumer experts,” who would use public information to force schools to become more efficient and effective. Thus, theoretically, NCLB distances bureaucratic and professional accountability (i.e., hierarchy and egalitarianism) in favor of the market accountability (i.e., individualism).

My interviews with teachers show, however, that NCLB has not reduced hierarchical accountability, just disguised it. Moreover, these changes have resulted in
occupational value conflict. Specifically, teachers are experiencing increased emotional dissonance because the new performative culture conflicts with the humanistic norms of teaching as an occupation. First, the new culture restricts teachers’ abilities to form meaningful relationships at work. Teachers view these relationships as necessary for developing children as well-rounded human beings. Second, testing as a technology has undermined the social democratic mission of schools, which is part of teachers’ ethical commitment to a just society.

Meanwhile, testing has shifted authority and power away from teachers and public schools. Teachers argue, for example, that control has shifted to state bureaucrats, corporate elites and interest groups, who use their authority to influence what is taught by constructing what is tested. In both cases, the public assumes that there is a consensus between what constitutes passing and failing, and that the cutoff score is scientific, but there is a lot of ambiguity and the actual cutoff score is neither objective nor scientific. Just as problematically, the construction of parents as “consumer experts” has shifted power to those parents who are the most vocal. These parents use their social and cultural capital to establish control over how schools are organized. They then use this power to obtain special programs for their own children, including gifted and talented programs and homogenous tracks, at the expense of “other peoples’ children.”

As a whole, teachers’ narratives suggest that the negative side-effects of the commodification of teaching have been exacerbated by a political discourse that normalizes the role of parents, as consumers, and public schools, as a marketplace, while distancing the role of parents as citizens and schools as communities. This inequitable treatment of citizens in relation to one another, and the public sphere in relation to the
private sector, has resulted in increased cynicism. Some teachers mentioned the decline of government regulation (i.e., deregulation) and the direct state production of services (i.e., recommodification through privatization and contracting out) under the new welfare state. Others discussed the ability of corporations to move beyond state regulation by closing their American plants and opening new ones abroad. Although teachers recognize that business’ ability to do so has largely been facilitated by the growth in globalized markets and technological innovations in the areas of communications and computers, they claimed that these processes have influenced revenues for local public schools as businesses obtained favorable tax and regulatory environments through threats to move (and take jobs) to other states and localities. Thus, unlike citizens, many businesses are able to avoid state regulation and taxation by moving significant portions of their production processes overseas.

As a result of these trends, teachers said it makes sense for citizens to wish to control school budgets. They are one of the few areas where “consumers” of public services have direct control in a time of fiscal austerity. Nevertheless, by portraying education as a consumptive good, political elites have fostered a decline in the common school ideal. Teachers claim that this common school ideal is critical for America’s commitment to a broader vision of public education. The next chapter explores how market and political accountability under NCLB have impacted teachers’ social experiences, identities and behaviors.
CHAPTER VII
NCLB AND TEACHERS’ SOCIAL BEHAVIORS

Introduction

In the first part of the dissertation, I showed how stories, especially the narrative of the mediocre status quo, were used to politically and culturally construct teachers and public schools in ways that justified new forms of regulation and accountability. These narratives downplayed the socio-economic and institutional barriers to educational performance, and assigned blame for educational failure to individual schools, teachers, and students. Research, on the other hand, shows that socio-economic background is a key predictor of educational achievement and attainment. Meanwhile, state resources and socio-economic need are unequally distributed between school districts, and schools as organizations non-randomly assign students across classrooms based on ability and prior achievement levels. Based on these alone, we would anticipate differences between and within schools in terms of student and teacher performance. At the same time, research from a wide-array of disciplines suggests that individual identities, preferences, experiences, and behaviors are constructed through social interaction. As such, it is likely that social contexts are important predictors of teacher and student performance. In terms of teachers, Durkheim argued that each occupational group possesses its own “morality,” or ideas, sentiments, and “ways of seeing” and “feeling” (Bosk 2003, 5). Bosk (2003) explored this contention for surgeons. Finding that surgeons have a “collective conscience,” he contends it is important to study how this conscience is formed and what purposes it serves. He writes:

Any programmatic change which intends to make professionals more accountable to clients must of necessity start with a complex phenomenological understanding of what currently passes for accountability and how it is achieved (Bosk 2003, 5).
This chapter argues that you cannot make teachers more accountable without first knowing what accountability (already) looks like, how it is achieved, and at what costs and benefits to society. To that end, it uses open-ended interviews with 83 teachers to explore their perceptions of how accountability worked in schools prior to NCLB and how it works under NCLB.

As previously mentioned, five different types of accountability have historically co-existed in public education: political, legal, bureaucratic, professional, and market accountability (Darling-Hammond 1991). Traditionally, public schools relied most heavily on bureaucratic and professional accountability. This was also true under the original ESEA. Teachers, on the other hand, indicated that the major form of accountability in teaching prior to NCLB was a moral or ethical commitment to caring. This ethos of care involved going beyond what was formally required at work (i.e., meeting the academic goals of the school) in order to develop children as well-rounded and well-adjusted human beings. Although this occupational norm was largely self-policing, it was formed and maintained through teachers’ relationships to their colleagues and their students. As such, it combined professional accountability with social accountability.

By social accountability, I mean two things. First, accountability is relational, rather than hierarchical, as is the case with bureaucratic accountability. Second, it is broader than professional accountability, meaning it goes beyond the relationship teachers have with their occupation. Social accountability occurs as a result of individuals being embedded in a group. This embedding creates social cohesion, which
then serves as an informal source of social control. Sometimes, appropriate behavior is externally enforced. One urban teacher said:

Marilyn: (I caught) my friend...cheating on the test...he was walking around the classroom...putting his fingers on the desk like this...(she is putting three fingers on the desk to indicate the answer is number 3)...I said to him, “If I can see that, then everybody else can see that. Are you kidding me? You are putting your career on the line for a test?”

Marilyn’s narrative occurred before teachers no longer proctored their own exams to prevent these kinds of behaviors. Nevertheless, it is an example of a teacher using her relationship with a colleague to shame him into ceasing an inappropriate behavior. In this case, the teacher she was shaming had violated both the norms of teaching (professional accountability) and state policy (political and bureaucratic accountability). Thus, like many teachers, she suggests that social accountability reinforces other forms of accountability.

Mostly, though, teachers policed themselves. They did so because they cared about other members of their school community *and* because they cared about how their community perceived them. One suburban teacher described both of these as follows:

Brenda: Years and years ago...you were internally motivated to do better. I think teachers want to do well for their students. There is professional accountability. Teachers care about their students and want to do right by them. But there is also social accountability. Teachers want people to think well of them. They care about what people think about them. Because we care about those relationships and how we are perceived, we want to do well. It is not like an external thing. It is internal but you do care about how you are perceived...I had...(an 11th grade) student who did well on each of the chapter tests. Great kid. She would study, study, study...and she would do well but it was a struggle... Well, she failed the...(state exam). So, in order to... (graduate) she has to take it next June...to wait) a whole year...(and) take it right before she graduates. And, for weeks, I was sick...to my stomach...She emailed me. I emailed her back. Her mother emailed me and I emailed her back. And, her mother said, “She is mostly upset because you are upset.” She was just such a great kid and I felt so sick about it...I told her I would help prepare her. It is so sad. It hits you hard. It really does. It hurts. There are kids that don't try as hard, and say, “Yeah, I pass after summer
school.” That hits you hard in different ways…The relationships you form with these kids. You are trying to motivate them, show them how to study, how to do well in life. It is not just about your grade in math. It is about seeing your future and how to get there…your work ethic, your personality…you are trying to help mold them…So, this is math, but really, it is about who they are and what they would like to be and what they need to do to get there. It is really exciting but it is also a lot of responsibility. So, it’s emotional… you take it home with you too. You try not to but you can’t help it.

In this narrative, Brenda links professional and social accountability, but clearly is trying to distinguish between them. According to her, teachers do not just follow the norms of teaching because of professional value introjection. They also follow them because they want to “do right by the kids,” who they care about (internal motivation). She then externalizes social accountability by noting that teachers, as human beings, also care about what others think of them. Either way, social accountability enhances other forms of accountability by using social cohesion as a form of (internal and external) social control.

Teachers’ narratives further indicated, however, that relationships (social cohesion) also serve as an informal source of social control in schools and classrooms.

One suburban high school teacher told me:

Molly: You have these students for a year…you know which ones will go AWOL on the test (laughs). Mostly it’s because they struggle in school, but some are just poor test takers and so they panic or just shut down. They are always the first ones to finish (laughs). Others are just lazy (laughs). Let’s face it, kids are human beings. They run the gamut of behaviors. It used to be we were in the room when they took the state exam. You know, it is a gym or a cafeteria and so there are a lot of other teachers in the room with their students. It was not like you were doing anything that other people did not know about. But, we would say things to students. If a student finished halfway through the allotted time, you knew they either shut down or were being lazy. If it was your student, you knew which one it was (laughs). Anyway, when they would try to hand in their test, you could say “You finished fast. Did you check all your answers? Are you sure you answered all the questions? Are you sure you wrote enough on the essay?” You know, things like that. Basically, what you were doing was trying to calm them down in some cases and shame them into doing more in others (laughs). It
was not considered cheating. You were looking them in the eye and that connection with a human being, who they knew, caused them to think about their actions or calm down if they were really nervous. You weren’t even doing it to help your own performance. We did it for each other’s students. Students know you even if they’re not your student. There was also the possibility they might have you next year so that put some pressure on them too (laughs). We also used to bring food to the students who had to take multiple tests in one day. They were the ones who had failed the year before and so they were taking the state exam for the current year and retaking the one from the prior year. You weren’t in the room for that, but you could drop food off and whoever was proctoring the exam could give it to them during the break between the two tests. Even if it was just a candy bar (laughs) I think it helped. They needed a break but I think it was really because you were in effect saying “I care about you. You can do it.” They may be 15, 16, 17, 18 years old, but they need to know adults care about them. They won’t ever admit to it (laughs), but it’s true.

In this case, Molly is describing how teachers use their own relationships, but also the fact that students “know them” to help students in some cases and hold them accountable in others. In this manner, social accountability improves student performance.

NCLB, on the other hand, uses a combination of political and market accountability (i.e., voice and choice). As previously discussed, political elites portrayed test scores as a “neutral” means of rating and ranking teachers, students and schools. These rankings could then serve as a form of public information that parents would use to aid voice (i.e., complaining and seeking supplemental services) and choice (i.e., exit to better performing public and charter schools within the district), thereby furnishing the incentive for administrators and teachers to improve their work effort. Less obviously, NCLB also uses hierarchical/bureaucratic accountability. The tests are developed by state departments of education (DOEs) and linked to standards that are also promulgated by state DOEs. School rankings on the tests are then used to diagnose and treat problems areas, while justifying punishment for repeat offenders.
As a whole, teachers’ narratives suggest that, in the process of normalizing political and market accountability, while disguising hierarchical accountability, NCLB has distanced professional and social accountability. Primarily, this is because the policy puts pressure on teachers to “perform” their jobs in ways that are easily measured. In the process, it has reduced teachers’ professional autonomy and discretion, and negatively impacted their ability to form caring relationships with students and colleagues. One consequence is that teaching as an occupation is being transformed from emotion work, where teachers offer emotional care as part of a professional ethos or for altruistic reasons, into what sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1983) calls emotional labor, where teachers perform emotions at work in order to advance organizational goals. The end result is that teachers are experiencing higher rates of burnout and dissatisfaction.

The next section briefly discusses the concepts of emotion work and emotional labor. The following section applies these concepts to teaching. I then use these ideas to discuss teachers’ perceptions of how accountability worked before and after NCLB, and the subsequent effects on teaching and learning. In each of these cases, I was interested in how NCLB has mediated teachers’ relationships to their occupation, students, colleagues and school communities, rather than how it has impacted parents and students. The latter topic is explored in the next chapter.

**Background: Emotions at Work**

Fineman (2000a) argues that research on organizations, professions and occupations has traditionally silenced the role of emotions at work. This is because organizations are perceived to be rational and managed, while emotions are viewed as private and thus unregulated. Two different strands of research challenged these
assumptions. The first documents the vital role that emotions play in organizational life. The second investigates the effects of emotion management on employee performance and well-being. Here, Hochschild’s (1983, 7) concept of emotional labor has been particularly influential. She used the term to convey that some jobs require the performance of emotions as a condition of employment. In these cases, emotions have “exchange value,” or are sold for a wage, and are prescribed and monitored by management as part of the capitalist labor process.

Emotional labor differs from emotion work. Both require emotion management, but the latter refers to the emotional act itself, which employees may do for their own non-compensated benefit. While emotion work has use value, jobs requiring emotional labor meet three criteria:

First, they require face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with the public. Second, they require the worker to produce an emotional state in another person—gratitude or fear for example. Third, they allow the employer, through training and supervision, to exercise a degree of control over the emotional activities of employees (Hochschild 1983, 147).

Hochschild further contrasts emotional labor with “care work,” where employees manage their emotions in accordance with professional norms, client expectations or the demands of the job. In the latter cases, employees are not closely supervised and retain some autonomy over their emotion management. Here, she specifically mentions teachers. These concepts are defined in Table 14 on the next page.

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121 Hochschild (1979, 1983) argued that societies develop feeling and expression rules, or social norms that regulate internal feelings as well as facial or bodily displays. The act of emotion management involves modifying one’s emotions, and facial or bodily displays to bring them in line with what is “appropriate” in a given situation.
Table 14. Emotional Labor: Key Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional Rules</th>
<th>Emotional Display Rules</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hochschild (1979; 1983) identifies two emotional rules in society:</td>
<td>Emotional display rules are norms or standards of behavior that prescribe feelings and expressions at work. They are a characteristic of emotional labor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Feeling rules specify the appropriate feeling in a given social setting or situation (e.g., a mother should feel excited when her child’s team wins a game).</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Expression rules guide appropriate overt expression or display of feeling in a given social setting or situation (e.g., people maintain a solemn expression at a funeral).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social actors who fail to adjust or manage their emotional displays in accordance with these rules may be labeled emotional deviants (Thoits 1990).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Emotion Work</th>
<th>Emotional Labor</th>
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<tr>
<td>The act of emotion management is called emotion work. It involves modifying one’s emotions to bring them in line with what is “appropriate” in a given situation. This may involve suppressing, exaggerating or moderating ones emotional reactions and expressions, including facial or bodily displays and physiological signs, such as sweating. Emotion work has use-value (i.e., employees choose to do it for their own non-compensated benefit) (Hochschild 1979, 1983).</td>
<td>Hochschild (1979, 1983) used the term emotional labor to convey that employees displayed particular emotional states for a wage. In such a situation, emotion management is conducted for the benefit of the organization, which exercises control through prescribed emotional display rules (e.g., smile at the customer). Emotional labor has “exchange-value” (i.e., it is exchanged for material rewards or compensation).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hochschild (1983) identifies two kinds of emotion management:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Surface acting: displaying outward signs of emotion without actually feeling those emotions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Deep acting: actually summoning those emotions.</td>
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<th>Emotional Congruence</th>
<th>Emotional Dissonance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Employees’ naturally felt emotions are consistent with the emotional display rules of an organization.</td>
<td>Employees’ naturally felt emotions are incongruent with the emotional display rules or with their actual emotional displays. As such, emotional labor is exploitive and alienating (Hochschild 1983).</td>
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Hochschild’s interest in emotions stemmed from her larger concerns about emotional exploitation in the workplace. Her concerns were timely given the growth in service sector employment, where managers use scripting and other routinizing mechanisms in order to control employees’ emotional expression and standardize service delivery. Scripting, in these cases, works in a similar manner to how the assembly line controls physical labor and thereby standardizes production. Even so, she

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122 At McDonalds, for instance, employees are told to greet customers with a smile and say, “Welcome to McDonalds, may I take your order please?”
hypothesized that emotional labor was more detrimental to employee well-being. This is because emotions are deeply attached to workers’ identities, and thus important for their sense of personal integrity. She was particularly concerned about the negative effects of “emotional dissonance,” which occurs when employees’ naturally felt emotions conflict with those they are required to express at work. Her concerns have since been supported across a wide range of private and public sector jobs, occupations and professions. In general, the research finds that emotional labor is associated with higher levels of emotional exhaustion, which is a key component of burnout. However, increased job autonomy reduces these negative side-effects. The empirical literature is less conclusive in terms of teaching.

Teaching as Emotion Work versus Emotional Labor

The emotional dimension of teaching has been well documented by sociological studies of new and experienced teachers. These studies conclude that teaching as an occupation involves more than technical skill and content knowledge. It also involves an affective domain, which includes, but is not limited to, the ability to genuinely understand and empathize with students, parents and colleagues. Hargreaves (1998b, 835) writes:

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123 Research has investigated the effects on waitresses, airline staff, call center workers, debt collectors, supermarket clerks, fast food workers, insurance agents, lawyers and paralegals, academics, nurses and home care workers, social workers, 911 operators, corrections workers, detectives, police officers, and child guardians (Bellas 1999; Bolton, 2004; Frenkel et al. 1999; Guy, Newman and Mastracci 2008; Heimer and Stevens 1997; Hochschild, 1983; Jackall 2000; Leidner 1999; Lopez 2006; Martin 1999; Meyerson 2000; Newman, Guy and Mastracci 2009; Pierce 1995; Steinberg and Figart 1999b; Taylor and Tyler 2000; Taylor et al. 2002; and Tolich 1993).

124 See, for instance, Ashkanasy et al. 2002; Brotheridge and Grandey 2002, 2003; Guy, Newman and Mastracci 2008; Hochschild 1979, 1983, 1990; Morris and Feldman 1996; Newman, Guy and Mastracci 2009; and Steinberg and Figart 1999a. Still, some studies find that employees enjoy or even benefit from performing emotion work. For example, Shuler and Sypher (2000) found that 911 operators enjoyed emotion work as comic relief and an “adrenaline fix.” They also enjoyed going above and beyond the job to provide (altruistic) service. Tolich (1993) found that grocery store clerks managed their own emotions to develop customer loyalty and for “fun.”

125 See, for example, Bullough et al. 1991; Hargreaves 1998a,b and 2000; Lasky 2000; Lortie 1975; Nias 1989, 1996; Schutz and Zembylas 2009; Woods and Jeffrey 1996; and Zembylas 2005b. The recent
Good teaching is charged with positive emotion. It is not just a matter of knowing one’s subject, being efficient, having the correct competences, or learning all the right techniques. Good teachers are not just well-oiled machines. They are emotional, passionate beings who…fill their…classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy.

Research also shows, however, that teaching involves extensive amounts of emotion work. In part, this is because teachers bring their feelings into work and need to manage those feelings in order to deal with others. Teaching involves human interaction, “often in crowded conditions, with large numbers of pupils who are frequently energetic, spontaneous, immature and preoccupied with their own interests” (Nias 1996, 296). But teachers also draw on their emotions to engage in the “act of teaching,” meaning they need to express, exaggerate or suppress their emotions and emotional expressions in order “perform” their jobs well (Nias 1996; Hargreaves 1994; Sutton 2007).

Unsurprisingly then, research indicates that teachers’ emotional health is an important contributor to effective teaching (Day and Leitch 2001).

The research further suggests, however, that the personal and intrinsic value of caring draws individuals into teaching and, once there, helps them sustain their commitment to the occupation (Lortie 1975; Hargreaves 1998b). Perhaps more importantly, teachers’ emotional commitments are not solely a product of their personal dispositions or the nature of teaching as an occupation. They are also mediated by the social, economic and political contexts in which they teach (Hargreaves 2001; Day and Leitch 2001; Oplatka 2009; Hargreaves 1994 and 2000; Zembylas 2005).126

Predictably, growth in research is evidenced by special editions of the Cambridge Journal of Education (1996:3), Educational Psychologist (2002:2), and Learning and Instruction (2005:5); books (e.g., Linston and Garrison 2003; Goldstein 1997; and Noddings 1984, 1992); and edited volumes (e.g., Schutz and Pekun 2007 and Schutz and Zembylas 2009).

teachers individually and collectively develop a sense of the working conditions they need to meet prevailing social and professional definitions of “good teaching.” These include the prerequisite material and organizational conditions, but also the quality of their interpersonal relationships. Both are necessary for performing their jobs, and experiencing job satisfaction. If these conditions are threatened, teachers experience occupational and emotional reactions. These reactions affect their self-esteem and feelings of self-efficacy, as well as their passion for teaching. Over the long term, negative emotions may result in burnout, exit from the profession, and resistance to change (Nias 1996; Day 2004).

Given these findings, researchers have recently begun to explore teaching as emotional labor. The findings are mixed. Some studies show that emotional labor results in negative side effects, such as emotional exhaustion and burnout. Others indicate that teachers derive important benefits from performing emotion work, including higher levels of work commitment, engagement and effectiveness, as well as job satisfaction and self-esteem. Some researchers also conclude that teaching is incompatible with Hochschild’s concept of emotional labor (Price 2001; Hargreaves 1998b). Employees in jobs that involve emotional labor often lack the motivation for caring because the “relationships” involved are typically transient in nature. In these situations, “relational work” never evolves beyond labor for a wage because employees do not form attachments to the subjects of their work. In contrast, research suggests that teachers

128 See, for example, Hargreaves, 1998a, 1998b, 2000; Hebson et al. 2007; Intrator 2006; Isenbarger and Zembylas 2006; Mack 2008; Oplatka 2009; Price, 2001; Winograd 2003; Zembylas 2004a. However, some of these studies had mixed findings.
engage in emotion work because of their relationships with their students, who they view as human beings that deserve recognition, empathy and respect. These findings are further supported by research on workers in other caring occupations, such as nursing, where employees develop relationships with their clients as a result of frequent and/or sustained interactions over time. In these cases, workers typically attend to the quality of their work because they care about how it affects the subjects of their work. Thus, they receive monetary reimbursement, but money is rarely their sole motivation for caring. They may even go beyond what is formally required at work to offer “emotional gifts,” including, but not limited to, the gifts of their authentic selves. In short, labor is always completely commodified. Care work is not (Himmelweit 1999).  

Another issue involves the locus of control. Hochschild was concerned about emotional exploitation in the workplace as a result of management control over employees’ emotion management. In contrast, research suggests that teaching has occupational feeling and expression rules, but these norms are embedded in the culture of teaching and largely “self-policed.” By that, I mean they are enforced through self-selection into the profession (i.e., those who value them are more likely to enter the profession), professional value introjection (i.e., teachers are taught to value them), and social approval or disapproval (i.e., teachers who are unable to manage their emotions according to these rules are socially marginalized or treated as unprofessional by their colleagues). More problematically, research further finds that emotional display rules

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129 Himmelweit (1999) is using Radin’s (1996) concept of “incomplete commodification” to describe any occupation where the nonmarket aspect of the work is important. This might also include doing a good job because you take intrinsic pride in your work, such as firefighters or skilled trades.

130 Research suggests that teachers’ normative feeling and expression rules include, but are not limited to, avoiding the expression of overly strong or weak emotions, such as anger or sadness; being enthusiastic or passionate about teaching and one’s subject matter; having a sense of humor about oneself (i.e., not falling
vary, largely due to a lack of clear organizational standards on how teachers should manage their feelings at work. 131

These findings may explain the puzzle of why some studies conclude that teachers experience emotional dissonance, while others show they receive positive benefits from engaging in emotion work and even view it as a desirable aspect of their employment. They may also explain why there is little evidence indicating that administrators or schools as organizations monitor and enforce emotional rules at work. By and large, individuals who self-select into teaching are committed to a strong service ethic and this commitment is reinforced by the norms of teaching, as well as the nature of the job. If true, we would expect organizational behaviors to change if the prevailing definition of what constitutes “good teaching” changes, and that these changes would impact teachers’ perceptions of the effects of engaging in emotion work. This is exactly what recent research suggests. These studies have re-examined teaching as emotional labor given the adoption of global political reforms that are designed to change the culture of teaching and public schools. 132

As discussed in the next section, these reforms vary but are largely designed to make teaching and public schools more accountable through market-driven education policies, such as school choice; centralized educational standards; and, testing, as well as

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131 Morris and Feldman (1996) described four dimensions of emotional labor: frequency of emotional displays, variety of emotions required, attentiveness to required display rules, and emotional dissonance. More emotional labor is required as the frequency and variety of displays increases (Grandey 2000; Morris and Feldman 1996). Teachers spend large amounts of time with students, colleagues, and administrators, which is likely to increase the frequency and variety of their emotional displays, and the duration of time when they need to attend to display rules. Nonetheless, the source of the supervision and monitoring remains an issue if the regulation is self-imposed.

other means of inspecting and measuring performance (Forrester 2005; Jeffrey 2002; Ball 2003). Nevertheless, by treating parents and students as consumers (rather than citizens or co-producers), they have made public education more like the service sector. In the process, they have opened up space for the commodification of teachers’ emotions in pursuit of organizational goals (i.e., emotional labor). In this case, the goals include increased student achievement or improved “customer” satisfaction, with the customer being parents, students, taxpayers or the state.

**Teaching as Emotional Labor**

Overall, recent studies suggest that teachers are experiencing increased emotional dissonance at work, even though they continue to derive important benefits from their emotional investments in students. Partly, this is because they need to modify their emotions in support of organizational goals, but a larger problem is that teachers are experiencing state-induced value conflict between the newly dominant “performative culture” and the previously dominant humanistic culture of teaching (Forrester 2005; Jeffrey 2002; Ball 2003). Teaching as a performative enterprise involves the public demonstration of technical proficiency through the testing of measurable academic skills. Teaching as a humanistic enterprise, on the other hand, emphasizes the development of the whole child, including nonacademic skills and domains (Hargreaves 1998, 1998b; Hebson et al. 2007; Forrester 2005; Jeffrey 2002; Ball 2003). Because these domains are largely “private,” or difficult to measure, they are not tested and therefore silenced by a culture that values public information as a way of controlling teachers’ work.

This silencing occurs on two levels. First, teachers need to reorient their work effort towards the technical domains of teaching, which are now largely restricted to
those prescribed skills and competencies that are needed to pass state exams. Second, the intensification of the performative aspects of teachers’ jobs reduces the space for caring, or the relational aspects of teaching. In the process, government reforms have increasingly challenged teachers’ ability to meet their occupation’s core moral purpose, which is to develop caring, well-adjusted, and competent human beings. The end result is that teachers are experiencing increased emotional dissonance, alienation, burnout and job dissatisfaction (Noddings 1992, 1995; Hargreaves 1994, 2003; Jeffrey 2002; Jeffrey and Woods 1996; Hebson et al. 2007; Forrester 2005; Troman and Woods 2001; O’Connor 2008).

These studies have provided many important insights into how political change influences teachers’ emotional experiences at work. Even so, most involved small sample sizes, and were conducted outside of the United States in response to very specific national education policies. As such, the findings cannot be generalized to teachers within those countries, much less to teachers outside those national geographies. Nevertheless, we can use these studies, and Bolton’s (2004) typology of workplace emotion management, to explore teachers’ perceptions that NCLB has changed their occupation in ways that have made it more closely resemble jobs in the service sector, where management regulates all aspects of a job in order to standardize the delivery of a

“product.” In this case, the product is an educated citizen, as defined by existing educational standards and hierarchically enforced through state exams.

_Bolton’s Typology of Emotion Management and Teaching as Emotional Labor_

Hochschild (1983, 7) argued that workers in jobs involving “people work” often perform or fabricate caring as part of their jobs. In her study of nurses in England, however, Bolton (2004) found that caring actually varied across a continuum from “professional behaviors” to “genuine feeling.” As such, she advocates using a four-pronged typology consisting of presentational, pecuniary, prescriptive and philanthropic emotion management.

As shown in Table 15 on the next page, _Presentational_ and _pecuniary_ emotion management equate to Hochschild’s concepts of emotion work and emotional labor, respectively. _Prescriptive_ emotion management, on the other hand, is consistent with Hochschild’s argument that employees in caring occupations self-regulate their emotions in accordance with occupational norms or client expectations. Here, however, Bolton acknowledges that these behaviors may result from either sincere or instrumental motivations, such as maintaining one’s identity or social status within the occupation. In this manner, she accommodates non-pecuniary emotion management and also recognizes that compliance with feeling and expression rules varies across individuals and situations. Finally, _philanthropic_ emotion management involves altruistic motivations for going beyond what is formally required at work. Bolton found four unintended consequences associated with making hospital service provision more like the private sector. These reforms: increased nurses’ pecuniary emotion management (emotional labor); crowded out their prescriptive and philanthropic emotion management; increased emotional
dissonance among nurses; and, reduced the quality of care as nurses’ behaviors were increasingly (and sometimes cynically) carried out to meet the expectations of “others” (i.e., the state or the organization).\(^{134}\)

**Table 15. Typology of Workplace Emotion Management**\(^ {135}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hochschild</th>
<th>Pecuniary</th>
<th>Prescriptive</th>
<th>Presentational</th>
<th>Philanthropic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Labor</td>
<td>Organizationally motivated and carried out by frontline customer service workers; surface act in order to meet management expectations.</td>
<td>Emotion management but does not assume a motivation of profit.</td>
<td>Self-regulated emotion management</td>
<td>Philosophical/humanistic—making the personal decision to care in adherence with a personal and individual philosophy or code of ethics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling rules</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated motivations</td>
<td>Instrumental:Behavior geared toward meeting organizational goals</td>
<td>Instrumental:Behavior geared toward meeting professional goals; Behavior may be motivated by status or altruism</td>
<td>Performative:Ontological Security</td>
<td>Gift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>Sincere or cynical Commitment</td>
<td>Sincere or cynical Commitment Consensual</td>
<td>Sincere Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Imposed self</td>
<td>Professional self</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>“Feel fake” and cut off from sense of self</td>
<td>Professional identity Self-managed contradictions</td>
<td>Stability Self-managed contradictions</td>
<td>Stability Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hebson et al. (2007) used Bolton’s typology to explore the effects of recent education reforms in England. They found that national standards and teacher capability inspections had reduced the space for philanthropic emotion work while increasing teachers’ pecuniary emotion management, or labor conducted in pursuit of organizational goals. Although they did not specifically address teachers’ prescriptive emotion management, their study suggests that these behaviors may have been affected as well.

\(^{134}\) Sociological studies of teachers suggest something similar. For instance, Vogt (2002) suggests that caring among primary school teachers existed along a continuum from “mothering” at one end to caring as relatedness on the other. Within this continuum, it involved: caring as commitment, caring as physical care, and caring as expressing affection, such as “giving a cuddle.”

\(^{135}\) Adapted from Bolton (2004)
This study found something similar. Post-NCLB teachers have experienced pressure to “perform” emotion work in ways that are easily measured. This has increasingly crowded out the humanistic norms of teaching as an occupation, as well as teachers’ philanthropic emotion work. The end result is that teachers are experiencing the negative side effects associated with emotional labor, such as alienation, burnout and lower job satisfaction, even though their jobs remain *incompletely commodified*. The next section explores teachers’ pre-NCLB prescriptive and philanthropic emotion management before examining how NCLB has altered both and, in the process, teaching and learning.

**Teaching as an Occupation: Prescriptive and Philanthropic Emotion Management**

As previously mentioned, teachers’ narratives reveal that one of the major forms of accountability in teaching prior to NCLB was a moral or ethical commitment to caring. This ethos of care existed at the individual (i.e., philanthropic) and occupational (i.e., prescriptive) level. Individually, it involved altruistically motivated decisions to offer emotional gifts at work. Occupationally, teachers are describing a normative commitment to go beyond what is formally required at work in order to develop children as well-rounded and well-adjusted human beings. This occupational commitment has both “performative” and “humanistic” dimensions. Under the former, teachers engage in emotion management to perform their jobs, or do paid work in pursuit of the academic outcomes of the school. Under the latter, teachers are complying with an occupational norm to “do right by the kids,” even if it involves a personal or professional cost. This is what we mean by unpaid or invisible work. One teacher said:

Paul: My parents used to say, “Do right by the kids.” And it’s a good expression. Teachers should approach their profession that way: “Do right by the kids.” They might get in trouble with the administrators. They might get in trouble with the parents. But…They should be doing what they feel is the right thing for the kids.
This section begins by discussing teachers’ prescriptive emotion management. It then
discusses their philanthropic emotion management. I am especially interested in what
purpose each serves, including how they serve the solidarity of the group and at what
costs and benefits to society.

Prescriptive Emotion Management

Hochschild (1983) used the terms “deep acting” and “surface acting” to convey
that service workers need to perform emotions at work. Deep acting involves actually
summoning emotions. Surface acting involves displaying outward signs of emotions that
are not internally felt. Teachers’ narratives revealed that they mostly experience “felt”
emotions at work, but also engage in deep and surface acting. This is because both felt
and feigned emotions helped them perform their jobs, meaning they are a necessary
component for learning in the classroom. Here, two main themes emerged: first, teachers
use their emotions and their relationships to motivate and engage students in learning;
and, second, they use both to improve classroom management. This section discusses
each.

All of the teachers in this study agreed that genuine and feigned emotions helped
them build excitement in the classroom.\textsuperscript{136} Many teachers, for instance, compared
themselves to actors or actresses even as their narratives expressed a great deal of
affection for their students; enthusiasm for the act, craft or art of teaching; a love of their

\textsuperscript{136} Teachers as a group were not uniform in terms of which emotions they drew on in order to achieve these
goals, and in fact teachers expressed drawing on many different emotions throughout the day. For
example, some teachers focused on humor, while others used energy or enthusiasm. Teachers further
admitted, however, that there was a place for anger or disappointment so long as it was tightly regulated.
That is, teachers expressed shame over losing their tempers, but acknowledged that they sometimes used
real as well as feigned anger to manage their students. Teachers also discussed that they drew on different
emotions for teaching different classes. This is one area where emotional understanding about their
students as individuals and as collective entities was particularly important.

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specific subject areas; and, a deeply felt commitment to teaching as an occupation. In fact, it was often hard to separate performed and felt emotions, as the following two narratives indicate:

Terry: I stand on my desk and march and sing to them…I have a tiara and I am the “Learning Fairy.” I bestow magic learning dust on them…1st graders just go “Yee-yah. Yeah. This… is it!” (said while shaking her fists high up in the air to emphasize each word). My own kids are grown…but every day I get to go and be a kid again with my kids in school. When they ask me how old I am, I say, “I am six years old, but trapped in a 53 year old body.” They laugh (she is laughing too). And I truly feel that way. In my heart, I am six years old. I am six years old in my soul. And that’s what counts.

Peter: Ever since I can remember I have lived and breathed science…always running tests…My mom…getting mad at me because I would have jars of things in the refrigerator…I would lose a tooth…and I had to keep my teeth in different liquids and see how they would dissolve and stuff (laughs)… (It) drew me to the profession… that creative side of it…where I could craft lessons…and I liked that I could be goofy…the whole mad scientist thing… I can be myself when I am working…become that character …use humor in my job…to engage children in learning.

Teachers also conveyed, however, that too much acting negatively affects performance. This is because students intuitively know if their teachers are not truly passionate about teaching, are fabricating genuine caring for their students, and/or feel stressed by their relationships with other adults in the building. One teacher said:

Ron: We are all human beings…we all want people to care about us. Students are especially that way. They want to know that you care about them. They make that judgment within 30 seconds. If they think you are indifferent to them, than it is a real struggle. But if they sense that you are concerned about them…They will really pull for you. Then, you need to build that rapport over time. You are building it every day…constantly communicating back and forth…Each month you forge a deeper relationship and rapport …You can lose it too. It’s not a given. It’s more fragile at first, but becomes more durable over time.

Teachers further agreed that students are more likely to engage in disruptive behaviors and less likely to work hard in classrooms that are permeated by fake emotion or no emotion at all. In these classrooms, individual disruptive behaviors affect all students,
not just those engaging in them. In part, this is because teachers need to spend more time “managing” children and less time teaching them. A larger factor, though, is that learning in the classroom is “collective,” meaning it is negotiated and co-produced.

Classrooms as collectivities have both academic and behavioral components. Academically, learning in the classroom is teacher directed, but a function of the collective abilities and dispositions of individual students, as well as the interactions between students. It is also influenced by external factors, including teachers’ and students’ experiences and relationships in the school at large, at home, and in their communities. All of these impact teachers’ abilities to create a classroom environment where students are both able and willing to learn. Behaviorally, teachers need to manage large numbers of students with diverse abilities, backgrounds and dispositions, in crowded (and compulsory) situations, often with limited resources. In order to do so, they need to channel individual and collective behaviors in ways that are conducive for learning.

In short, like all collective bodies, teachers need to create social order and social cohesion in order to meet their core functions and tasks. By that, I mean the instrumental side of teaching, which includes both individual academic outcomes and the academic outcomes of the classroom or school. Their jobs are complicated by the fact that these goals are often in conflict. For example, the goal of increasing student achievement (core task) may create adversarial relationships between teachers and students (social control) if teachers exert too much pressure on (unmotivated) students to work hard, or between students and students if teachers rely too much on explicit rewards and, in the process, create an environment of “us” versus “them” (social cohesion). The task of channeling
individual and collective behaviors is further complicated by the presence of peer effects. In its simplest form, the term “peer effects” denotes the ability of students to influence one another academically and behaviorally (social order). Many teachers, for instance talked about how one student could influence the behaviors of an entire class, and that students model their behaviors according to the norms of their peer groups. They also discussed “balloon effects” (i.e., a small incident blows up into something big), “snowball effects” (i.e., once a class starts going “downhill” it is difficult to stop its descent) and “tipping points” (i.e., it gets disproportionately hard for teachers to manage students and ensure learning in a classroom once the number of academically or behaviorally challenged students reaches a large enough mass).

Teachers’ narratives reveal that they use their emotions and relationships with students to create social cohesion, while minimizing the need to engage in overt measures of social control. They also use their emotional understandings and their acquired knowledge about student behaviors to “keep their fingers on the emotional pulse” of the classroom, and stop these behaviors before they occur. The end goal is to create an environment that encourages students to rise collectively, as well as individually, to their full potential. One teacher even claimed it was important to create “caring communities” in homeroom:

Don: It’s a challenge. It’s always a challenge, but that’s fun…(for example) when you have a bad day, they know and they really pull for you…They show it in little ways…It’s a community in the classroom…Sometimes, someone will walk by your classroom and peak in, and the kids and I will look at each other like, “Why is he looking in here?” (Because) We’re all in it together (laughing). We need to do better than “the other guys” (the other classes)…I even do it for

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137 Teachers expressed that this was one very important reason why experience was important for performance on the job. Novice teachers are less able to stop negative behaviors before they occur because they are focused on learning and teaching the content. They thus end up spending more time “putting out fires.”
homeroom. I didn’t like the word “homeroom” because it was too warm and fuzzy (laughing)...so we (voted and) renamed it the “Morning Meeting Room” (laughing)...It is all part of the whole idea of, “Come on board, we’re all in this together.” You try to rope them in (laughing).

In these classrooms, social order is present, but the mechanisms through which it is achieved are not “visible,” meaning it does not appear to be teacher-directed.

Nevertheless, teachers also portrayed their relationships with students as important for meeting non-instrumental goals. Here, teachers most frequently offered two responses, often in tandem. First, their emotional connections to students, teaching as an occupation, their schools as communities, and their content areas are important for developing children as caring, well-adjusted human beings. This includes voluntarily following the rules and contributing to society, rather than behaving, learning or contributing only when they are compelled to do so by authority figures. Second, these connections are important for fostering an intrinsic love of learning, which is important for developing children as lifelong learners. These goals are often hard to separate because both involve managing one’s own emotional displays and behaviors (i.e., suppressing or expressing emotions at work); modeling appropriate emotional displays and behaviors; and managing students’ emotional displays and behaviors. We can use Hochschild’s (1983) discussion of feeling and expression rules to explain these findings.

Hochschild (1983) argued that feeling and expression rules, like other norms, create a zone of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. They also communicate what is owed to others emotionally in specific situations.138 Meanwhile, human beings are not

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138 Hochschild (1983) argues that feeling rules serve a “signal function,” or communicate information. Fear, for example, warns us of danger while encouraging flight away from the dangerous situation. Guilt and shame are internal or external signals, respectively, that either the rules were not followed or that something owed was not paid. Feeling and expression rules differ from context to context. For example,
equal in their capacities to comply. This may be related to upbringing, but institutions also play a role. She writes:

We commonly assume that institutions are called in when individual controls fail: those who cannot control their emotions are sent to mental hospitals, homes for disturbed children, or prisons. But, in looking at the matter this way, we may ignore the fact that individual failures of control often signal a prior institutional failure to shape feeling. We might ask instead what sort of church, school, or family influence was unavailable to the parents of institutionalized patients, who presumably tried to make their children into adequate emotion managers (Hochschild 1983, 49).

In this quote, she recognizes that authority figures, like teachers, socialize our young. By that, I mean they serve as gatekeepers for feeling and expression rules. Teachers expressed something similar, but added that this sometimes resulted in moral dilemmas. On the one hand, teachers acknowledged that it was important to implicitly and explicitly model appropriate behaviors within and outside the classroom. One teacher explained:

Fred: I lost my dad in 2004 and…It was something real… Showing them how you deal with pain, with life. Nobody talks about this stuff…it’s not fun, but they need to hear it and see it. They need role modeling. That is how we learn. I remember hanging up my wall phone in my room, the kids…said, “What’s the matter?” and I said, “My father just died.” And… this was 2 days before the moving up ceremony. I came back for the moving up ceremony…to read their names as they go by. So cool, so hard, but I spent a year with these guys. I couldn’t just go and leave them. I had to be there.

In this example, the teacher is signaling that it is still important for him to fulfill his emotional and work-related obligations to his students even though he is grieving for his father. In return, he talked about how his students expressed sympathy for his loss, thus fulfilling their obligations.

On the other hand, teachers implicitly and explicitly admitted that there is always an element of compulsion or coercion in education. This is also true of feeling and

in some societies, displays of grief are owed at a funeral while others discourage such displays or encourage the celebration of life.
expression rules. As such, it is important for teachers to tread lightly. They further argued, however, that these kinds of moral dilemmas often impose emotional costs. Norms and rules discipline differences in human behavior. In consequence, they are often perpetuated in ways that advantage those who already have power or status. One counselor said:

Sue: (I counsel at-risk children)...Many of them suffer from mental illness...(or) have drug...and behavioral issues...You have to really think outside of the box. Every child is different. Every family is different. I think they all want to be understood...They don't want to be judged. I think many of them have not had positive relationships...(at school and have)...struggled to get help...many of the parents themselves had struggled with school. They lack those academic skills but they also struggle when they interact...(at school). They don't even know what to ask...(Some) of the parents have limited social skills and act inappropriately in the school setting...say inappropriate things...then they are not taken seriously...and it is this vicious cycle...(So) I work with the families to help them interact with schools. You have to be careful because I have to tell them sort of how to act appropriately, you know not to swear...and so forth. It is a fine line. You have to walk a fine line because you do not want them to feel judged but you have to help them interact in appropriate ways so that they and the child get the help they need. Many of them are limited and struggled in school. Many did not graduate or got a GED.

Sue’s language about “walking a fine line” was used by many teachers. This suggests that most teachers recognize there is an unequal relationship, both in terms of children and parents. In fact, the “laughing” that occurs when teachers discuss “motivation” often signals their discomfort because the “product” that they are motivating to meet their occupational outcomes is a human being, and therefore deserving of respect and autonomy. This aspect of teaching is often taken-for-granted, but must be navigated by teachers in order to meet their responsibilities, as well as the responsibilities of public schools in a democratic society. In brief, children need to be taught “the rules” (i.e., formal and informal norms, rules, laws, regulations and policies) so that they will internalize and voluntarily follow them within and outside of school. But they also need
to have the capacity to negotiate, debate and challenge ways of seeing and constructing the world when necessary. Teachers view their relationships with their students as a way to maximize the democratic aspects of learning (and public education) while minimizing the compulsory ones.

In sum, the relational components of teaching, learning, and classroom management are a large part of why teaching as an occupation stresses a normative commitment to addressing children’s emotional and social needs. Unlike the academic goals of schools as public institutions and organizations, these latter goals are often viewed as moral or ethical imperatives, and thus taken for granted. Nonetheless, they are an important aspect of teachers’ abilities to meet their core academic tasks. They are also critical for the development of children as human beings. One further point deserves mention. Teachers further expressed that the relational aspects of learning are one of the reasons teachers need to interact with other adults in the building. Teachers can close their doors and teach, but it influences their ability to perform their core tasks. It also affects their well-being, and therefore the well-being of their students. This is true when relationships in general are strained even if their own are not. One urban teacher said:

Brian: You know, the better I get to know you, the more I am willing to do for you...to help you out or go the extra mile for you. Of course you have to do that for students, but you also have to do that for the school to run well. And, I think a happy workplace is an effective workplace. I've worked in schools that were not happy, and it is cold... you walk by and do not speak in the halls...and, the kids know it...they can sense it. I didn't have that problem though because I figured that...we needed to laugh and to make one another laugh. So, I would always take the time to make someone laugh...I felt that it made it easier to do the job and help others do the job...the kids are better off for it.

Thus, teachers manage their relationships at work because it affects the quality of their work. They care about the quality of their work because they care about the subjects of
their work. This often necessitates going beyond what is formally required on the job in order to attend to children’s emotional and social well-being, and the emotional landscape of schools as organizations and public institutions.

Empirically, the importance of the ethos of care for teaching as a job and an occupation is indicated by the fact that all teachers expressed a humanistic commitment to going beyond what was formally required at work to develop children as well-rounded human beings. These findings did not vary by age, gender or occupational position. They also did not vary across schools or grades, although the form of teachers’ emotion work sometimes changed as students aged. It is backed by another theme that ran across these interviews. Teaching requires both a cognitive and an emotional commitment. Good teachers master their academic content and possess strong pedagogical skills (i.e., the head and the hand of teaching). Great teachers are passionate about teaching, enthusiastic about their content areas, and genuinely care about their students as human beings (i.e., the heart of teaching). Largely because of this occupational commitment to an ethos of care, it is often difficult to separate teachers’ prescriptive and philanthropic emotion management, as discussed in the next section.

139 Although some studies indicate that caring is more prevalent among female elementary teachers (Woods and Jeffrey 1996), the findings from this study concur with Hargreaves (1998b) that there are no significant gender differences, and with Emmer (1994), Godar (1990), and Sutton (2007) that there are no major differences between elementary, middle and high school teachers. Even so, secondary teachers’ more frequently expressed that they used humor or engaged students in conversations about their outside interests rather than the more overt verbal or physical displays of caring used by elementary teachers, such as “side hugs” (i.e., standing side by side and putting an arm around a child’s shoulder). Moreover, consistent with what Hargreaves’ (1998b) found for teachers in Canada, the narratives also suggest that elementary teachers display and suppress more intense emotions than secondary teachers. In part, this is a function of the fact that elementary teachers spend more time with their students, and thus appear to develop stronger affective ties, because they teach a single class over the course of an entire day and year. Subject area teachers in middle and high school, on the other hand, switch classes throughout the day and sometimes in the middle of the year. The data also suggest, however, that the occupational norms more strongly oppose expressing strong negative emotions and encourage expressing strong positive emotions in the primary grades due to the impact on children’s development.
Philanthropic Emotion Management

As a whole, teachers’ narratives show that their affective ties to their students, colleagues, schools as communities, and teaching as an occupation strongly motivate their willingness to engage in “invisible work.” By that, I mean uncompensated, unacknowledged or altruistically motivated behaviors on behalf of their students, colleagues, occupation, or schools as communities. All of the teachers in this study demonstrated very high levels of work commitment. Quantitatively, they averaged an additional 10 hours at school every week and 9 hours at home. They also reported spending, on average, $800 of their own money every year on their students. Qualitatively, they described teaching as “all encompassing.” Teaching was a calling, mission, vocation, or lifestyle, rather than a job. One teacher exclaimed:

Carley: It’s not a 9-5 (job). It’s something that you bring home with you. You know those children for 10 months of the year and they really become a family to you. You care about each and every child… It’s something that you really have to be willing to put 500 percent into… I always tell people the best part of teaching is the kids. That’s the biggest reward. I absolutely love the children…I’m a people person and they are just little people…I think everybody has something good they can give to this world and if you can find it and tap into it, that’s the way to go…I love to learn myself…A lot of people say you get summers off. It never crossed my mind…It was not about the hours…I want to make sure those kids are getting everything they can out of that year with me. Everything (said emphatically).

Although teachers’ altruistic behaviors most frequently involved their own students, it was also clear that their emotional commitments extended outwards in ways that fostered collective organizational, occupational, and societal outcomes. As shown in Figure 8 on the next page, we can chart this as a continuum of care that moves from caring for children and their colleagues on one end to caring for schools as organizations, teaching as an occupation, and their school and home communities on the other.
Some examples of these behaviors included serving on school committees; cleaning up the school and the school grounds; chaperoning student activities and functions; attending school cultural, academic or sporting events; raising money or donating time to causes that support children and families in need (both within and outside of their classrooms, schools and communities); mentoring new teachers; and training student teachers.

The way teachers described these behaviors to me was that it became “natural” to engage in them at more distant levels (i.e., society at large) as they engaged in them at more proximate levels (i.e., their own students). For example, providing emotional care to a student with Leukemia was extended to providing support for his or her family, and then to donating time, money or raising funding or awareness for organizations that conduct research or provide assistance to those who are afflicted with Leukemia. Still, because most teachers engaged in invisible work at school or for causes that benefited people in their school communities, teachers by and large did not view themselves as altruistic or even as people who consistently volunteer. In fact, they often downplayed
these behaviors. For instance, when asked if they volunteered outside of school, teachers frequently replied “not much” and indicated this was because they spend so much time outside of school on “school related” work or activities. Yet, when asked about specific activities, such as “have you ever participated in a walk-a-thon” or “donated money to a charity,” teachers responded “all the time.” Then, they would discuss the specific causes to which they contributed time and money, and relate their contributions to things that affected people within their school communities. Thus, teachers’ altruistic behaviors are often invisible to society, but, just as interesting, they are often invisible to teachers themselves.

Even so, teachers’ narratives strongly suggest that they also take these behaviors for granted because they view them as something that they “do” because they “are” teachers. By that, I mean that teaching is part of their identity as opposed to something they do as part of the “job” of teaching or their role as a citizen. Many teachers further struggled with the word “altruistic” because they claimed their caring behaviors were not a “one way street,” meaning they derived important non-compensated benefits, including job satisfaction, enjoyment, love, affection and validation. Often, these benefits were implicit, as evidenced by this story:

Peter: I had this one student two years ago who was really into astronomy…This is one of my favorite stories…A couple months before my student’s birthday, I got in touch with…(a famous astronomer) and…gave him something my student had written…He sent a book of his and he had written a note addressed to my student on the first page…I presented the book to the student and he was really excited when I told him that someone had signed it inside. He said, “Did you sign it Mr. So-and-So?” And he was really excited thinking that I had signed it (laughing), which was really nice, but I said, “No, no, it's even better!” You can imagine how excited he was when he saw the note. I'll never forget his face. He was dumbfounded. He carried that book around with him for the rest of the year. It never left his side (getting emotional).
More explicitly, most teachers expressed that their relationships with students and colleagues helped them sustain the very high levels of work commitment that are needed to teach effectively, especially given the emotional strains associated with “doing people work.”

Similar to other jobs, teachers’ relationships at work sometimes cause emotional distress. These strains are mitigated and complicated by the fact that teachers work with children. In general, teachers are more accepting of children’s foibles because mistakes are part of learning. Still, as human beings, teachers want to be treated with respect, and therefore experience negative emotions, such as frustration, anxiety and anger, when students misbehave. This includes rule violations, but also underachievement related to controllable behaviors, such as laziness. One teacher admitted:

Emily: It's emotional because it involves your students…there is no way this is a job that you walk into and walk out of (laughing)…because it involves human beings that you care about...(And), not in the early grades, but with 5th and 6th grade…I needed to counsel myself all of the time so that I exercised patience with behavioral issues. I was in a very difficult school and for the first time in my life I had someone swear at me...(and) I was called a whore (laughing). I didn't even know how to deal with that (laughing)...tough to come home after that one (laughing)...The reality is…you can't teach anything unless you have their behaviors under control… I think if you are a good teacher you really labor over whether your students get something …You also care about whether they are happy, not just about whether they’re learning. If you see students with problems… there are all kinds of emotions that come into play…So, sometimes it is great because, what is a better feeling than realizing that you have really reached children? But other times it's terrible. Your emotions run the gamut with teaching.

As this narrative indicates, to be warm and loving to a child who calls you a “whore” takes a great deal of emotion work. In fact, many teachers acknowledged that it is difficult to depersonalize student behaviors. One teacher exclaimed:

Loretta: (Teaching is) very emotional…the kids somehow become your own. You take ownership and if you don’t…I don’t think you are doing your job well.
They somehow become a reflection of you and you have to take it personally…if somebody goes on a trip and misbehaves…I take it like it’s my own kid who went on a trip and misbehaved.

Their narratives revealed that this is one area where experience is crucial. Over time, teachers learn strategies to depersonalize student behaviors. This is important because it enables teachers to move beyond negative emotions at work and “do right by the kids,” even when children themselves make it difficult to do so.

More frequently, though, teachers’ negative emotions when attached to students related to things that affected their students, but were out of their students’ or their own control. These were typically associated with students’ home lives or problems experienced by individual children, such as health or mental health issues. But they also included factors associated with the socio-economic environment, such as poverty or crime in the community. Teachers are increasingly being asked to solve what Harmon and Mayer (1986) call “wicked” problems. As previously mentioned, wicked problems are those where there are no agreed upon definition, and, as a result, irreconcilable differences about how to deal with them and how to measure the effectiveness of the solutions. They include poverty, homelessness, drug abuse, crime, and family decay. They affect teachers deeply because they care about their students, not just because they impact their jobs. Teachers expressed that they “never forget” those students they could not help or those they helped but could not do enough to make up for their experiences outside the classroom. They “worry about” their students, and remember many of them long after having them in class.

The importance of societal problems for teaching and learning is evident by the fact that almost all of the teachers in this sample discussed them in some manner.
Meanwhile, as the following two narratives indicate, male and female teachers across elementary and secondary schools were equally likely to express that wicked problems affected their emotional well-being:

Kelly: (I had a child with) emotional issues, and I probably spent the entire year with this child and …his mother and father…getting them as much help and services as I possibly could…working with the social worker… bringing them clothing, food…you name it, we did it…one-on-one time with the little boy… after school…before school…watching this little boy…through 1st grade and 2nd grade…the mom still taking the abuse, the domestic violence…And feeling like there was nothing I could do…And he is not functioning as a good citizen should…the mom is still in a battered relationship, and…it just feels like…(getting emotional) no matter what I did or…anybody did…nothing seemed to work.140

Mark: (Your relationships with students are both) a positive and negative thing… some of my students didn’t want to leave…(during a break) because their whole lives were so messed up but at school they had stability…their day was planned out and they always knew what was going to happen. But when they got home, they had no clue what was going to happen, who was going to be there, or even if they were going to get lunch and dinner. Some of them did not get fed when they went home. You literally would see kids go home for a week and lose 10 pounds because they may eat once a day...(heavy sigh) as much as they complain and say they hate you (laughing)…they miss you…And that is really tough. You felt like you were needed and that was the rewarding aspect of the job but…tough because you knew why …(heavy sigh) I mean I knew, but I really didn't know (said emphatically) what was out there…Once the kids got to know you and they trusted, respected and liked you, they would tell you anything. And a lot of it you didn't want to hear (laughs)…you heard a lot of stuff…a lot of negative stuff. It was tough.

The second narrative was from a teacher who worked in a low resource urban private and public high school before getting tenure at a low resource rural high school. Despite the fact that these three schools drew from very dissimilar populations, he told similar stories

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140 Kelly’s narrative show’s that teachers often extend their caring behaviors out to parents in their efforts to help children, but many narratives demonstrated that teachers care about parents as human beings too. One teacher said:

Annie: The psychologist and I had to meet with (a mother)…and…inform…her (that her) child was mentally retarded. And she burst into tears and put her head down on the table…just sobbed for 20 minutes straight. We could not console her and could not get her to even lift her head up off the table…she herself was limited so…it just devastated her (said very emotionally), that her child, she felt, inherited her genes…is how she said it. And I’ll never forget that experience as long as I live (getting quieter)…It’s still with me. It’s still horrible; a horrible memory for me.
about how economic distress and societal problems impacted teaching and learning. He also expressed guilt at having to leave his students at the urban school he is discussing above, as if he had violated a moral code by leaving “his kids,” even though he left as a result of being laid off due to fiscal cutbacks.

Guilt was a very common emotion among the teachers I interviewed. Their narratives revealed that teachers commonly struggle to uphold two widely held (individual and occupational) moral codes due to the nature of teaching as an occupation. First, teachers believe that they ought to care about children, and feel guilty when they struggle to feel genuine caring for a difficult student. Second, teachers believe it is important to control their tempers, and feel guilty when they do not. As evident from the following narrative, however, teachers agreed that it is acceptable to show anger and “false” (i.e., performed) anger if it is used sparingly, kept under control, and used to promote learning:

Brenda: (Once) or twice a year I…get mad. And when I do, they know and they are like, “Whoa.” (Laughs) But I think they need to know that too. Emotions are part of life and they need to know when they have pushed too far. Mostly, I find that being respectful of my students means they are going to respect me back. I really don't have any discipline problems…You cannot shout at your kids…(or) talk down to them. They don't respond to that. You have to treat them with respect. But you can use your own emotions to motivate them. As long as you are not out of control with your temper, it is fine to let them know when they push too far, or to yell to get their attention and wake them up a little bit (laughing), especially first thing in the morning. I am not yelling at them I am just being loud (laughs). And they laugh at me and that’s good too. It’s also good for them to see your excitement about what you’re teaching…They know when you love what you teach…they respond to that.

Here, anger is managed and used sparingly. When it is not, teachers expressed that they felt sad, guilty or ashamed of themselves afterwards. These feelings of sadness, guilt and shame wear on teachers both emotionally and physically, but also serve as reminders that,
while teachers across-the-board supported the ethos of care, like all human beings, they sometimes fall short of this ideal. Here, emotions serve a “signal function,” or a reminder that teachers need to reconnect to the norms of the occupation. More broadly, though, widely held negative emotions signal that something is going on in teaching as an occupation, rather than that teachers are “falling short” as a result of individual traits or characteristics. It may mean that the norms of teaching are in conflict with the norms of society, public polices or schools as public institutions; or, it may be a signal that organizational factors, working conditions, or the nature of teaching make it difficult for teachers to live up to the occupation’s ideals.

In terms of the latter, many teachers expressed that their working conditions mitigated their ability to live up to occupation’s ideals, but these statements were especially prevalent among those who taught disproportionately large numbers of high need students with inadequate resources. Teachers most frequently mentioned large class sizes and inadequate space; classrooms and buildings that were in poor condition or lacked appropriate ventilation; and, old textbooks, not enough textbooks, or inadequate teaching materials. Interestingly, some teachers mentioned occupational stress related to the physical location of their schools rather than the needs of their students or inadequate resources. Some linked this issue to concerns about physical safety, while others discussed having their personal property vandalized. One teacher combined these narratives:

Loretta: (The) first school I was at in the City…there was a parking lot by the school and we used to rent a parking lot, which was down the block…it was fenced in with a gate…I used to work in an after school program, and in the winter time when I would get out…at six o'clock it was dark…I used to…pry the gate open (laughing), walk into the lot to my car, get in my car and drive it out, and then get out of my car to pull the gate closed and lock it again (laughs). One
night, I do this and, \textit{thank God} (said with emphasis) I was with someone else because I did not know that there were homeless people living...in an abandoned car. All of a sudden I see movement...I almost died. My heart was beating so fast. I really thought my life was going to end right there and then. And, I had switched to that parking lot because I had my car broken into (at school)...Other teachers also had their cars broken into. This happened all the time. They would steal your tires...they would take anything ... I had my radio pulled out...So most of us opted to park in this lot ...(but) it was really scary...the precincts that were within this district had the highest crime rate in the City...this kind of stuff...puts a lot of stress on you, and I don’t think people realize that...they don’t realize that teachers face this. You not only have to worry about your own personal safety...you know was someone going to be hiding to mug you...you also had to worry about whether your car was going to be there when you came out and if it was going to be intact.

Like Loretta, most urban and rural teachers discussed issues related to their schools being located in communities with a dearth of public resources. Some mentioned, for example, the fact that the roads were not plowed due to rural isolation, inadequate resources, and/or fiscal cutbacks, which made it difficult for them to get into work in the winter. These kinds of conditions wear on teachers and students, and impact their physical and mental well-being. In the process, they affect teaching and learning.

Just as frequently, though, teachers conveyed that the job of teaching itself made it difficult to meet the occupation’s ideals. Teachers often felt like they walked a “tight-rope” between “going the extra mile for individual students” (philanthropic emotion management) and maintaining the professional distance they need to do their jobs well (prescriptive emotion management). Many teachers voiced that, in some ways, it would be easier to maintain “distance,” or take a clinical stance, because the costs of caring for every student were quite high and often unsustainable given the other demands of the job. Yet, because teachers concur that maintaining clinical distance negatively impacts students’ development and teachers’ abilities to perform their jobs, teachers’ personal and occupational integrity, as well as their status within the occupation, requires that they go
beyond “teaching as a job” and involve themselves with students, even when it involves a high personal cost.

One teacher described emotion management in terms of holding a bubble in your hands. The bubble represents your negative emotions. As the bubble fills up, it will stretch some and ooze out between your fingers as you try to keep it contained, but eventually it will pop if the air is not allowed to seep out slowly. Across-the-board, teachers expressed that they used their affective ties to their students, colleagues and teaching as an occupation to help them manage their emotions and sustain the very high levels of commitment that are required for effective teaching. Their colleagues were especially important for helping them deal with organizational and occupational stress, and recovering their spirit and love for teaching when serious problems occur. Most often this is accomplished through humor on the job. Some teachers, however, also expressed providing outright assistance, such as covering classes or extracurricular duties during times of crises. For example, teachers and administrators in one school covered the classes of a fellow teacher who had lost her husband and was struggling to meet the demands of the job and care for two small children.\footnote{The teacher was relatively new and had not accumulated leave. She would have had to return to work because she needed to support her two children. The teachers each gave up a free period to teach one of her classes so that she could stay at home for a period of time rather than return before she was emotionally prepared to do the job. This also helped students who were taught by an experienced teacher, who was known by the students and their families, rather than a long-term substitute or a succession of substitutes (who were not known by the community). Stories like this were not uncommon but mostly involved short-term commitments or helping colleagues in ways that were not specifically related to teaching classes.} In all of these cases, the humanistic values of teachers, backed up by the humanistic values of teaching as an occupation, serve as a “gift” that teachers give to their students, their colleagues, and their schools as communities. More broadly, though, these values are a gift that they give to society in the form of better-educated and socially adjusted adults.
Summing up, teachers’ narratives indicate that, prior to NCLB, their prescriptive and philanthropic emotion management were (largely) inseparable due to the widely held normative commitment to a more expansive, humanistic conceptualization of teaching. Thus, teachers acknowledged different capacities to care and recognized different ways of demonstrating care, but collectively valued and enforced an ethos of care. The interviews further suggest that, for the most part, individual teachers did not experience (persistent) emotional dissonance at work because compliance with the ethos of care was felt versus cynically carried out. Even so, teachers’ narratives reveal that compliance with the ethos of care was uneven. Here, teachers described cases where they felt another teacher demonstrated a command of their content knowledge and pedagogy (i.e., the head and hand of teaching) but lacked the heart (i.e., a passion for teaching or a genuine love of children). In these cases, teachers individually and collectively “policed” the emotional rules of teaching. This was largely achieved through their relationships with one another, and involved imposing social costs, such as gossip, social exclusion, or withholding social or professional approval. But teachers also reported imposing work related costs. These involved, for instance, voicing their concerns to administrators to encourage them to remediate the issue or forgo offering tenure to a particular teacher.

Interestingly, many of the narratives that involved the strongest emotions related to a colleague who had “fallen down” in areas of the heart. The fact that teachers so consistently expressed a commitment to the humanistic dimension of teaching, and the real emotion they showed when describing violations of this norm, suggests that “caring” was an occupational ethos more than a personal characteristic.\textsuperscript{142} Nevertheless, their

\textsuperscript{142} Teachers’ narratives also suggest that there are limits to this feeling rule. For instance, some teachers discussed their need to negotiate between developing caring relationships while simultaneously maintaining
narratives made clear that, prior to NCLB, this humanistic dimension of teaching was largely self-policing even though it was normative, or reinforced by professional norms and feeling rules. As discussed in the next section, teachers’ narratives reveal that testing under NCLB has altered teachers’ relationships to their profession, their students, and their colleagues by serving as what Foucault calls a disciplinary technology. By that, I mean that testing as a technology imposes social control from within as well as through public information. In the process, it has partially commodified teachers’ prescriptive and philanthropic emotion management in service of organizational and state aims. The end result is increased emotional dissonance.

Post-NCLB: Effects of Partially Commodified Emotion Management

Political scientists and sociologists concur that there are consequences to the over- and under-regulation of social life. Marx, for instance, expressed concern about how social control damages the individual, and leads to alienation and powerlessness. Conversely, Hobbes, Tocqueville and Durkheim focused on the negative effects associated with the excessive pursuit of self-interest and individual rights, including, but not limited to, the loss of social ties. Durkheim used the term anomie to refer to a condition that exists when social regulations breakdown, either in society as a whole or in some of its component parts. He contended that healthy individuals were more likely to live in communities that imposed a sense of duty, obligation, or commitment to a higher social purpose. This is because anomie results from social structures where individuals pursue their own goals and interests, unfettered by norms or other forms of social control (Durkheim 1984; Polumbo and Scott 2005).

some professional distance. In part, this is because there is a clinical side to teaching, which sometimes requires distance. But teachers sometimes need to create distance to manage their emotions and thus perform their jobs.
In spite of their differences, Marx and Durkheim were both concerned about the emergence of modern capitalism, especially how the division of labor and spread of market relations affected social solidarity and the ability of society to regulate and reproduce itself. Both theorists further rejected the individualist assumptions that were being fostered at the time by Utilitarianism, political economists and Social Darwinists. Durkheim, for example, recognized that anomie may also arise as a result of a mismatch between individual or group norms, and wider social standards, a condition that he tied to rapid economic change under modern capitalism. Marx, on the other hand, claimed that capitalists were the product of a market society, not its starting point. He argued that the value of a commodity was created through social exchange versus a property of the product itself. This means that, when I make something for my own use, it is not a commodity. It only becomes one if I sell it or exchange it for something else. According to his analysis, the main difference between pre- and post-capitalist societies was that the commodification of social life would continue to spread under the latter as capitalists were driven by the profit motive to continuously search for new markets in the face of increased competition.

Marx’s larger concern, though, was that the production of commodities would gradually replace other forms of social exchange, and become the dominant means of organizing society. Under these conditions, workers would increasingly become estranged from the product of their labor, as they increasingly needed to direct their labor toward the goals of those who owned the means of production. The end result was a loss of selfhood, because the transformation of nature into objects is part of our humanity. In the process, the spread of market relations increases alienation, or estrangement, from our
natural and social worlds (Marx 1977; Polumbo and Scott 2005; Tucker 1978). Although teachers are not using the language of Durkheim and Marx, their narratives expressed very similar concerns.

In the previous section, I showed that one of the major forms of accountability in teaching prior to NCLB involved a moral or ethical commitment to caring. As a form of social control, this ethos of care was formed, maintained and enforced through teachers’ social and emotional ties to their students, colleagues, occupation and schools as organizations and communities. NCLB, on the other hand, opened-up the private spaces of teaching and learning by portraying testing as a form of “clinical authority.” Specifically, legislators conceived of test scores as a “neutral” means to rate and rank teachers, students and schools. These rankings could then be used to diagnose and treat problems areas, and punish schools (and teachers) that performed below the norm. In the process, testing commodified teachers’ emotion management and relationships because both are crucial for learning. By commodification, teachers mean that teaching and learning are being reduced to “consumable packages” that teachers deliver in uniform ways regardless of individual interests, needs, skills and capacities. Consumable learning packages are easy to disseminate and easy to assess. As such, they facilitate hierarchical control by schools as organizations and ultimately by the state. One suburban schoolteacher said:

Meagan: They would like everything to be scripted. They give us things that we have to follow where it says things like, “Now you say...da da da da da.” Some of this is related to the reading program but it could also be at parent-teacher conferences. They tell us what they want us to say at these conferences. But it is mainly when you’re teaching. I have a hard time teaching that way. I can't just follow a script. There is a lot that comes up. There's a lot of learning that goes on spontaneously through the interaction between teachers and students, and through students’ questions. The whole lesson can be taken in a whole other direction and
be just as valuable, if not more valuable because you are engaging students’ curiosity and so forth. I am finding that it is becoming very scripted. They give us binders, books, units that we have to do and do it in a certain way… we don't have freedom to implement it in a way that is comfortable to us and that best fits the needs of our students…they are not giving us the autonomy to implement it in ways that are comfortable to us based on our professional knowledge. It is now, “Okay, this is the first unit and this is how you will teach it.” We are also given scripts for test prep.

One consequence of testing is that increased hierarchical control has created what Hargreaves (1998) calls “geographies of distance” in teaching and learning, meaning it has negatively affected teachers’ relationships with their students and colleagues. This has mitigated teachers’ ability to create social cohesion in the classroom and necessitated more authoritative styles of teaching (social control). The end result is that teachers and students are increasingly alienated from the learning process.

Just as troubling, by promoting market values, such as competition, efficiency, effectiveness, and individual “merit” based on performance, the discourse of NCLB has increasingly crowded out the communal and social democratic values of schools as public institutions, such as participation, co-operation, and equal worth. The new “culture of performance” has also impacted teachers’ commitment to things that are not specified in their contracts or measured by their evaluations, yet are important for the efficient and effective operation of schools (e.g., serving on school committees) and the health of the occupation (e.g., training student teachers). A former teacher, who now supervises student teachers as part of a university program, said:

Shannon: (Student teachers) cannot get teaching time…the teachers have them do tasks in the room, but they are not turning over their classroom to the student teacher. And it's a real problem for the profession. Our school is struggling to get placements for student teachers. Another problem is that they will only take student teachers in the primary grades because there is no testing…But teachers are supposed to have two experiences, one in the primary grades and one in the upper elementary grades. For the second experience, because the teachers are
under so much pressure to cover content, they don't want...(them). And, if they do take them, they use them to correct papers or things that help the participating teacher but the student teachers are not getting the teaching time. So, it really is affecting the profession as a whole because the student teachers are not getting the experiences that they need to then become proficient teachers. And so, they have to get that experience their first year on the job, which is not good. But you can understand why the cooperating teachers do not want to give over their teaching time. They are under so much pressure to get good test results that they do not want to hand over their classroom to somebody who is not yet proficient. Yet, the profession depends on teachers’ willingness to do just that.

Most troubling to teachers, though, is that testing as a form of accountability appears to be democratic and objective, but hides the very real ways that school performance is influenced by socio-economic inequality. This is because all assessment regimes overtly and implicitly codify knowledge, skills, and behaviors that are unevenly distributed across social classes and social groups. They do so to rate and rank. As such, testing as a form of accountability institutionalizes the effects of class, race, ethnicity, and gender on the performance of children, and unevenly distributes compliance across schools and teachers. The next two sections discuss the new culture of performance under NCLB.

The following sections describe how testing as a technology has perpetuated it, and how it inequitably impacts teachers and students.

NCLB and the Culture of Performance

Sociologist Erving Goffman (1959) portrayed social interaction as a form of theatrical performance where, similar to actors, people present themselves in ways that will make an impression on others and earn “acceptance from the audience.” To that end, people alter their appearance, as well as their spoken and body language, according to their social contexts. By social context, he means the particular time and place, but also the “audience.” Here, he suggests that people take “personal fronts,” such as age, gender, race, and so forth, into account. Goffman further argued, however, that people construct
“situated identities,” meaning they adjust their identities when values, norms and expectations change, or in accordance with the roles that they are playing. According to his analysis, people’s identities are neither stable nor independent. Instead, they are remade in the process of interacting with others. He divides these interactions into front, back and off-stage regions.

Front stage actions include situations where we interact with others in a public or professional settings. These behaviors are visible to the audience. Backstage performances are what we do when no one is watching. They include our inner feelings, as well as those situations where we can be at home and “step out of character.” Off-stage regions are outside the performance. For example, a waitress may smile at an unhappy customer (front stage) while feeling angry inside (backstage), and then go back to the kitchen and have a laugh at the customer’s expense with her co-workers (off-stage). Yet, backstage and off-stage regions are often coopted into the performance. In our waitress example, she is playing the role of a loyal insider and giving her colleagues “a laugh,” while her colleagues are helping her decompress from the strain of performing “people work.” Thus, she hides her true (backstage) emotions even while coopting her (offstage) colleagues into the performance. Goffman argues that the boundaries between the regions are important because they help performers manage when, how and who has access to the performance. He says, however, that there are almost never “true” backstage regions whenever two or more people are present.143

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143 According to Goffman, individuals play three basic roles, depending on their level of access to inside information about the performance. Performers are the most knowledgeable, while the audience only knows what the performers have disclosed or what they have observed themselves. Outsiders, on the other hand, have very little, if any, relevant information, but are often important for maintaining borders or boundaries between the regions.
As shown in the last section, teachers’ narratives reveal that there has always been a level of performing involved in teaching as an occupation. Their concern is that testing, as a means of accountability, has opened up the “private” spaces of teaching for inspection (i.e., backstage and offstage regions). In essence, this has reduced teachers’ capacity to (autonomously) manage who has access to the performance, even as it has enabled the state and schools as organizations to commodify teachers’ emotions and relationships in pursuit of organizational and state aims. The end result is that teachers are increasingly experiencing the negative side effects associated with emotional labor, such as alienation, burnout and lower job satisfaction, even though their jobs remain incompletely commodified.

These findings were expressed in three distinctive ways. First, when describing their work before NCLB, teachers used words like “creative,” “stimulating,” and “engaging.” When discussing their post-NCLB jobs, teachers often used words like “frustrating,” “stressful,” “restrictive,” “repetitive,” and “demoralizing.” Second, almost 100 percent of the teachers who had never taught under NCLB said that, if they could do it all over again, they would still become a teacher. They also claimed that they would be supportive if someone close to them said that he or she was thinking about becoming a teacher. In contrast, those who taught after NCLB were far more likely to say that they would not become a teacher again or that they would not recommend becoming one to someone close to them. Third, the negative side-effects of emotional labor were especially evident in schools where public managers required scripting and other routinizing mechanisms as a means of controlling teachers’ work. In these cases,
teachers across-the-board experienced increased emotional dissonance, and even increased health problems (Please see Appendix E for sample narratives).

Teachers’ narratives further suggest, however, that they are not simply reacting to a loss of autonomy at work, nor are they objecting to testing or a common curriculum. Least directly, this conclusion is supported by the fact that teachers who had never experienced a pre-NCLB environment used the same language to describe their jobs. Therefore, they are not reacting to a “before and after” loss in professional autonomy. More directly, teachers agreed that there is a need to formally evaluate students and teachers, and expressed a willingness to give up autonomy when it benefited children. Most directly, the state had a well-developed system of testing prior to the adoption of NCLB and teachers followed a common curriculum. Instead, teachers’ narratives suggest that the larger problem is Durkheimian in nature. It stems from individual and occupational value conflict because the new performative culture often conflicts with teaching as a humanistic occupation.

Teaching as a performance emphasizes the technical or measurable aspects of the job. Under this definition of teaching, children are increasingly reduced to “products” that need to be shaped and molded according to a standardized output. A former teacher, who is now supervising student teachers as part of university program, said:

Shannon:  (There) is an effect…that…has not been so positive for children… because I am not teaching, I can take a step back and kind of listen to people and how they talk…what I notice is that I am always hearing conversations between teachers about programs and scores… curriculum and assessment… Whereas, when I was teaching, the conversations were always about children (laughs). You don't hear teachers talking about children… The kids are almost like products (laughing)…everything is focused on the kids’ performance and what is getting lost is who they are. We are focusing on outcomes and objectives and what is getting lost is the human being…the human side of teaching. When you set up
systems where a kid’s performance reflects your success or failure, then you are going to have to treat children more like products…it is really unfortunate.

Conversely, teaching as a humanistic enterprise stresses the relational aspects of learning. It recognizes that (1) children have many different learning styles; (2) learning in the classroom is co-constructed through the interaction between teachers and students, and students and students; and (3) learning is “contingent” (i.e., children may not “catch” what is being “thrown out”) and rarely “linear” (i.e., children may take one step forward and two steps back). Thus, teachers need to use multiple methods in order to engage different learning styles within a single classroom; adjust their lessons across classrooms; and, “adjust as they go” within specific units or lessons.

While teachers blamed NCLB for these developments, they also acknowledged that the changes in what and how they teach have been “self-directed” more than organizationally mandated. Most schools as organizations do not specifically script what and how teachers teach. Still, teachers’ narratives indicate that the term “self-directed” is not an adequate characterization of what is going on. Rather, it is more appropriate to characterize testing as a “disciplinary technology” (Foucault 1995), meaning it is an external form of social control that causes teachers to self-regulate in ways that achieve state aims and organizational goals. One teacher explained how this works as follows:

Brenda: (When) kids are failing or not doing well, it is looked at like it is your fault. At least now that is. I don’t think it was as much that way years ago but…You get very frustrated because you're there for afterschool help, you are calling the parents, you are trying to get these kids to pass, but if they don't, it is a frustrating part of the job because you are accountable…everyone throws it on the teacher’s lap and says, “You need to figure out what you need to do” while I think it should be more, “How is everyone going to help this student do better”…It is a team effort…(But now) the teacher does get looked at as, “Those are your kids, those are your test scores, and that is your student that is failing. What are you doing wrong?”…You know, the superintendent will come in and go over all the numbers with the teachers…our percentages, and say, “This is what teachers need
to do”…they…break the test score numbers out by different grade levels, categories, subjects and so forth. We also focus heavily on graduation rates…The push is not to fall into categories where aid will be taken away or we will be labeled a school in need of improvement. No one wants to be labeled that (laughs)…The concern is that we won’t meet our subgroups requirements… It is all numbers. It is all about how you are portraying those numbers and who is included and is not included in those numbers. It’s like a numbers game. We have people that have been hired to do that…They look at the numbers. They say, “Math, grade 11, here is how we are doing”… It is a lot of pressure on teachers. Not the administrators. Not the parents. The teacher's name is the one that is attached to these kids. The teacher is being held accountable.

She then explains how the teachers in her department developed binders they used to structure their teaching in ways that conformed to state standards and thus state exams. Here, the school is not scripting how teachers teach. Instead, the state and public schools cause teachers to alter their behaviors in ways that foster state aims and organizational goals by attaching children’s names and test scores to specific teachers. These ideas are discussed in the next section.

Testing as a “Disciplinary Technology”

Like Marx and Durkheim, Foucault was concerned about social regulation, but he focused on how society coerced individuals to self-regulate through the ways it partitioned time and space. He used Jeremy Bentham’s concept of the Panopticon to convey how societal norms could serve as a “disciplinary technology,” or socialize individuals and groups to behave in certain ways through the perpetual observation of their behavior. The Panopticon was a prototype prison that enabled guards to view every aspect of prisoners’ daily lives. Even so, perpetual observation was not an end in and of itself. It was used to compare prisoners to one another, construct norms and

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144 Foucault (1984, 256) used the word technology to convey the practice of power that involves “the government of individuals…souls …the self by the self…families…children and so on.” He used the term architecture as a metaphor for the ways that society could make visible (and thereby control) individual behaviors, as well as control and affect the body.
abnormalities, and encourage deviants to conform in ways that were docile and productive through the threat of observation and punishment. In this manner, norms largely became self-enforced as prisoners disciplined themselves.

Foucault used the metaphor of the panopticon to convey that organizations, bureaucracies and (social, political and economic) institutions partitioned time and space into parts or cells in order to control individual behaviors. This included physical partitions, such as classrooms within a school, but also social labels and partitions, such as groups, ranks and classifications. In all of these cases, architecture, in the form of norms, social labels, time or space, makes it easier to observe, inspect, and partition off deviants by providing information about their behaviors. This information is then used by the collective to “normalize” individuals, or discipline and control them. Still, social control is (largely) not achieved through violence or force. It is exercised from within as individuals strive to meet social expectations. In this manner, individuals become component parts of a larger machine, whose productive capacity is greater than the capacity of its loosely combined individual parts. Meanwhile, normalization creates docility and systematically produces inequalities in name of greater productivity.

We can use Foucault’s analysis to express the differences between teachers and political elites with respect to testing as a form of accountability. Earlier, I showed that the federal government normalized a business discourse, which framed teaching and learning as technical endeavors that could be measured, and therefore controlled, through testing. Members of congress then used the term “diagnostic testing” to convey that public information, in the form of test scores, was not intended to be punitive. Rather, it was a means to remEDIATE underperforming students, teachers and schools. Teachers told
me, however, that, once that information is available, the drive to use it to rank “collective bodies,” such as schools and different groups within society, becomes almost unstoppable. One suburban schoolteacher explained it to me in this manner:

Robin: I think…(under NCLB) teachers are being held accountable to the public. Our test scores get posted in the newspaper. The newspaper publishes our salaries. People look at these numbers and it puts a lot of pressure on you…right now, they do not even publish test scores by individual teacher, but they can. There's nothing stopping them …There was a case of a teacher committing suicide because his grades were published. They do publish it by school and district…And one newspaper will publish anything, and I hate to say that will make teachers look bad but that's pretty much where it's coming from. And so it's stressful. You put a lot of pressure on yourself. You want your students to do well certainly but it is also a pride thing. I work really hard and…What you do becomes reduced to that number. I know its not just based on my performance, but I’m the one who is being held accountable…I think we’re going to see more of this kind of thing, you know using test scores to say “this person is a bad teacher”…Once you have the data, it snowballs because they can rank teachers and students and schools…and they want to get rid of the bad teachers, which I’m all for and I think most teachers support because, like in any career, we have people who should not be there. But, with that said, you don't see headlines in terms of who's the best fire inspector or who’s the best lawyer or policeman. I just don't think I've ever opened a newspaper and read things about another career or profession or occupation like you see with teachers.

Like Robin, many teachers argued that testing has become a harbinger of punishment.

Also like Robin, many claimed NCLB has not effectively remediated the problems it sought to redress, either in terms of schools, teachers or children. These ideas are evident in the following narrative, which was told to me by a suburban math schoolteacher:

Sandy: They use it (testing) to put a failing grade on the kids, or on the school, or on the teacher. It’s meant to find out what the kids need to learn, but there is none of that “Let’s get the kid this extra service.” I shouldn’t say that, they do, but it’s a Band-Aid…The kid scored a 2 on this exam so now they need to have remedial service. Let’s put them in front of a computer to do 500 problems of adding and subtracting until they get better at it. That qualifies as remediation. It’s not what they need, but there is no money to get what they need…no money to get at the source of the problem. The same thing is going to happen to the teachers (due to the state’s new evaluation system). So, you find out you…scored…below
standard, the whole purpose is to help the teacher improve, which would be a win-win…but I’m not sure that…substructure, or whatever, is in place to help that person to become better...(It is the same with a struggling school, and) so they just close it down, or they fire all the teachers…that’s not the way to do it… If I had students fail my state exam I personally feel accountable, but usually there is some reason behind it, they were absent 50 times or whatever…(Administrators) never come and say “How can I help you”…administrators are not about making teachers better. They’re about politics and testing and discipline. It’s not about helping teachers, which it should be…their job is to support teachers, and I don’t feel that…Maybe it’s different in other districts.

Viewed through this lens, testing as a form of public information is not an end in and of itself. On the contrary, it enables the state (and school districts) to classify individuals as cases, and construct norms to rank individuals across space (social groups) and over time. In this fashion, the state evaluates, differentiates, and hierarchically organizes individuals into relation with one another; makes statements about their potential worth, value, and contribution to society; gives them tasks commensurate with their ability, capacity and productivity; and allots rewards and punishments to those who deviate from the norm.

Teachers admitted that some of this increased social regulation occurred prior to NCLB with the promulgation of state standards. They claimed, however, that schools still remained loosely organized in the sense that teachers could “shut their doors” and exert some control over how they taught even as the state increasingly directed what they taught. Here, they are providing support for my claim that, prior to NCLB, schools as public institutions relied on hierarchical accountability, as well as professional accountability. As evident in the following quote, testing as a technology has opened up the private spaces of teaching and enabled school districts to increasingly direct what and how teachers teach:

Renee: (The) first principal that I worked with…you never wanted to fall out of grace…because then the expectations are so high…I happened to have a very good relationship with…(her but) I don’t know if I could have stayed in that
building…she…micromanaged everything. *Everything*…She’d…press a button…the P.A. system and listen in to people’s classrooms from her office…she’d walk in and out of classrooms all the time… you had to have all your aims on the board…change it with every lesson…file every piece of paperwork at the end of the day. This principal in particular had an 8½ x 14…front and back, like 4 pages…bulletin every week in small print (laughing). And then you were tested on it… Somewhere in it, she would advise you to do something, which would let her know that you read the whole thing…We have a new superintendent …who nicknames herself the “Data Diva.” She is big on data and so…(now it has) come down…(to) our building. We are required to print out our own data…in math and in reading…four times a year…(and give it to our principal so she can) assess how you are doing, how your children are doing…The tool that they are using is districtwide and… they are all done on the computer. So the entire class goes in and everyone in the district is doing it right around the same time…they all go into the computer lab and are tested and …you print them out. They are individualized both by child, teacher and then overall, you against a grade level…so that’s the local assessment …(Then we have) the state tests… (we look at) which school fared the best in which area and so forth and then it gets more specific…it goes to each question and…what our teachers need to work on at that grade level…Sometimes that’s all put up at our superintendent’s meeting prior to school to both inspire and humiliate you (laughing)… It’s…just dropped on the teachers. So, “teach this better!” *Alright!!*

Here, we see how testing enables the principle to link teachers to their students and thereby “observe” them. Meanwhile, the cellular structure of teaching also fosters perpetual observation. This involves listening into classrooms, as well as “popping in” to see what teachers are doing. The principal also “tests” teachers through their responses to her weekly newsletter. Mostly, though, hierarchical regulation is fostered by rating and ranking teachers based on their students’ performance on districtwide and state exams. As discussed in the next section, the ability to use test scores to rate and rank teachers has resulted in teachers (self) regulating what and how they teach.

*Teaching as a Technology: The Commodification of Teaching and Learning*

According to teachers, testing as a technology has changed what they teach because it provides very limited information about “the performance,” meaning easily measured (and therefore testable) skills, competencies and content. In the meantime, it
silences other aspects of teaching that are essential but difficult to measure. For example, one goal of public schools is to level the playing field in society. As discussed earlier in this chapter, one occupational norm that teachers widely support is to “do right by the kids.” One professed goal of the federal government, on the other hand, is to increase the number of students pursuing science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). All three of these require schools and teachers to be inclusive in terms of the opportunities they afford students from diverse backgrounds. The following narrative shows how testing silences these broader goals:

Ron: (The) previous physics teacher only wanted the “elite” students and so he made the class so difficult…to weed out students. Those kids really liked him, but he only had like 31 students taking physics and now it has increased (since I have been teaching it) so that next year I will have 70 students. More students are taking physics because I have a welcoming approach. I make it challenging. It is very rigorous, but it’s fun. That word gets out and students then want to take it…Reputation is important…(But when) a student spends a year with you and puts the effort in and then they are labeled “pass or fail,” based on a test, you feel bad. And, the physics exam is tough…Sometimes I think I feel worse than the kids do (Laughing). It's brutal. I have had excellent reviews every time I have been observed. I've had nothing but success except at the end of the year. My first year I had 66 percent pass. It blindsided me. I wasn't expecting that. I thought I had them prepared …To have to tell those…kids that they failed…was really tough. It was very stressful. It was very hard to do. That summer I made a lot of changes. I re-did everything so that all the homework questions and test questions were questions from past exams. I thought I would have stellar results, and they were better but only 72 percent. I know that a lot of the kids should not be in that class. They would not have been in that class under the previous teacher. But I want to be inclusive. I want to extend that class to anyone who wants to take physics…I don’t want to focus on whether it's going to affect my test results. I have had a large number of my students achieve “mastery” (85 or above), and that number is growing so that is encouraging, but it is tough when you lose students. You do need to teach to the test. I hate to say that, but you do have to give students a lot of opportunity to take similar exams during the year. You need to be done with the material early so that you have enough time for review. Students need a lot of practice and they need a lot of review. To be a teacher, you have to have your students do well on that exam.
Ron’s narrative indicates that the previous teacher was liked and got good performance reviews, but at the expense of following the norms of teaching. In this case, the teacher put his own needs ahead of the students who were excluded. Therefore, he had “not done right by the kids.” Ron made a conscious effort to remedy this situation. Still, he is disadvantaged in two ways. First, physics is a difficult course and, second, he teaches in a high need, low resource urban school. In brief, he is being penalized by a system that values test scores above everything else, and then rates and ranks teachers, students and schools as if they all face a level playing field. In consequence, he felt increased pressure to alter what and how he teaches his course in order to ensure his students pass the state’s exam.

Ron was in a unique situation because students are not required to take physics in order to graduate. His pressure to “teach to the test” resulted from wanting to be inclusive while also teaching in a school with a large number of at-risk students. Most teachers, though, argued that testing altered how they taught as a result of time pressures. That is, the need to prepare students for state exams, and the time spent actually taking those exams, has reduced the amount of time teachers have to develop (untested) knowledge, skills and competencies. In consequence, there is little time for lesson extensions or creative activities that engage students at multiple levels across multiple forms of intelligence. Teachers provided many examples of these, but most involved building higher order thinking, interpersonal and/or civic skills and capacities, in addition to non-tested content knowledge.145 They also mentioned “teachable moments,” which is

145 Some examples included writing and enacting plays, creating a class newspaper, debating government policies and critical junctures in history, and conducting “book talks.”
something that is not in your plan book but comes up spontaneously through student questions. In all of these ways, testing has changed what teachers teach.

Testing has changed how teachers teach due to the “speed up” of their work in testing related areas. Ideationally, knowledge is reduced to something that is “taught” and then “demonstrated” at prescribed moments in time. In practice, this means that teaching is standardized, teacher-directed, and then tested. As an unintended by-product, teachers increasingly lose the capacity to develop children’s interests and abilities beyond the tested curriculum. Just as problematically, the intensification of the performative aspects of teachers work reduces the space for teachers to form caring relationships with students. These relationships are important for social control, and therefore learning, in the classroom. The end result is that teachers increasingly need to engage in “command and control” forms of teaching (i.e., direct teaching) as a way of managing students and achieving state aims.

Again, it is important to note that teachers did not object to state standards. Their main concern revolved around policy-induced pressures to “teach certain things, in certain ways, at certain times,” regardless of how it impacted students’ academic, social and emotional growth and well-being. They argue that President Obama’s Race to the Top (RTP) (U.S. Department of Education 2009) initiative has exacerbated the problem. I discuss RTP in chapter eight, but the state instituted an initiative that tied teachers’ evaluations to a combination of yearly observations and student test scores in order to secure federal funding. In brief, teachers blame the direction the federal and state governments have taken on a political discourse that endorsed business and market values, such as competition, efficiency and effectiveness, often at the expense of human
relationships. Regardless of the source, the end result is that teachers need to expend more time and work effort on administrative reporting requirements, largely due to policy-induced demands for data and other kinds of information.

According to teachers, the larger problem associated with NCLB and RTP is that both have affected their abilities to form meaningful relationships at work by speeding-up the performative aspects of teaching. Teachers’ narratives suggest that this negative side-effect disproportionately impacts two groups of teachers. The first are those who teach large numbers of disadvantaged or at-risk children. One suburban teacher complained:

Robin: The kids that struggle…constantly feel like failures and it really brings them down…You can see it in their faces and their demeanor as they are taking the test or when they know we’re going to take a test or after we've taken a test…they don't actually say a lot because, sadly…by the time they get to us in fifth grade they've accepted it…it's not something that magically happens…(in) fifth grade…And, we have less and less time to teach them, which is supposedly what we care about, because we are spending more and more time testing them. And, it's just discouraging. It's discouraging for them, but it's also discouraging for us…they are pretty much told “you are not good at school.” No one is actually saying this to them, but that's what these tests tell them…When you're constantly told you're not good at something, I think it is really human nature to feel less willing to do it…So, we as teachers are told … to lower the dropout rate…but they're not changing the way we deal with special needs kids. They're just testing them.

The second are teachers in schools that use scripting and other routinizing mechanisms in order to control teachers’ work. As discussed in the next two sections, teachers in these cases experienced the highest level of value conflict and the most severe emotional dissonance.

“Technologies of Power”: Testing and the Inequitable Costs of Caring

Although stratification between and within schools is widely recognized in education research, many studies portray teachers as if they are uniform in their views and undifferentiated in their work. Teachers, on the other hand, argued that the costs of
caring are unequally distributed between and within schools due to socio-economic stratification, state policies, school financing, and organizational practices, such as tracking and inclusion. Their narratives further revealed that these inequities have been exacerbated by NCLB and RTP. This is because teachers and schools that disproportionately serve children at the margins are also disproportionately the target of state aims. This section focuses on these claims.

Historically, teaching has been stratified between schools largely as a result of “student” sorting and inequitable school financing. By sorting, teachers mean that the distribution of students by race, ethnicity, poverty and achievement is non-random because parents, as “educational consumers,” vary in their capacity to choose where they live and thus where their children are schooled. They also vary in their preferences for living within homogenous communities. Teaching is stratified between classrooms due to organizational practices. Here, the examples most frequently offered by teachers are tracking and inclusion. An in-depth discussion of both is outside the realms of this dissertation, but tracking is the formal process of differentiating instruction within a school by grouping students according to ability or prior achievement. Informally, tracking often results in students being sorted by race and socio-economic status due to the relationship between student achievement and those demographic variables.146 Inclusion involves reducing the number of organizationally separate educational “spheres” for students with special needs (i.e., eliminating classrooms within schools, schools within schools, or contracting out services to other schools) by providing aides and other resources that enable the provision of differentiated instruction within a single classroom.

146 See, for instance, Lucas and Berands (2002); Oakes (1985).
While I discuss both of these in the next chapter, the gist of their argument is that these organizational practices stratify teacher and school performance because teaching and learning are co-produced, and children’s academic outcomes are highly correlated to their socio-economic backgrounds. Meanwhile, racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately likely to be poor. Accordingly, teachers and schools that serve large numbers of poor and minority children are also more likely to have high numbers of students who are at-risk academically. In terms of school districts, these problems are magnified in two ways: first, districts that disproportionately serve large numbers of at-risk students are also more likely to be located in poor communities, where the property values are low; and, second, in the state that is the subject of this analysis, public education is largely financed through property taxes. Even though state aid formulas offset some of these differences, there is still a wide disparity in per pupil spending across school districts.

Many teachers discussed the effects of the inequitable distribution of public resources and at-risk students across school districts; schools within districts; and individual classrooms within schools. Some of the most interesting narratives involved teachers who taught in a combination of high need, low resource schools and average or low need schools that had average or above average levels of resources. For example, a teacher who retired from an impoverished inner city school district and then served as a substitute teacher in a variety of suburban schools said:

Elaine: I have to tell you that I felt angry a lot…subbing (in suburban schools because it really brought home to me) how little my kids (in the urban school) got…I would really love for those teachers to teach for a year in an urban school because they really have no idea what it is like…a teacher was complaining because the air conditioning in the building was not working and…their classroom was hot. I remember laughing hysterically to myself because I taught
in a 110-year-old building on the third floor and we had no air conditioning, with windows you could not open because the birds fly in… you had no screens on the window and if you did many of them had cut marks where kids had cut them with knives (laughs)…So, I bought fans for my classroom and it was bearable…In my entire time teaching I never had an aide for a whole day…and I taught 32 kids who were all very needy…then there are the other kinds of amenities, like even just the playgrounds or the athletic activities that they did in gym. The kids in the suburban schools...have beautiful playgrounds while my students had to make do with the concrete slab…and some swing sets that were mostly destroyed because kids would come into the playground at night…And you certainly didn’t want to have small children using that playground because you didn’t know what you are going to find… from kids hanging out there in the after-school hours. And when I’m substitute teaching, I see the students doing cross-country skiing and all kinds of other sports activities that we simply cannot afford…in the urban schools…I don’t know why the state cannot spread the wealth. There is no tax base in my old district…It is so unfair (said emphatically).

As evident from Elaine’s narrative, inter-district fiscal disparities inequitably distribute educational opportunities, and thereby impact teaching and learning. Less obvious, though, is that they also inequitably distribute the costs of caring. Yet, teachers across-the-board acknowledged that those who teach in these situations bear an unequal cost of caring, and do so under difficult working conditions as a result of their schools’ fiscal struggles. Moreover, many teachers in these situations echoed Elaine’s narrative about feelings of anger due to what they perceived to be a socially unjust system of public education. By that, they mean the system inequitably distributes educational opportunities. These feelings alone wear on teachers, but teachers also discussed feeling overwhelmed as a result of their work environments. This included dealing on a day-to-day basis with “wicked problems,” as well as a disproportionately high level of at-risk students.

Given these issues, it is not surprising that many experienced teachers opt to switch to a better performing school within the same district, exit to a better performing school in another district, or exit teaching all together. Unfortunately, this means that
teachers in these situations are more likely to be novice teachers, and therefore learning the ropes. One teacher described the despair and hope she felt her first year teaching:

 Kristen: I had a situation where a mother came in…Her nose was bleeding and you could tell she had just been beaten up. I had her son in my class and she came in…(with) a baby on her hip. I was 22-years-old...(laughs) And she said, “You need to help me. I have all my stuff parked outside right now in a taxi and I don't know what to do.” And I didn't know what to tell her. I had all kinds of situations…I had desk throwers, I had a little girl whose mother was a cocaine addict and her boyfriend had put the mother in the home and burned it down with her in it, and just poverty…things I read about…but…had never been exposed to…But ...(very heavy sigh) I took the baby and I grabbed the social worker, because I did not want her son to see her beaten up like that…and they got her tickets on a bus to go see her mother in another state, and…within one week the boy randomly showed back up in my class…She had gone back to that...(pause and sigh) to the guy who had beaten her up…I could go on and on because I have so many stories, but the gist of it is that I just couldn't believe that children lived like this…what these poor babies went home to. I just never realized...(getting emotional) there's something about that first year, it was my toughest year but it will always have that little piece of my heart because they were my life. They really were my life…I wasn’t married and I didn't have my own children at home….I cannot believe how much that first year I cried. I stayed tough…(though because as) corny as it sounds, I really believe I was supposed to do this…to work in an inner city or a very poor rural district. I hate to say this is my calling, but I have never, ever (said very emphatically) faltered. I have always believed that I was meant to do this…I can make the most difference here.

Similar to many of the teachers who worked in high need, low resource schools, this teacher displayed a very high level of public service motivation. Still, public service motivation alone does make up for the very real ways her working conditions inequitably affected her emotions.

Overall, teachers’ narratives suggest that NCLB and RTP have exacerbated the effects of the inequitable distribution of care. Although this is more thoroughly discussed in chapter nine, these schools (and teachers) carry a state-endorsed stigma because they

147 Studies show that classes with lower performing students are more likely to be taught by novice teachers. This means that poor and minority students are also more likely to be taught by less experienced teachers because they are disproportionately poor and poverty is correlated with achievement. See, for example, Boyd et al. (2002); Clotfelter et al. (2005); Hanushek et al (2004); Lankford et al. (2002); and Scafidi et al. (2008).
are (unfairly) rate and ranked with schools that serve smaller numbers of disadvantaged students, often with more resources. This negatively impacts students because, in these situations, testing is more likely to result in authoritative modes of teaching. These findings are troubling given teachers’ claims that the relational aspects of the job are particularly critical for students at the margins. Unsurprisingly, teachers who disproportionately taught large numbers of disadvantaged children, but especially those who taught in low-resource schools, experienced higher levels of emotional dissonance.

Some teachers further argued, however, that schools as organizations are increasingly orchestrating the distribution of care work. Their narratives reveal that, prior to NCLB, schools (for the most part) placed students with certain teachers either because they felt it was in the best interests of the child or because it was organizationally efficient. In terms of the former, the student may respond better to one teacher over another. In terms of the latter, it may be more efficient to place high needs students in one or a few classrooms, and provide services within those environments, than spread the students (and services) out if the latter requires hiring more staff. Teachers did not object to the former and only objected to the latter if it impacted other students within the classroom or if one teacher was systematically assigned the most difficult students. Teachers conveyed that, post-NCLB, (some) administrators were increasingly using student placements as a means of achieving performative goals. Typically, this was accomplished by manipulating existing organizational practices. Most frequently,

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148 As previously mentioned, teachers described the issue in terms of “tipping points” for classrooms. Teachers also objected to student placements when they felt the needs of one child were being put above the safety of other children in the classroom, or based on favoritism toward one teacher, who therefore is consistently assigned “easier” classes, or dislike of another teacher, who therefore is assigned more difficult classes. They further objected when certain parents consistently advantaged their children because of their information or connections. Teachers felt this was unfair to other students, whose parents were not vocal.
administrators used tracking and inclusion to disproportionately assign high need or at-risk students to more effective teachers and thereby improve school performance.

One teacher discussed the effects of consistently being given a disproportionate share of high need students as both emotional and physical.

John: I think there are a lot of reasons that people burnout…I love my job…but I get more than my share of the most difficult students because everybody sees I’m good at it and so…the numbers keep climbing…administration…(is) actually complimenting (me but)…it gets to be too much…(I) feel bad for these kids…(I) barely made it out of …(one) school year mentally sane…I had a student in my class who suffered from anxiety attacks…huffing and puffing…His hair would be sweaty. He would tell me “I can’t take it anymore. I am on fire.” So…(we talked about how)…he could…come up and stand next to me…But it…would panic the other students…because…if he was not having an anxiety attack, he would have a look in his eyes…this is the other side…the bipolar…like…(he) wanted to hurt someone. He would even (say that)…and he would screw up his face in a very scary expression…He would scare all of us…I was almost embarrassed to think “I wish he was having anxiety attacks” (because)…at least I would know he wasn’t going to hurt someone. It was disruptive, but everyone was safe…then I had…another student…(who had) violent outbursts…one of his tactics was to stab with a pencil…(some of the kids were) scared by it…you will never…pull them to the dark side. But (some)…are looking to misbehave…(and then) you have that whole section in the middle…they can go either way…so I am concerned about the misbehaviors in the class and what it is teaching the other children in addition to how the other children are feeling (emphasized) about it too…I remember this one specific day, I was teaching a solar system lesson…and…watching…the one that was prone to stabbing…I had my student with the anxiety up at me sweating and holding on…to the side of my belt…(I’m also) watching…(a student) in my back row who had a habit…(of inappropriately touching herself under her desk)...I had the school psychologist…(in observing her)…and I’m thinking, “This is like one heck of a year.”

This narrative is a prime example of what teachers characterized as peer effects and tipping points in the classroom. In addition to the behavioral issues described here, John also talked about serving a large number of students who were labeled academically, meaning they had educational needs, as well as students whose families were struggling economically. The “burnout” he experienced was related to “feeling bad” for the children involved, but also due to the need to forge emotional connections with his
students in order to maintain order within the classroom while simultaneously creating an academically stimulating learning environment.

Clearly, the practice of inequitably assigning children to certain teachers unequally distributes the costs of caring during the workday. Less acknowledged, but discussed by John and many other teachers, was that teachers who serve large numbers of at-risk students also engage in large amounts of “invisible” care work. By invisible, I mean that these teachers end up doing more unpaid work at home. John, for example, mentioned that he needed to spend a lot of time after school on academic and administrative responsibilities because his time in the classroom was “eaten up putting out fires.” Meanwhile, his academic and administrative responsibilities were already magnified because of the large amount of paperwork associated with children who have special needs under state and federal laws.

Many teachers, however, also discussed how their relationships outside of work (i.e., their offstage regions) helped them sustain the very high level of work commitment needed to do their jobs. In essence, they are acknowledging that their relations do unpaid (i.e., invisible) work for the state. And John, like many other teachers who serve large numbers of at-risk students, claimed his outside relationships were increasingly being co-opted into his work performance. Although he did not use the bubble metaphor, it was implicit in his discussion of how the need to expend such an enormous amount of emotional energy at work was increasingly spilling over into his relationships (and life) outside of school. Thus, by assigning at-risk students to high performing teachers, schools as organizations increase their amount of unpaid work. They also increase the likelihood that teachers’ relations will do unpaid work for the state as well.
One final point deserves mention. Teachers did not necessarily object to the unequal distribution of students. Where teachers stood in regard to this issue depended on (1) their views on the effects of tracking and inclusion, and (2) their beliefs about the motivations for placing students with certain teachers. In terms of the former, the findings on how tracking impacts students are mixed.\textsuperscript{149} Unsurprisingly, teachers also vary in their views. In terms of the latter, most teachers expressed that teaching styles vary between teachers, as well as between classes for the same teacher. In part, this is because teachers, like other employees, possess different attributes, experiences, and abilities, all of which affect how they perform their jobs. Yet, as previously mentioned, teachers also alter their teaching styles depending on the class.\textsuperscript{150} This is because students have different learning styles but groupings of students also need different teaching styles.

Most teachers acknowledged that “good administrators” recognize different teaching and learning styles, and try to somewhat match students and teachers. For example, one teacher may be better able to handle students with behavioral issues than another teacher within the same grade. Just as importantly, in some elementary schools, teachers in the prior grade construct class assignments for the next grade. Therefore, teachers’ views did not necessarily relate to issues of teacher autonomy over student placements. Their main concern resulted from administrators who systematically assigned more difficult students to certain teachers.\textsuperscript{151} In these cases, administrators go

\textsuperscript{149} Please see, for example, Figlio (2007); Figlio and Page (2002); Gamoran (1986; 1992); Lucas and Berends (2002); and Oakes (1985).

\textsuperscript{150} Teachers also mentioned that they alter their teaching styles according to the time of day even if it is the same class. For instance, students are typically more tired in the morning and teachers need to generate a lot of excitement to “wake them up” but are more “hyper” after lunch and so teachers already have the “excitement” but need to engage more in “containment” strategies.

\textsuperscript{151} As discussed in the next chapter, teachers also expressed concern about parental behaviors in this area.
beyond commodifying teachers’ skills and capacities. They also commodify teachers’ backstage regions, meaning their emotions, and their offstage regions, meaning their relationships to other students in the classroom and their relationships outside of the classroom, because all of these are such a huge part of the job.

Summing up, Foucault (1980, 156) argues power is “a machinery…nobody owns.” By that, he means it is (largely) exercised from within rather than hierarchically. Similarly, teachers’ narratives suggest that the culture of performance has (largely) been self-enforced rather than hierarchically imposed by schools as organizations through scripting and other routinizing mechanisms. Nevertheless, their narratives support Foucault’s (1980, 110) assertion that power “establishes inegalitarian and asymmetrical relations between individuals and groups” even when it is not hierarchically imposed. In this situation, testing has impacted schools (and therefore teachers and students) differently largely due to stratification within society. As the next section shows, however, administrators in some schools have hierarchically imposed practices that discipline teachers in order to meet performative goals.

**Organizationally-Imposed Commodification**

In the last section, I revealed that most teachers associated their loss of discretion with time-related factors more than managerial ones. Nevertheless, in some districts teachers are experiencing significant new administrative (hierarchical) controls over their work. We will call these “Tier 1” and “Tier 2” schools to convey that they differ from school districts at large. In Tier 1 schools, public managers standardized and routinized teaching in order to ensure job consistency and (theoretically) improve educational outcomes. Standardization was largely achieved through top-down hierarchical controls
that were backed by explicit rewards, sanctions and incentives. In Tier 2 schools, managers adopted a very strong “performative” discourse that was often backed by explicit rewards. These districts made up 10 percent (4 districts) and 8 percent (3 districts) of this sample, respectively, but had very little in common other than the fact that they had adopted similar managerial innovations and discourse (Please see Graph 3 in chapter four). Still, the interviews suggest that the managerial controls were “policy-based” in all of these cases.

Two of the five public schools were labeled under NCLB and were trying to meet state expectations through standardization. In the remaining three public and two charter schools, administrators were motivated by “consumer” expectations rather than a fear of policy failure. Teachers in the two charter schools expressed that managerial innovations were profit-motivated, or related to the need to “compete” with public schools (i.e., outperform them). Some also indicated that administrators viewed their positions within the organization as “stepping stones” to other jobs within the public or private sector. Thus, they cared about public opinion, and believed it was linked to how the school compared to similar public schools on state exams. One teacher said:

Crystal: There is a lot of ego involved in the leadership…It feels like it is a just a “resume-builder”…It is just a launching pad…the administrators view themselves as competing with the public schools…to be superior…it is a resume builder.

Similarly, teachers in the three competitive public schools revealed that administrators “at the top” adopted managerial controls in order to satisfy the local community through improved performance data, which is now public under NCLB. Here, two themes emerged. In the first scenario, teachers described the relationship between the school and the community as adversarial or contentious in a budgetary sense. Improved test scores
were viewed as a way of justifying expenditures and (hopefully) encouraging the community to pass the budget. In the second scenario, teachers perceived (or felt that administrators perceived) that the district’s “clientele” (e.g., parents, but sometimes the community or taxpayers) was “competitive.” Parents in these schools were consistently described as “helicopter” parents, hovering over their children in order to improve their academic outcomes (i.e., test scores), even at the expense of children’s emotional, social and non-test related academic growth. In these cases, overall district test scores were important, but “relative” test scores were more important, meaning parents cared about whether their district’s test scores compared favorably to the neighboring districts or to overall state scores, or their children’s test scores compared favorably to their academic peers. This was because, as more than one teacher said, these parents believed that “Harvard is on the line in Kindergarten.”

Despite the differences between these schools, their theory of action was the same. Administrators believed that the “norm of competition” would improve performance. Just as significantly, this theory of action had very similar affects on schools, teachers, teaching and learning. The first effect was the creation of an “externally-oriented” hierarchical performative culture. It was externally-oriented because it was focused on the “public face” of teaching, or how the school looked to the “community” (e.g., taxpayers, parents, the state or other school districts). It was performative in that it focused on “the numbers” (i.e., data and other forms of public information), including the budget; special education placements; teacher evaluations; dropout, graduation and college attendance rates; numbers of students taking advanced placement classes; and, student, teacher and administrator performance on state exams. It
was hierarchical because administrators managed teachers through top-down controls.

One teacher exclaimed:

Donna: They’re evil up there (laughs)…our district’s in chaos…it was like working under…Hitler’s dictatorship…they had percentages…you have to reduce Special Ed(ucation) in your building by ten percent each year…so many teachers have to be on improvement plans…you can’t have too many teachers exceeding standards, because that’s just not possible…on our PPR’s (Professional Performance Reviews)…you have this kind of bell-shaped curve…So they’re saying if it doesn’t look like a bell shape, it can’t be accurate…And…they don’t care what it takes for us to have to do our job. They’re taking away support…and adding to the administration at the top. So it’s a top/down, instead of the bottom/up…they re-did…all the buildings…the schools look great. But we’re all going, “monitors, aides, assistants?” You know, the money that they’ve wasted in landscaping…could’ve been used for the kids…For the administration, everything has to look good…the façade to the community. “Look at our schools how beautiful they look!”…the schools look wonderful, but they don’t know…the bitterness and the hurt on the inside. The parents don’t (know).

Teachers described these top-down, hierarchical controls in terms of both the “carrot” and the “stick.” Either way, schools motivated teachers by providing or withholding recognition or status within the organization, as well as material rewards. One suburban teacher said:

Annie: …we do a lot of standing up and clapping for people…It’s always the same people, it seems (laughs)…trying to look like we’re wonderful…praising successes…celebrations of our test scores if they are up, and…being really sad because the test scores went down …The principal will say…80 percent of the 1st graders are reading at grade level…99 percent of the kindergarteners are reading at grade level. Stand up everyone and clap. You’re a kindergarten teacher—stand up! (Clap, clap). This is wonderful! (Clap, clap) Isn’t this wonderful? (Clap, clap) We need to talk about how we can get those 1st grade test scores up. And then the 1st grade teachers feel horrible…(and) it starts from there.

This example shows how administrators are able to co-opt teachers’ backstage and offstage regions (i.e., emotions, emotional displays and relationships). Here, teachers were (largely) forced to participate in the performance of recognizing some teachers (clapping) and shaming others (silence with facial expressions that reflect sadness). This
particular school also accompanied public shaming with bad performance reviews, which were then used to justify withholding material rewards.

Like Annie, many teachers claimed that their school motivated teachers by providing or withholding material rewards. An example of this is merit pay. A more common example, though, was the use of student placements to manage the intensity of teachers’ work and thereby reward or punish teachers. This involved managing the overall number of students in a class, the level taught (i.e., regular, honors or advanced placement classes), the number of students in a classroom with special needs, and the total number of students taught across classrooms for middle and high school teachers.  

Returning to our previous narrative:

Annie: Teachers who have problems with the principle are definitely finding themselves next year with classes that are loaded with behavioral problems. We’ve seen that a lot (said emphatically) in the last few years. And, certain teachers who are friendly with the principal are suddenly finding themselves with wonderful classes. Then, they are praised because “aren’t they wonderful, their scores are wonderful” when another teacher had children that were much more challenging to teach.

Some teachers also mentioned that administrators influenced teacher behaviors by rewarding or punishing them with outside duties. One teacher, for example, told me that some teachers were consistently given duties where they could correct their work (e.g., monitoring an unused hallway), while others were given duties that resembled an extra “class” (e.g., monitoring a study hall) or required more stressful interactions with

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152 Union contracts in some schools put upper limits on the overall number of students taught by secondary teachers. Here, teachers are conveying that some teachers consistently hover at the upper limits either because they are more effective, and will therefore improve overall district performance, or are being targeted by administrators. Some union contracts also reduce the work load for teachers in essay intensive classes, such as English, by either reducing the number of classes taught per day or their number of duties. All of these differences impact how teachers experience their jobs in terms of work intensity. As such, they affect teachers’ emotional and physical well-being.
Some districts combined the use of material incentives and social approval with scripting and other routinizing mechanisms in order to (hierarchically) standardize teaching. Teachers described scripting as the use of a formally designed curriculum package that mandates specific content, but also prescribes the methods, materials and language for teaching that content. Typically, schools purchase scripted instruction from private contractors. In its most prescriptive form, schools adopted organizational and procedural controls to ensure teachers followed the exact “scripts,” or the actual language provided in the package. This included, for example, requiring teachers to hand in their schedules and lesson-plans at the beginning of the year. Then, administrators engaged in “walk-throughs” to ensure teachers followed those schedules, as well as the scripted curriculum. Administrators also gave poor performance reviews to those teachers who did not follow the scripts. Two suburban elementary teachers described these processes as follows:

Kelly: (We) hand in a schedule in the beginning of the school year that indicates what we are doing every 5 minutes of our day, from 8:20 until 3:20…And she (the principal) has to approve it …Teachers don’t…plan their own lessons. They “teach to the book”…I actually heard a first grade teacher say that she…opens up the book… and says to the children, “So and so says (the author of the book) that when you need to stretch out a word, this is how you do it”…Because…after 20 years of teaching, if that’s what they want her to do, that’s what she’ll do. But she refuses to make the children believe…that it’s her idea…(But) you do what… you’re told…Because if you don’t…well then you might not be meeting standards. And…they can…fire you…And that has happened… I use some of… the little mini lessons from the books...but improvise…except during my formal observation. I go verbatim from the book. Exactly…I stay and memorize the words from the book.

One specific model that was mentioned was “Success for All” although teachers mentioned others.
Annie: There are a lot of walk-throughs…when administrators …just walk into classrooms …they’re told to ask …the students what they’re learning and why they’re learning it. And, if you hear your child say, “I don’t know!” … you get very upset. It’s very scary …in the pre-K through 2 building, you can’t always get that from children. So there’s a lot of nervousness…What are they going to ask the students? What are the students going to say? What are they going to think of the lesson I’m doing?

It is important to note that teachers were not necessarily opposed to curricular packages. Some expressed that they were helpful, especially for new teachers. They voiced concern only in those cases where teachers were required to follow the script regardless of their own professional judgments about the needs and abilities of their students. This was the case in Tier 1 schools.

Meanwhile, teachers in Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools across-the-board concurred that the district’s increased focus on “the public face” of public education (i.e., the numbers) increasingly altered its “private face,” or what actually goes on in schools and classrooms. This resulted in a loss in “site-based decision-making,” which is decision-making at the school level, as well as restrictions on teachers’ professional discretion and autonomy in the classroom. These restrictions were designed to reorient teacher work effort toward the public face, or the performative aspects of teaching and learning. In the meantime, the growing demand for data increased teachers’ reporting requirements, thereby diminishing the amount of time they had to meet other non-performative objectives. The end result was that decisions in the classroom, as well as centrally, were increasingly made based on data rather than experience or occupational knowledge. One teacher in a large urban school described how this works as follows:

Lorna: (We switched to) scheduled learning…scheduled to the minute (said with great emphasis). The daily schedule had to be posted, and it would say things like “From 8:22 to 8:29: Morning Message.”…It was really ridiculous…with children, it is hard to keep to a schedule…when you are learning something, you don’t
want to interrupt it and move on to something else because you have to stick to a schedule...And that is where things got bad...we did not know...that on the administrative side, they were being trained to do the “gotcha thing.” You know, “It is 8:29 and you’re supposed to be here but you're actually there. You’re off schedule.” They had that schedule that we were all supposed to be following and they...would stand outside the classroom and play gotcha. And, I would say to them, “You are not just taking spontaneity out of the classroom. You are impeding learning. You are interfering with their (teachers) ability to relate to their students. There are reasons for being off schedule. Moreover, you are making people paranoid and they can't teach.” This is especially true of the new teachers because they were not experienced enough...to adjust their schedules the second they would see them. Our administrator said to me, “I come into your group all the time and it doesn't make you paranoid and it doesn't bother you when you teach.” And I said, “Yes, but I am experienced enough to shift what I'm doing the second I see you (laughing)...to end whatever I'm doing, give the kids ‘the look’ and move on (laughing).” If I need to, I can put on a show, but it's not teaching. It's a show...We had no idea...But, the principles are being trained...in a certain way because people were saying that nobody was being fired, everybody got satisfactory ratings, bad teachers were just being moved through the system, everyone got tenure and so forth...(So) under the new philosophy, a certain percentage of teachers in a the school has to get U’s...an unsatisfactory rating... And, that is ridiculous. What if you have a wonderful school? What if you have a terrible school where 50 percent should be getting an unsatisfactory rating?

As evident from Lorna’s narrative, in the most severe cases, scripting relegated teachers’ to performing technicians, and students to non-thinking, passive receivers of knowledge. Teachers argued that this increased use of “command and control” forms of administration and teaching (social control) negatively impacted their relationships with students (social cohesion).

Teachers further agreed, however, that the focus on the façade of teaching resulted in increased occupational and organizational conflict, and that the two were closely related to declining trust among teachers, and between teachers and administrators. First, the differential treatment of teachers through the use of explicit incentives negatively impacted teachers’ relationships with one another. Second, it altered teachers’ relationships to their occupation. Here, the increased focus on data,
numbers and percentages resulted in a power-shift away from teachers who stressed (and enforced) the humanistic values of teaching toward those who supported, at least on the surface, the portrayal of teaching as a clinical or technical enterprise (i.e., something that is easily standardized and measured). Third, it created a competitive climate where teachers were less supportive of one another (reduced social cohesion). One teacher said:

Kassidy: I think everyone was a little bit more out for themselves...they felt like, “Hey, I have my own issues and I need to do what I need to do to keep my own standing”... It was like that mentality that you see in the City, where it is every man for himself (laughs). You know, no one can stop and help the blind person cross the street (laughing). It was very competitive. It was not a community in any sense of the word. I don't know what kept people there...it wasn’t for me.

This, in turn, created a climate of “us” versus “them.” At the heart of this divide was a value conflict between those who went along with the new performative culture and those who tried to uphold the previously accepted norms of teaching as an occupation, but it also clearly involved negative perceptions about the motivations of “others.” Those who maintained their loyalty to teaching as a humanistic enterprise felt that the new culture favored teachers who “performed” teaching but did not “feel” it. Teachers in the latter category were often accused of “not liking the kids” or having a “corporate, self-interested mentality.” When asked to expand on those thoughts, teachers mentioned that they were focused on “getting ahead” at the expense of caring for children. They did not teach spontaneously or holistically approach the development of children. Instead, they focused on those aspects of teaching that were tangible and easily measured. In short, they “taught to the test.”

In the upper grades, “teaching to the test” largely involved only covering tested topics, typically in a repetitive fashion. In the grades or subjects where there were no state exams (i.e., K-2 and in middle or high school subjects that involved “local” or site-developed exams), teachers suggest that this goes beyond teaching to the test: “Annie: You also see sometimes teachers’ scores will be up one year and then suddenly in the next grade those children are tested at the beginning of the school year and...(their) test
In a teaching context, “getting ahead” means either moving into administration or getting better classes, classrooms, or supplies. One teacher explained:

Debbie: It’s almost like a…corporate feel… There’s…the family side and then there’s the corporate side…teachers that are trying to get ahead…(and then teachers who are) more into the children than…(their) career…I think…(the corporate side is) fake… they have all of the newest and latest things up on their walls…know the newest theory…but they're so busy trying to get ahead with the adult side of teaching that they lose sight of the cuddling and the love that the children need …they could talk your ear off about theory, and…probably put the theory into practice, but not with the heart. And that I think is the key to teaching …if your heart is really into making a child learn…grow and… prosper, you’ll find a way, regardless of what the theory is. It comes from your heart.

Like Debbie, teachers claimed that those who adopted the new business mentality had “lowered their standards” or ideals in order to gain status or approval within the organization. These behaviors signaled a lack of personal and professional integrity, yet were rewarded by a system that valued test scores above other indicators of teacher professionalism, performance and proficiency.

Declining trust between teachers was accompanied by reduced trust between teachers and administrators (reduced social cohesion). Here, teachers perceived that administrators were using the carrot and the stick to “weed out” those who challenged the new performative culture (increased social control). In all of the Tier 1 schools, for example, teachers used words like “targeted by administration” to explain the conflict. One teacher told me:

Shannon: In the City, power has been transferred to the principals… I worked with one principle closely, and he felt like teachers needed a kick in the butt to really shake out the wheat from the chaff. He felt that the schools needed to use the test scores, and the pressure, to get rid of the dead meat…the dead weight.

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scores are lower…(and the new teacher) is made to feel guilty when it is…obvious that they were not tested correctly at the end of the year. You know…Given it a little more leeway, fudged it a little…the reading teachers in our building say that certain teachers…scores are much higher then what the reading teacher’s scores show for those same kids…much more elevated…then they should be…certain teachers…have the reputation for that.”
That was his interpretation of it. So the test scores were to push teachers into leaving. He said that.

Many teachers further claimed that the real motivation for “separating the wheat from the chaff” related to efficiency concerns, albeit under the guise of performative goals. 155

Teaching is an egalitarian occupation in terms of teachers’ responsibilities in the classroom but is “end-loaded” in terms of pay and seniority, meaning new teachers are paid far less than more experienced teachers, who are also (typically) are afforded preference in terms of teaching assignments. Teachers believe that some districts and district principals are using the stereotype that older teachers are “dead wood” to justify forcing them out and thereby reduce the costs of teaching. By dead wood, they mean that older teachers use outdated teaching techniques or are not driven to improve their teaching because they have tenure.

Predictably, teachers in schools that engage in these behaviors claimed there were very high rates of turnover. They said that most teachers left “voluntarily” (i.e., “retired early,” left teaching, or transferred to another district), yet explained that, prior to leaving, many of these teachers had been “targeted” for increased observation and supervision, had their “support yanked” (i.e., they were denied resources), or were given classes that were “loaded” with behavioral and emotional problems, as well as with children who were labeled for other special needs. Because these children are more likely to perform below grade level, these teachers were then (inappropriately) “shamed” at school or grade level meetings for having lower test scores (or shamed through silence as other teachers were praised). They also received poor performance reviews associated with their students’ test scores.

155 On average, schools spend approximately 80 percent of the budget on salaries and fringe benefits.
Just as interesting, teachers also claimed that their schools experienced high rates of principal turnover. According to the teachers, many of the principals left or retired early rather than engage in behaviors they perceived were morally objectionable. One teacher said:

Annie: (Many administrators) are leaving rather than caving to the pressure….We’ve heard this from reliable sources that they…have meetings where they are told that they need to tell who are their three best and three worst teachers and then they are told to go get rid of the three worst teachers. Some have left because they feel that they cannot do that. Just because you have to say who are your three worst teachers does not mean that they are so bad that they need to be fired. You can work with them...(but) administrators are being hired to come in and crack the whip….the message….teachers get….when administrators leave…(is that) they felt bad and…could not be the kinds of administrators that they (said emphatically) wanted to be…and so they just chose to go to another district. There is a rumor, and I think it is an accurate one, that one of the administrators who left said that “this district is a sinking ship and the only administrators left are the sharks.” The person that this is a quote from was an administrator that was very well liked and couldn’t stay here.

Teachers further alleged, however, that increased teacher and principal exit had facilitated the rise of the “new culture of teaching,” which was characterized by a fear of expressing opposing voices, a decline in risk-taking, and mechanistic teaching styles.

In these situations, teachers professed that they struggled to balance competing loyalties to their occupation, students, colleagues, and school as an organization. Unsurprisingly, these teachers were especially likely to tell narratives of dissonance and resistance (Please see Appendix E for sample narratives). The vast majority of these narratives involved things teachers believed were harmful to children. For instance, in one school district, principals were encouraged to keep the number of children referred to special education down as part of the district’s efforts to contain costs and make their “numbers” look good. Quite a few teachers’ told stories about going against the principal even at the risk of losing their jobs. One teacher explained:
Donna: You have to really feel the parent out. See how they are because then you tell them which way to go...tell them step by step how to get around the system of special ed(ucation) in this district...“Okay...I want you to go to the doctor...to write the letter to the principal saying you want testing done...You’ve got to comply within 30 days” and...I’m one to...take that risk because...I will never ever compromise my belief in that child...not giving him services because the district doesn’t want to...I’ve already been told within a CSE (Committee on Special Education) meeting I was borderline on insubordination trying to help a parent get services for a child...It’s not right...they are trying to cut back on services...It’s not right (said quietly and emotionally).

Teachers’ narratives of resistance also involved their struggle to preserve their relationships to their colleagues and occupation. This was true even in cases where they believed that they would lose their jobs as a result of these behaviors, or be subjected to increased “surveillance,” harsh language and public shaming at faculty meetings. These narratives suggest that what is at stake in these schools is not simply teacher autonomy over what and how to teach. It involves a clash of values that, for many, compromises their personal integrity, as well as the heart and soul of their profession.

Summing up, Hochschild (1979, 1983) argued that emotional dissonance was the inevitable result of emotional labor because it involved the transmutation of the private emotional sphere into the public commercial sphere. Nevertheless, she viewed emotional dissonance as the product of managerial control. In some schools, managerial controls have certainly reduced teachers’ professional autonomy and discretion, and put pressure on them to “perform” emotion work in ways that are easily measured. Even so, teachers agree that NCLB has imposed what Folbre (1999) calls “a cost of caring” on individual teachers in ways that are not related to managerial controls. First, the policy downplays those intangible emotional qualities that teachers believe are important for learning in favor of those that can be measured by policymakers. Second, NCLB has intensified teachers’ work in ways that have reduced the amount of time they have to form caring
relationships. In consequence, teachers are increasingly experiencing the negative side-effects associated with emotional labor, such as increased alienation, burnout and job dissatisfaction, even though their jobs remain incompletely commodified. This was especially true in schools where public managers required scripting and other routinizing mechanisms. In these cases, teachers across-the-board experienced increased emotional dissonance, and high levels of occupational and organizational conflict (Please see Appendix E for sample narratives). They also experienced health and mental health issues, as evidenced by the following charter school narrative:

Tim: Sometimes you get depressed (laughs)...when you don't meet your goals...this year, I started antidepressants ...and it really helped me...that pressure can be really crushing and I needed to remove some of (it)...so that I could perform. I think that happens to a lot of teachers, where the pressure gets to be too much and so they have to look for something else at that point. I think this is definitely a product of high-stakes testing. You put a lot of pressure on yourself.

Unsurprisingly, many teachers exited from these schools and teaching. Meanwhile, as demonstrated in this section, some principals actually used teacher exit as a strategy for meeting their performative goals. Existing research, however, supports teachers’ contention that this strategy is misguided. Studies find, for example, that novice teachers are less effective, although the relationship is not necessarily linear (Rockoff 2004). Thus, what schools save by hiring less costly novice teachers, they may lose in terms of effectiveness due to the flight of more experienced teachers.

One further point deserves mention. Earlier, I discussed that research consistently shows that the personal and intrinsic value of caring draws individuals into teaching and, once there, helps them sustain their commitment to the occupation (Lortie 1975; Hargreaves 1998). This research is backed by other studies, which find that college seniors who are “idealists,” meaning that they list “service to society” as the main reason
for choosing certain careers, are the most likely to enter teaching and then make up about 30 percent of the occupation. Studies further show, however, that those who strongly value service to society are the most likely to exit the profession (Lortie 1975; Miech and Elder 1996). These studies are not claiming that unethical people remain in teaching. Instead, they suggest that teachers’ emotional commitments are not solely a product of their personal dispositions or the nature of teaching as an occupation. They are also mediated by the social, economic and political contexts in which they teach. This research clearly supports these findings.

As previously mentioned, the teachers in this study displayed very high levels of public service motivation and worked above and beyond what was formally required at work. Nonetheless, NCLB’s emphasis on tangible (i.e., testable) skills and observable work has had the unintended side effect of reducing teachers’ commitments to things that are not specified in their contracts or measured by their evaluations. These findings were especially evident in Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools. Here, the focus turned away from communal goals toward individual (preservation) goals. Teachers called this “flying under the radar.” In these schools, the performative culture moved teachers’ productivity away from teaching as a humanistic enterprise and toward teaching as a technology, where teachers express “care” in ways that promote organizational and state goals in the form of improved test scores. In the meantime, the focus on data and numbers crowded out an important mission of public schools, which is to produce well-rounded and productive human beings. These points are especially evident in the following two narratives:

Debbie: Those numbers are analyzed...looked at and discussed...often...Right down to...8 percent of the children in this classroom didn’t answer this question
correctly... why do you think that they answered B...I mean, is that going to impact your teaching this year? ...The test is going to be different and the students are going to be different. Why am I looking at...a test...for a half a day? How much money was spent on administrators...all of these teachers discussing it? ...where are you going with it? ...We're not making parts...we're making people...we're making human beings.

Shannon: It is about the test scores. That is the ultimate measure of whether they (teachers and students) are considered successful or not... It is also stressful for the teachers because the principle is putting a lot of pressure on them...constantly walking into rooms or walking by rooms...what that translates into, is that they cannot keep their focus on student needs at all...(and) science and social studies have pretty much gone by the wayside in elementary school. It is all about math and literacy. And now, with technology, it is much easier to do (said emphatically) literacy on the computer. It is also easier to...assess the kids. So the kids are doing everything on the computer...doing literacy on the computer (laughs). They've spent an enormous amount of money training teachers on the technology part. There's a study that shows that test scores have not gone up on literacy, but they have slightly in math. But if you look at the amount of money that they have put into it, buying computers and training the teachers on these assessments, I don't know how successful that is...I don't think people think about what is being lost or what has been spent. They just look at the numbers. But the costs are just too high. They're too high.

Those teachers who could not deal with the moral dilemmas imposed by the new performative culture exited from these schools, districts and even teaching as an occupation. We can call these teachers ethical leavers, but many teachers echoed their sentiments. In a nutshell, teachers argue that the drive for greater efficiency and increased accountability is transforming teaching and learning into “performing,” and that the end result will be a loss in our humanity.

Discussion: Public Values as Social Capital

Earlier, I argued that NCLB, as an event, occurred within a broader paradigm shift regarding the proper means and ends of public services. NPM and Neoliberals purport that market mechanisms provide more freedom to citizens as customers, while improving the delivery of public services and reducing the need for direct government regulation. In
the language I have been using in this dissertation, market incentives reduce the need for social control by rewarding citizens and bureaucrats who behave in certain ways.

Teachers’ narratives reveal, however, that this broader paradigmatic shift has actually directly and indirectly increased hierarchical/bureaucratic controls and distanced control through occupational norms and other forms of social accountability. Meanwhile, NCLB has interacted with public schools in ways that have increased the effects of socio-economic stratification on children’s educational outcomes. It has also negatively impacted teachers’ relationships to their students and colleagues. In consequence, it has interfered with their ability to create social cohesion in their classrooms and necessitated more authoritative, and even coercive, forms of social control in schools and classrooms as communities.

Durkheim argued that social cohesion becomes more difficult to achieve in modern societies due to the atrophy of social ties. As such, the state needs to build socially integrating institutions, such as public education, to pull together the social fabric. He writes:

A society made up of an extremely large mass of unorganized individuals which an overgrown state attempts to limit and restrain, constitutes a veritable sociological monstrosity. For collective activity is always too complex to be capable of finding expression in the single organ of the state…the State is too remote from individuals, its connections with them too superficial and irregular to be able to penetrate the depths of their consciousness and socialize them from within…A nation cannot be maintained unless between the state and individuals, a whole range of secondary groups are interposed. These must be close enough to the individual to attract him strongly to their activities and…absorb him into the mainstream of social life (Durkheim 1997, liv-1v).

He claimed that professions and occupations, such as teaching, were uniquely “marked” to perform this integrating function. My analysis of elite political discourse in chapters five and six shows that they recognize public schools perform this integrative function,
but not teaching as an occupation. This research strongly suggests, however, that
teachers’ relationships structure individual behaviors within schools as communities in
ways that facilitate individual and collective outcomes (i.e., societal, institutional and
organizational outcomes).

On the most basic level, teachers’ public values and emotional investments at
school serve as a public good (social capital) that makes schools as collective bodies
more efficient and effective. On a broader level, teachers’ relationships and
humanistic values benefit society in the form of better educated and socially adjusted
adults. Even so, this research shows that these emotional investments are not solely a
function of teachers’ personal characteristics or the nature of teaching as an occupation.
They are also mediated by teachers’ social, economic and political contexts. Prior to
NCLB, this “ethic of care” extended beyond individual relationships to “collective
bodies,” including the school as a community and teaching as a profession. After
NCLB, these collective caring behaviors increasingly broke down, especially in schools
that had adopted scripting and other routinizing mechanisms in order to meet
performative goals under NCLB.

Thus, like a large body of research, this study documents that teachers respond
unevenly to educational change. Nevertheless, it finds that, in large part, teachers’
responses were uneven due to the social contexts in which they teach. In brief, all
teachers adjusted their teaching in order to navigate institutional demands (NCLB), but

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156 This research is consistent with quantitative studies outside of education, which find that public servants
are far more active in civic affairs than other citizens, and may be a source of social capital in society.
Brewer (2003), for example, shows that public employment predicts civic participation while Houston
(2005) found that government employees demonstrated more “public service motivation,” or “a
commitment to the public interest, service to others, and self-sacrifice,” as measured by donations of
money, time and blood.
schools mattered in terms of these processes. This was also true in terms of teachers’ caring behaviors. While all teachers felt increasingly conflicted between meeting the policy’s performative agenda and meeting the humanistic norms of teaching, this was especially true in schools (and classrooms) that served large numbers of disadvantaged children and schools that pursued scripting and other mechanisms that standardized teaching in order to improve educational outcomes. Here, teachers often felt forced to compromise their ideals, which was both an assault on their professional judgment and their identities as teachers. In consequence, teachers as a whole have experienced increased job dissatisfaction and burnout as a result of NCLB, but this was especially evident in schools that mechanized teaching and among teachers who bear an inequitable cost of caring.

Still, it could be argued that teachers’ emotional investments at work are only important if there is evidence that they influence teaching and learning. Research suggests they do. Some of the causal mechanisms are direct and some are more mediated. For example, teaching as an occupation is characterized by high levels of stress and burnout (Brouwers and Tomic 2000; Kyriacou 2011; Naring et al 2006; Wilhelm et al 2000), yet research indicates that relationships in school increase teachers’ feelings of efficacy and control, while simultaneously serving as implicit rewards that help teachers avoid burnout and sustain their giving (Goldstein 2002; Hargreaves 1998a and b; Hunt 2006; Nias 1996; Noddings 1984 and 1996; Sutherland et al. 1989, 1993; and Sutton and Wheatley 2003). Research also finds that teachers’ emotional investments impact children’s educational behaviors and development, as well as their emotional and social growth and well-being (Goldstein 1999; Jennings and Greenberg 2008; Noddings
1992; Sutherland et al. 1989, 1993; Sutton and Wheatley 2003). Studies further show that students are aware of teachers’ emotions, even when teachers try to mask them. Moreover, children say they value teachers who care about them, while being less motivated by the ones who do not (Sutton and Wheatley 2003). As a whole, these findings strongly indicate that teachers’ affective ties increase learning; serve as informal forms of social control in schools and classrooms; and indirectly lower teacher turnover by reducing feelings of burnout and isolation, and increasing feelings of efficacy and control. In short, teachers’ emotions, while individually experienced, are a matter of collective concern.

**Conclusion**

Summing up, education reforms frequently overlook the personal and intrinsic nature of teaching. In part, this is because these behaviors are difficult to measure or evaluate, but emotions in teaching are also frequently viewed as something that needs to be “managed” in order to “offset teachers’ resistance to change” (Hargreaves 1998b, 837). This research strongly suggests, however, that public policies and public managers must account for teachers’ emotions, both positive and negative. First, teachers’ emotions impact their ability and willingness to engage in reform. Second, the personal and intrinsic value of caring recruits individuals into the profession, and influences the quality of those who remain in teaching. Third, teachers’ emotional investments at work are important for delivering high quality services, and therefore impact children’s academic development. Accordingly, the emotional domain of teaching deserves more attention from education scholars, policymakers and public managers.

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157 The teachers in this study also expressed all of these viewpoints.
More broadly, though, this research indicates that emotions in public life form a counter-discourse to the technical/rationalist emphasis on efficiency, accountability and measurable outcomes. The former suggest that teachers’ identities and behaviors are complex and socially constructed, and that learning in the classroom is negotiated, contingent and relational. The latter prescribes teachers’ professional roles, yet may negatively affect educational outcomes in the name of efficiency. In short, public policy and management scholars need to better understand the “feeling” nature of public service. Making public service more humane and caring may be one way to make it more efficient and effective, but public policies may also unintentionally cause the opposite. We turn to these topics in the next two chapters.
CHAPTER VIII
PARENTS AS CONSUMERS VS. CITIZEN CO-PRODUCERS

Introduction

As discussed in chapter one, NPM and Neo-liberalism seek to reform the public sector by making public service provision more like the private sector. The theory of action is that competition for “consumers” will stimulate public servants to alter their behaviors in ways that promote more efficient and effective service delivery. To use the words of Albert Hirschman (1970), these reforms assume that the quality of public goods and services are determined by some combination of market-like consumer behavior (i.e., exit, choice and competition) and political activity (i.e., voice). NCLB, for example, presumes that public information, in the form of test scores, will provide parents, as consumers, with the means to “name and shame” under-performing schools. Parents then have the option of voice or exit, meaning they use the information to demand changes or leave for a better performing school or public charter school within the district. The theory of action is that parental voice and choice will furnish the incentive for administrators and teachers to improve their work effort. In the last chapter, I showed that socio-economic stratification manifests itself in schools as public institutions, and is then exacerbated by organizational practices. This chapter uses 83 interviews with teachers and former teachers, and Hirschman’s concepts of exit and voice, to examine the consequences of applying political and market accountability (i.e., voice and exit) to public education.

Teachers claimed that this framework was problematic for three reasons. First, it neglects the important role that parents and children play in co-producing educational outcomes. Second, it emphasizes the importance of education for individual outcomes
(i.e., the development of human capital) while downplaying its importance for societal outcomes (i.e., education as a public good). Third, treating parents as consumers of education, versus citizen co-producers, and education as a consumptive good, versus a public good, magnifies stratification between and within schools. Teachers further argued that NCLB is unlikely to improve educational outcomes because it fails to acknowledge the importance of citizen co-production. The next section outlines Hirshman’s model of exit, voice and loyalty. I then apply it to public education.

**Background: Exit, Voice and Citizen Co-Production**

Policy elites and scholars recognize that participation is central to the quality of many public goods, such as education. Even so, public policies frequently ignore citizen co-production because it is easier to influence the behaviors of public servants. More recently, scholars have begun applying Hirschman’s (1970) concepts of exit, voice and loyalty as a means of understanding how citizens influence the quality of services in a democratic society. Hirschman largely used these concepts to discuss how consumers influence the quality of a product, but he also applied them to the different strategies people have for dealing with poor performance in the public sector. This includes public services, such as transportation, as well as public institutions, organizations and groups. Thus, his analysis could be applied to public policies, public schools, political parties, or interest groups.

Exit involves taking your business elsewhere. In the public sector, it denotes what Tiebout (1956) called “voting with your feet,” or exiting one local political jurisdiction and moving to another. Voice, on the other hand, is the process of fighting for reform from within. It involves any effort to change a disagreeable situation or
condition, such as providing feedback, speaking up, complaining or expressing criticism. It is also the primary way that groups and individuals participate in a democratic society. It includes, for example, running for office, participating in campaigns, serving on boards and commissions, testifying in public hearings, serving on juries, voting, sending letters to the editor or public officials, and writing public blogs. Thus exit and voice are active behaviors, while loyalty is largely an emotion that has behavioral effects. In these cases, an individual fulfils his or her obligations while patiently waiting for things to change. More recently, theorists have added the fourth construct of neglect to Hirschman’s model. It characterizes situations where one is physically present but not participating (i.e., withdrawing or opting out). In politics, for example, it involves non-voting.

Hirschman posited that exit, voice, and loyalty are important mechanisms in their own right, but theorized that the interaction between them is what provides institutions, organizations and groups with the ability to identify and correct problems. Loyalty, for instance, enhanced voice because those who cared the most were also more likely to complain than leave. In this fashion, loyalty neutralized the tendency of the most quality-conscious customers to be the first to exit. In the process, it provided institutions, organizations and groups with “slack,” or time to correct problems before losing a critical number of dissatisfied customers, clients, or members. Meanwhile, neglect provides a similar cushion when it denotes non-participation, but may lead to the rapid degeneration in quality if it involves shirking. Together, voice, loyalty and neglect provide organizations with the information and time to correct problems, while exit creates the incentive to do so.
Exit and American Political Culture

For better or worse, American political culture has long been shaped by the viability of exit. This includes, for example, government rhetoric that eulogized manifest destiny and public policies that encouraged westward expansion and settlement. Likewise, recent political reforms and discourse also stress exit as a recuperative mechanism. Neo-liberalism, for instance, advocates privatization and deregulation largely as a means of overcoming the “stickiness” of exit in public life. The theory of action is that competition will increase efficiency and effectiveness by removing barriers to exit (i.e., “public monopolies”). These political solutions are most frequently used for national policies and politics, where exit is difficult, but the costs of moving might also prohibit individuals from “voting with their feet” at the local level. In these cases, citizens may give up their voice, or engage in neglect, because exit is restricted. The end result of citizen non-participation is that “producers” (i.e., bureaucrats) are able to pursue their own interests at expense of their “captive clientele.” Here, Neo-liberals advocate choice and competition as a means of restoring exit and stimulating voice. In terms of education, for example, school choice policies are designed to make it easier for citizens to exit poorly performing public schools for private or public alternatives, such as charter schools. Theoretically, competition for customers will then force under-performing public schools to improve.

In contrast, Hirschman argued that exit weakened the effectiveness of voice. He used the example of the inefficient and ineffective train system in Nigeria, which appeared to be a public monopoly but was actually preserved because the most quality conscious customers were able to exit via the trucking system. Hirschman recognized that
the market was not always the best option for resolving social problems, or the most
efficient and effective form of social organization. Similarly, teachers suggest that the
“real” problem in education is neither a dearth of voice nor too many restrictions on exit.
In point of fact, exit and voice have always been available for those who lack ties of
loyalty to a particular community, or who have political, social, or economic capital. The
real problem is that (1) parents are not equally endowed with the capacity to voice or exit
and (2) the state has historically advantaged some groups while penalizing others in terms
of these processes. As discussed earlier, some government policies funded white flight to
the suburbs and the end of legal segregation enabled the most ambitious African-
Americans to flee inner cities while relegating the least well off to deteriorating
conditions. Thus, just as Hirschman predicted, exit has historically drained the most
vocal and engaged parents and students away from schools that were struggling, and
pooled them into better performing public and private schools. Once there, parental and
student behaviors widened the gap between highly effective and ineffective schools for
another reason. Parents and students are involved in both supply and demand, meaning
they produce and consume public education.\footnote{The concept of co-production is used to convey the importance of citizen involvement in the production of public services. Sometimes co-production is by design, meaning that the government purposefully co-opts users into the production of public services to either improve their efficiency and effectiveness, or to promote other goals, such as citizen engagement. Either way, citizens or clients assist street-level bureaucrats, such as police officers, teachers, or health workers, in service delivery. This may also involve the participation of private and not-for-profit contractors, who are involved in the delivery of a public financed service, such as a charter school. The idea of “co-production” questions the divide between market, state and civil society in neo-liberal and traditional public administration discourse (Ostrom 1996, 1073). Nevertheless, Lam (1996) and Ostrom (1996) found that coproduction requires the active support of government officials. Productive relationships are created and sustained through a large array of formal and informal rules, which relate individuals to one another (Lam 1996).} In consequence, districts that lost large
numbers of engaged parents and students were (largely) unable to resolve the problems
that had initially caused parents to flee.
It is important to note that teachers are not claiming schools are blameless or unable to make improvements. Their point is that NCLB does nothing to resolve educational inequality and therefore will not improve public school performance. First, it assumes that public schools (and teachers) are the primary driver of educational performance. Certainly some aspects of production are exogenous, such as the quality of teachers, administrators, and school buildings, but education as a “product” is (largely) endogenously produced, meaning it is a function of the capacities and behaviors of those who are consuming it (i.e., parents and students). Second, NCLB does not redress the very real ways that differences in parental and student propensities and capacities produce educational inequality. As shown in chapters five and six, policymakers largely blamed public schools and teachers, while minimizing the contributions of parents and students. Meanwhile, the importance of citizen co-production suggests that declines in quality are not necessarily attributable to schools as “producers” or fixable by schools as organizations. The next section moves beyond exit and voice to flesh out these points.

Beyond Exit and Voice: Co-Production and Education

Fennell (2001) uses Hirschman’s concepts of exit and voice to theoretically explore the consequences of school choice policies. She advocates against choice as a means of addressing declines in educational quality due to the dual character of public education. By that, she means that public education is a consumption good, as well as a public good. In economics, consumption goods are exogenously produced and then individually consumed. The classic case is a widget where a decline in quality is unrelated to consumer behaviors or actions. Conversely, public goods are non-rivalrous and non-excludable. As discussed in chapter three, they are non-rivalrous because
consumption by one individual does not affect consumption by others. They are non-
excludable because, once provided, non-contributors may also receive benefits. This is
the case, for example, with national defense where everyone in a nation benefits
regardless of whether they have contributed to its provision. Typically, public goods and
services are provided by the state because they are viewed as producing broader societal
benefits. Meanwhile, they are under-produced because, in economic terms, they provide
“positive uncompensated externalities.” This means that people “free-ride,” or benefit
without contributing to the costs of production. The end result is that private
organizations do not reap sufficient rewards from their production.

Clearly, from the viewpoint of individual consumers (i.e., parents) and producers
(i.e., public schools), education does not meet the defining characteristics of a public
good. Individual parents and students can and do shop around for good schools in a
similar manner to how they consume other products. Moreover, as shown in chapter
seven, their individual consumption affects the consumption of others. This is true, for
example, when increasing the number of students in a classroom impacts other children
in the room, but it is also true when an individual student disrupts learning in the
classroom. Alternatively, schools can and do lock individual students out. Certainly, this
pertains to private schools, where individuals compete for slots, but public schools also
expel students and, as history shows, have sometimes barred entry by closing the
schoolhouse doors. Even so, public education also generates benefits for society at large
from which no one may be excluded, regardless of how little they contribute. This
includes, but is not limited to, the political, social and economic benefits of an educated
populace. Because of these larger benefits, people care about public education beyond
the utility it provides to them as individual “consumers.” This means that full exit is not possible but free riding (by some) is inevitable (Fennell 2001).

The dual nature of public education is further complicated by the fact that education is co-produced. Here, Fennell (2001) suggests it is more appropriate to conceptualize public schools as “user pools” rather than providers of a consumptive good. By that, she means that users differ in their consumption of publicly provided goods, like education, and those differences affect everyone in the consumption community. Some students are attentive in class, do their homework and obey the rules. Others detract from the quality of education by either disrupting the class, failing to do their homework, disobeying school rules, or withdrawing (i.e., failing to contribute).

While these behaviors are a function of exogenous factors, such as the quality of their teachers and schools, they are also learned and enforced at home. Studies further show that academic achievement and attainment are highly correlated with a student’s socioeconomic background. Thus, student (and therefore school and teacher) performance is highly influenced by socio-economic inequality.\footnote{This may explain why empirical research suggests that inputs, such as teachers’ salaries, student-teacher ratios, and so forth, are not consistently linked to improved student achievement (Fennell 2001).} Regardless of the source, students clearly do influence the learning process, and their behaviors also generate “spillover effects,” or impact other students within the same user pool (i.e., their class or school).\footnote{Studies show that peers have an effect on a student’s educational experiences and achievement. But empirical work suggests that students may perform better when pooled with higher achieving students due to behavioral effects more than academic ones. See, for example, Case and Katz (1991) and Figlio (2007).}

Within this environment, parents and students make two decisions. First, they decide whether to remain in the “user pool” or exit to a private, charter, or public alternative. In these cases, exit may be motivated by a desire to switch to a higher
performing school. However, because education is (largely) endogenously produced, parents often equate buying the “best product” with choosing the best “user pool.” In other words, their choices do not necessarily reflect unhappiness with the quality of the product. Instead, they reflect their assessments about “other people’s children.” Their choice of a consumption community is further complicated by the fact that they play dual roles. As consumers of public education, parents want their children to have a competitive advantage post-graduation. As citizens, they care about “composite value,” or whether children as a whole are getting a good education. This may be for altruistic or patriotic reasons, but it may also be because local public school performance influences property values. In some cases, these two roles may conflict. When they do, it is likely that parents will weight exit (their role as a consumer) over loyalty (their role as a citizen). Parents may sometimes ignore self-interest in favor of the public good, yet concern for the community is likely to pale when it affects the future well being of their children. Either way, their decisions have societal consequences. This is because parental exit often creates “snowball effects,” meaning it spurs a mass exodus once a growing number of “quality-enhancing users” leave. This creates a decline in school quality, which is difficult for schools to rectify because those who are left behind are (typically) the ones who struggle the most. This is because they lack the social and economic capital to flee. In short, parental exit behaviors create collective action problems. Society has a stake in ensuring that some collective block of quality-enhancing individuals remains, but few families have an interest in being among those who stay (Fennell 2001).
The second decision parents and students make is their choice of behavior within a particular consumption community. Here, Hirschman’s conceptualization of voice needs to be expanded. He used the concept to explain how customer complaints might improve the quality of a product. Fennell (2001) rightly notes, however, that this concept is too limited when applied to co-production, where parents and students influence the quality of education through their voice, as well as their everyday acts of participation. Similar to exit, these individual acts often have collective effects. When individuals engage in quality enhancing behaviors, they create a collective good that everyone enjoys. Those engaging in quality detracting behaviors, on the other hand, create a collective bad from which no one can escape. Fennell (2001) theorizes that this creates a second round of collective action problems. Some parents or students may find it (extrinsically or intrinsically) rewarding to participate. This is the case, for example, when a parent volunteers at school or a student actively participates in class. Others may prefer to free ride off of their efforts, or lack the capacity to contribute equally. Regardless of the reason, these individual behaviors affect the composite value, or the quality of services in the school. As such, state coercion is unlikely to be an effective mechanism for encouraging “producers” (i.e., public schools, administrators and teachers) to improve educational quality unless it addresses the important role of co-producers. This means that user participation is an important component of quality in its own right and needs to be considered separately from voice (Fennell 2001).

In sum, Fennell (2001), like Hirschman, theorizes that exit and voice have more profound effects when combined. Parents and students who regularly challenge school priorities, decisions and policies, or consistently display their distrust of school
administrators and teachers, undermine more than the quality of their own experiences. They also negatively impact the experiences of “other people's children.” Consequently, we cannot think of education as an ordinary consumption good, where the aggregation of individual “consumer” behaviors and actions leads to the efficient and effective production of a product. The collective construction of teaching and learning means we need to understand how societal forces contribute to differences in quality between and within schools. Teachers and schools are not the sole contributors to the quality of public education. We turn to these ideas in the next section.

Policy Feedback in the “Consumer’s Republic”

Teachers argue that the importance of a high school and college education for the socio-economic well-being of individual citizens increased after World War II. As high school completion became the norm, however, schools increasingly tracked students by ability level, so that individual experiences within schools remained quite stratified. Research suggests that their ability to do so was greatly aided by technological developments, including standardized testing and intelligence quotient testing, as well as the institutionalization of guidance counselors as an occupational group within schools (Levin 1991). It further indicates that the federal government played a role in these developments. For example, the National Defense Education Act provided aid to public

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161 Teachers’ views are supported by educational historians, but the trend started prior to the war even though high school completion did not become normalized until after World War II. In terms of higher education, the Service Man’s Readjustment Act of 1944, or the G.I. Bill, dramatically increased college enrollment after World War II by providing educational assistance to returning servicemen in order to help them transition to civilian life (Ravitch 1983; Tiedt 1966).

162 The point teachers are making is that, prior to World War II, tracking was largely unnecessary because, for the most part, students “self-tracked” into non-high school, high school, and college-bound courses. Once increasing numbers of students attended high school and college, tracking by “ability” (as measured by standardized tests) became the norm.
schools for these kinds of administrative purposes (Levin 1991; Tiedt 1966). Meanwhile, separate but equal was the law of the land.

In the 1960s, previously marginalized groups mobilized to demand the state act to redress de jure segregation and educational inequalities. The resulting public policies and court decisions made public education more inclusive within schools, even as migration to the suburbs, de facto segregation, and inequitable school financing exacerbated educational inequalities between schools. Unfortunately, education policies did little to redress these issues. As discussed in Part I, the ESEA did not fulfill its promise due to its design and implementation. Then, as state courts increasingly ruled against inequitable state and local financing of public schools, other groups mobilized to demand excellence for all, versus equity for some, as a panacea for global economic competition and a means of promoting the social democratic mission of public schools. Their demands were rewarded in the form of state policies that raised educational standards and, eventually, the adoption of NCLB.

The causal relationship is unclear, but teachers alleged that parental demands for educational rigor interacted with these macro-political trends in ways that increased stratification between and within schools. At the school level, for example, parental demands were met through organizational changes, such as programs for the gifted and talented, advanced placement classes and other forms of accelerated instruction. Together, these macro- and meso-level changes created an educational “floor” (i.e., minimum standards), which was enforced through state exams and expanded graduation requirements, even as they raised the ceiling for some by instituting advanced college preparatory programs. Teachers suggest that the long-term effect of these (sometimes)
conflicting trends was increased racial and socio-economic stratification within a more inclusive system of public education. By that, they mean that classrooms today are more integrated in terms of students with special needs and less overtly tracked by socio-economic background, but the system itself is highly stratified in terms of the quality of educational experiences and opportunities afforded to students. They further contend, however, that these trends have been exacerbated by altered parental expectations and behaviors.

Although they are not using this language, the idea teachers are conveying is that, in the past two decades, parents have increasingly viewed education as a rivalrous good, even though public discourse still (largely) portrays it as a public good. In general, they suggest that this trend resulted from changes within the larger political economy. As the competition for jobs and college placements intensified, parents viewed the expanded consumption by “other people’s children” (i.e., the leveling of the playing field) as a threat to the value of their own child’s consumption. In reaction to these issues, they engaged in behaviors that altered the playing field in ways that benefited their own children. Their behaviors then impeded the progress of “other people’s children” through the downward leveling effects of neglect, or withdrawal from school. A second theme that ran through teachers’ narratives was that these behaviors have been exacerbated by a political discourse that elevates the consumer over the citizen and the private over the public. Regardless of the source, teachers claim that parental behaviors, backed by public policies and discourse, have resulted in negative side effects, particularly for children in disadvantaged communities. This is because the combination of these trends has boosted
the performance of some while suppressing the performance of others. This section uses teachers’ words to discuss the stratifying effects of parental exit, voice and neglect.

The Stratifying Effects of Parental Exit

Fennell (2001) theorized that exit creates tipping points in terms of the quality of public services for two reasons. It is (typically) used by parents who are the most well-off, involved or engaged. Then, as more parents withdraw it spurs a “mass exodus” due to peer effects. Teachers used this exact language, as evident in the following narrative:

Elaine: (The community) changed over time…in my first couple years of teaching…even though they were urban kids, they acted more like they were suburban kids. There were different enclaves within the (city)…(and) many different languages were spoken…Italian, Chinese, and so forth, but it was a neighborhood school and the parents were very engaged…They were very interested to know about everything that was going on in school. And maybe they did not speak English, but if you had a parent-teacher conference, they would bring someone into the conference who could translate for them…an older sibling of the child who was in your class or someone in their family, but the parents would all come to the conference…(Then) more and more parents, as they established themselves, would move their families out of the city and into the neighboring suburbs…And it changes the whole flavor of the urban school…not just the urban district, but each individual school. We talked about schools having cultures…having an ambiance…and I saw that happen multiple times. The parents who really were strong and committed to education, they were always the ones that would move. They would find an apartment in suburban districts…(or buy a home) so that their children could go to those excellent suburban schools…(Prior to that, the schools) were much more similar to suburban schools…The parents…worked for a very major company in the area…(and many did quite well but still) lived in the city and…(their children) attended the city school. That really doesn't happen any more. Those parents all moved out to the surrounding suburban schools…prior to then, the neighborhood school was considered a school of excellence…So, you had parents who chose to live in the city…It was their choice…And, it bothers me when people use race or nationality, because that is not what it was…it was across the board. The kids who stayed were having a much more difficult time in their home lives. And the character or culture of the school was changed…the whole school changed…the whole flavor of the school changed.

According to Elaine’s narrative, exit resulted in an overall decline in school culture.

These consequences are discussed more fully in the section on neglect, but here it is
important to note that “exit” was not a single event, nor was it a short-term process. It involved multiple migrations over a twenty-year period. In her conversation with me, Elaine described this as part of the problem. First, the school had to constantly restructure how it organized teaching and learning. This is because, once the exodus of middle class parents began, it snowballed and there was rapid turnover. Second, rapid turnover put a lot of stress on administrators and teachers as they tried to deal with a community that was under duress both socially and economically. In terms of the former, social duress resulted from economic hardship, but also because migration patterns destroyed old social ties while the continuous upheaval made it difficult to forge new ones. Both of these negatively impacted public school performance, which then expedited a new round of exit. Eventually, exit became the default mechanism for those who were not necessarily well off financially but cared deeply about education. These parents chose to live in an apartment in the surrounding suburban school districts rather than attend what they increasingly perceived to be an inferior public school system in this urban city.

Elaine’s narrative illuminates another important point. Exit did not solely harm the performance of her school. It also enhanced the performance of the surrounding suburban schools through the influx of engaged parents. In this manner, exit actually compounded the gap in performance between districts. We will use the example of suburban and urban schools, but some teachers in rural schools also expressed the same phenomenon. Teachers claimed that the normalization of suburban living among the middle and upper-middle classes resulted in suburban schools (typically) having more resources. They were also better able to distribute resources to individual students. First,
as Elaine’s narrative shows, the capacity to engage in exit was stratified by socio-economic status, which is highly correlated with children’s educational behaviors and outcomes. As such, these schools (were far) more likely to serve fewer disadvantaged children, as well as students with academic needs. They also (typically) had more resources because the desirability of suburban living bolstered property values, and thus tax revenues, even as it suppressed both in the communities they left behind. State aid formulas and federal aid under the ESEA offset some of the disparities between schools in terms of revenues, but per pupil spending still varied across school districts. Second, but just as important, suburban schools were typically more homogenous. In part, homogeneity was a function of socio-economic status. That is, racial and ethnic minorities were disproportionately likely to be poor and therefore (often) lacked the capacity to move. But, as shown in the first part of this dissertation, state policies promoted white ethnic flight from urban centers while discriminating against minorities in ways that locked them into an increasingly segregated urban core. Regardless of the source, more homogenous communities (typically) experience more social cohesion. The end result was that suburban schools could expend fewer resources on organizational mechanisms that maintain social order, which means they had more resources to devote to improving individual and collective educational outcomes.

While Elaine’s narrative clearly shows that parental exit stratified performance between school districts, many teachers also said that parental exit increased educational disparities within school districts. By that, they mean that parents used inter-district moves to leverage improved educational outcomes for their own children at the expense of “other people’s kids.” I had three very different examples of this, but most involved
parents in some way targeting specific schools within a district due its racial or socio-economic composition. Despite the reason, in all three cases, parental exit created inter-district disparities in educational outcomes in a similar manner to how between district moves affected the performance of those who stayed in the one district and those who left for another.

The first instance was described by teachers who had worked in three different Southern states before working in the Northeastern state that is the subject of this analysis. All of them told similar narratives as follows:

Jen: The Southern schools use the county system. Here, everything is done by district, but there it’s done countywide. So, it is a growing area in the South (laughs), a lot of Yankees moving down there (laughs), and so they were building all of these schools. They were letting all of these white families put transfer letters in to go to these new schools…(but) all of the Hispanic and black families would stay in my school…my school was probably a 50-50 split (when I started), but, by the time I left after five years, it was 90 percent minority. We became a minority-majority school. They don't use the word segregation but that is what it was, but it is all done by “parental choice” (making quote signs). They were letting these parents write letters to go to these new beautiful schools…It was segregation. And…even if the minority parents wrote letters, which most of them didn't, it was our most motivated kids who left.

As Jen indicates, this form of exit is largely unavailable in her current district, where parents are assigned to elementary schools based on where they live. These elementary schools then feed into a certain middle school and high school, if the district has more than one. Still, her narrative shows that parental exit affects school composition even within the same district.

The second instance was similar to what Jen described above, but involved using residential addresses as a way of opting into certain elementary schools. This was most often expressed to me by teachers in suburban schools, and related to the socio-economic background of the students in those elementary schools. However, I did have teachers in
four urban districts tell me that parents targeted certain areas of the city in order to ensure that their children attended certain elementary or middle schools. In these cases, teachers said that parents cloaked their decisions in socio-economic terms, or expressed that they wanted their children to attend a specific elementary school to make friendship networks with people “like them.” By that, they meant people from the same (or higher) socio-economic background, although teachers claimed these decisions may also have been racially motivated. Regardless of why, teachers indicated that parents were not choosing a specific school because they perceived it had better quality teachers. Instead, it reflected the socio-economic background of the families in those schools. In urban areas, these decisions often had racial consequences in terms of school composition, even if parents were motivated by socio-economic status.

The third instance involved a combination of parental behaviors and organizational practices designed to alter how students were assigned between schools. Teachers specifically described two. The first situation involved an urban district that assigned students to certain “feeder” high schools based on where they lived, but then also allowed students to request placement in certain “elite” high schools. The idea was that the competition for limited slots would spur students to perform better in the lower grades. The second situation involved an urban district that had adopted a lottery system for one of its three middle schools. The school was new, and this was viewed as a (fair) way to distribute students between two older middle schools and one brand new one. Those students who did not win the lottery remained in their feeder middle school. Eventually, the district eliminated the lottery system for the one middle school and closed
one of the other two middle schools. Students were then assigned to one of two middle schools based on where they lived.

Both of these cases are interesting because they were spurred by changes in organizational practices. Thus, the only variable that changes is parental behaviors within the school community. In this sense, these examples set-up a natural experiment for understanding how exit affects public school performance. Teachers’ narratives suggest that both result in social justice issues. In terms of the large urban district, one teacher noted that allowing students to request placement in “elite” high schools put a lot of stress on the students. She said:

Shannon: Everything is about test scores. It has created a lot of stress...for the upper grade kids, certainly by middle school, the students need the test scores to get into good high schools. And in high school, they need to pass the test in order to graduate. And so it is very stressful for the students.

She then talked about how this system appears to be “unbiased” (i.e., based on merit), but ignores the very real ways that socio-economic inequality affected student performance. As such, the system reproduced socio-economic inequality even while promoting itself as a merit based system. This is because the drain of the most engaged students negatively impacted the performance of students who were left behind in the feeder high schools and further stratified performance across schools within the same district.

Shannon’s complaint becomes more obvious when we discuss the second situation, which appears even more unbiased since students were assigned by lottery. Similar to the more overt competitive mechanism used by Shannon’s school, random assignment also resulted in socio-economic inequality. Here, though, it was because the most engaged parents opted into the lottery school. What made teachers’ narratives so compelling was the fact that, as the next two quotes indicate, teachers told the exact same
story regardless of whether they worked in the lottery school or one of the feeder middle schools:

Chloe: (The students in my middle school) were picked by lottery…which is fair because anyone had a shot of getting in. Nonetheless, it wasn't fair because, while everyone was put into the lottery, who's going to follow up on that? Not all parents are equally on the ball. So…the parents who cared, and I'm not saying that the other parents did not care, but the parents who were more go-getters wanted their kids to be in the new school and so by definition we got more active parents…it is not necessarily always true but these parents tend to have children who do better in school because their parents have high expectations and are involved in their children's education. So, although demographically we looked very similar to the other two middle schools, we really were not. And the teachers in my middle school pretended that…we did not serve different kinds of students, but we really did. Now, we are back to feeder schools, and you can see a huge difference from the way the school was before and the way the school looks now. So, we realize that we were “lucky” (she is putting it in quotes) for the first few years because we had a different clientele, and now I realize that the whole climate was different because of it. There was a lot of school pride…kids felt pride in telling people that they went to school at “XYZ” (her middle school), and I do think that the teachers felt pride too because our students did much better in general.

Stephanie: We had a middle school close…and…(we had one middle school that) was a lottery school (and the students in my school were assigned to go there). That is part of the argument against charters too. You have to have parents sign you up and so typically it is the most involved parents who will do that. If you look at the scores…because I just looked this up, but last year was the first year that the school was not based on a lottery system, and that school used to be…(way) higher than us on its test scores, the gap was crazy, but last year, they were only 6 percent ahead of us. So, when you level the playing field, the outcomes score-wise, which is what we are being judged on…the outcomes are really similar. And, it would look like we were serving the same population, because demographically both middle schools served the same population and the kids came from the same community, but we all knew that we weren't serving the same population. It wasn't similar because familial-wise they were coming from homes where the parents were really on top of things. You know, it is not always true but the kids who are struggling the most in the classroom are having trouble at home …It is a cliché, and no one wants to hear you say that it is the parents, but there is a lot of truth to it. The kids that are struggling the most, a lot of times you cannot get a working phone number and when you do get a working phone number and call home the parents don't want to hear it…Parental involvement is so important for a child's educational life. Everybody has to be involved. It really does take a village.
Just as compelling, a high school teacher in this district agreed that parental behaviors stratified school performance by (positively) influencing the behaviors of students in the lottery school while (negatively) affecting the behaviors of the students in the feeder schools. Clearly, this is not a case of teachers displacing blame in order to escape accountability.

Together, these narratives support that parents, as educational consumers, care about their child’s education, but, in exercising their right to choose, stratify public schools by race and socio-economic status. This has positive consequences for the schools of choice, but negative ones for the schools they leave behind. In the process, parental behaviors actually widen the stratification between schools by influencing performance on both ends. In a very real sense, parental exit behaviors affect the value of education that is consumed by “other people’s children.” Just as problematically, the state has not been a neutral actor in these processes. Inequitable school finance formulas and government policies that promoted exit for some while denying it to others have created social justice issues.

One further point deserves mention. Working in a school where exit is the default mechanism also imposes costs on teachers. Elaine discussed these invisible costs as follows:

Elaine: Recently, I was talking to a police officer, and his wife taught in (a middle school in my urban district)...he said to me that he had one of the police officers in the city check on his wife to make sure she was okay. You literally would not leave certain buildings in the district after dark...(or if) you had to leave after dark, you made sure that somebody was walking you out of the building. And this was not just true of the high school or the middle school. It was also true of some of the elementary schools. When I taught in one of the elementary schools, which was in a very bad area...someone found a gun in the playground...It was a working community. There were shops and stores and restaurants and bars...when I first started teaching...I would have no problem
going out at night after work in that community. In some of the schools in the city, I would still go out at night…But (the surrounding community of the school where I taught was increasingly) crime-ridden and mostly I did not feel comfortable walking around at night. You worried about your car being broken into…there was a teacher in my school who had a parent come into her classroom and take the keys out of her pocketbook…they were rifling through her desk…. They went into the parking lot and hit the unlock button to find out what car…it opened…and they stole her car. That was like 4 years ago….It is very difficult to go to work somewhere where you do not feel safe.

Elaine’s narrative is an excellent example of what we described in chapter seven as the emotional costs teachers’ bear when they work in distressed communities.

Unsurprisingly, many teachers chose to exit from Elaine’s school and even her district.

As a result, students were negatively impacted by high teacher turnover, combined with a disproportionately large number of novice teachers and inadequate resources. While state aid offset some of the fiscal disparities between schools, exit imposed costs on those who were left behind that could not be rectified solely by changing how the school provided services or even how it was financed. This is because, as discussed in the next two sections, exit also affects voice and neglect.

The Stratifying Effects of Voice

As previously mentioned, Hirschman argued that voice is the process of fighting for reform from within. He used the concept to explain how customers influenced the quality of a product by communicating with those who were in charge of its production. Within the public sector, voice is a means of altering the behaviors and actions of public servants. Fennell (2001) rightly notes, however, that this conceptualization does not adequately address all of the ways parents and students influence the quality of education through their everyday acts of participation. Thus, “user behavior” needs to be considered separately from the mechanism of voice. One way that parents and students...
influence quality is through peer effects. In chapter five, I described how peer effects influenced teaching and learning in the classroom, but the following suburban narrative especially illuminates the issue:

Sarah: One child can ruin a whole class. It happens...(for example if you) have one or two children who are inappropriately placed in a regular classroom...a least restrictive environment, who need an emotionally disturbed class because this child is going to do (said emphatically) something to somebody. Okay. This is a dangerous situation. And, I have no authority at all. I have to stand-by and allow a child to be in my classroom, a threat to the rest of my kids, tear up my classroom, and I have to stand-by, have him hurt 10 people...(and keep documenting it until)...finally, we are going to remove this child from the room...sometimes, two years of this, but the parents are really pushing to keep their child in the classroom...if they really push it may take even longer. Then, you have the parents who don’t know that their child could be getting help so they won’t do anything...So there are the haves and have nots...I had a classroom two years ago and I cringed everyday thinking “How would I feel if one of those kids was my child or grandchild in this class?” That is how bad it was and how horrible, really horrible, I felt for the five so-called “normal” kids in the class. I felt as if I just could not do enough...to make-up for this class that they were in...last year I had a truly wonderful class. I didn’t want to see them go. And the (teachers in the following grade kept) telling me “Oh my God, they are killing me. I am going to have a nervous breakdown. This is awful.” And I would tell them, “You’ll be okay next year”...(don’t) let it get to you...you cannot teach the program...(you have to) teach something else. The first grade teacher told me before I had them “Never in all my years have I had a class like this. I had to literally change my entire program for the year because there were so many off-the-wall kids.”

The fact that this class behaved in a similar manner across multiple teachers and grades indicates that there are collective effects to teaching and learning that are not related to individual teachers. Teachers conveyed that these collective phenomena apply to schools as communities as well.

Like teachers, schools need the (voluntary) cooperation of parents and students. Without it, they need to invest heavily in mechanisms of social control. This is true when parents provide no support at school (i.e., neglect), which will be dealt with in the next section, but is also the case when parents and students regularly challenge teachers, or
school decisions, priorities and policies. In this regard, exit and voice often work
together to stratify students’ educational experiences. Returning to Elaine’s narrative:

Elaine: The discipline is so much easier in a suburban school… In the urban school I constantly had to think about… I hate to use this expression, but I almost had to think of it as “crowd control.” There was a constant need to watch for what might flare up in a classroom… The population is just very different. Yes, they are all children, but the experience is very different… Even the comparison between what we would call “Title I schools” is different between urban and suburban schools… in the very good suburban district where I am currently substitute teaching, they have three “Title I schools,” but they are nothing like the “Title I schools” where I taught in my urban district… They should be very similar, but they are not… in the urban school, I had regular classes… these were not majority special needs classes… they were regular classes, and I had kids who were just angry or could not focus… kids who had major emotional issues and… in some cases they should be in a special needs class but you had parents who just did not know how to go about doing it… There are so many other issues that these children and families were dealing with, that teaching was sometimes difficult to do… over the course of my career… I had to spend more and more time on discipline. And… more and more and more time on paperwork. It was just really draining… getting through the day because of all the discipline issues. I had 32 kids in my classroom and I was by myself. I didn’t have support staff. Kids were on all different kinds of… (special education plans), but our so-called “normal” kids had all kinds of issues too. It was exhausting.

When combined with her earlier comments, Elaine’s narrative shows how exit spurs a mass exodus of those with the most capacity or drive. Then, those who remain are the least able to generate improvements from within. Still, like most teachers, Elaine (largely) portrayed these effects as resulting from differences in resources, capacity and experiences rather than values. Clearly, some students arrive at school “less ready” or lack good study habits as a result of growing up in impoverished or disordered environments. Others have experienced negative repercussions from participating in class and become increasingly more reluctant to do so. These differences mean that quality-enhancing behaviors are very costly for some children (and parents) but not for others. The end result is that voice often stratifies experiences at school.
This brings up another point. Most research presumes that voice is positive and improves the quality of a product in ways that help all customers. Teachers’ narratives, however, reveal that not all forms of voice are equally productive. They further suggest that some forms of voice have positive results for individuals but negative results for schools as collectivities. Overall, teachers’ narratives portrayed parental and student behaviors as a continuum from participatory, to competitive, to aggressive voice. Participatory voice involves attempts to resolve problems in ways that are engaged but non-threatening. Teachers described it as “considerate” or “democratic” because participants were also willing to consider communal concerns or needs. Competitive voice describes parental efforts to seek favorable treatment for their children through positive means. Aggressive voice is a step beyond competitive voice. It reflects an intolerance of opposing viewpoints, and involves attempts to “win” without regard for the effects on the community. It occurs, for example, when parents or students constantly challenge teachers’ decisions, or school priorities and policies; or when parents constantly complain or threaten litigation in order to gain advantages for their children at the expense of “other people’s kids.”

Teachers’ narratives indicate that each of these forms of parental voice impacts their children’s behaviors. Participatory voice tends to improve children’s performance. Conversely, parents who engage in competitive voice undermine their children’s willingness to work hard to improve their own performance because they expect adults to “do it for them.” Aggressive voice, on the other hand, undermines children’s willingness to cooperate at school. Just as importantly, however, these behaviors also create “spillover effects,” meaning they affect the behaviors of others. Most typically, they
weaken the support and cooperation from other parents and students through “peer
effects,” meaning the behaviors “snowball.” Teachers suggest that this happens because
parents (and students) see that “the squeaky wheel gets the grease” and then they too
engage in these behaviors to ensure they are not left behind.

Interestingly, these complaints were far more prevalent among teachers who
taught in suburban schools, especially wealthy suburban districts. Nevertheless, teachers
across-the-board concurred that parents engaged in aggressive and competitive voice in
order to maximize their own child’s consumption and thereby compete more favorably in
the race for college admissions and employment opportunities. The end result was
reduced social cohesion. The phrase more than one teacher used was that parents behave
as if “Harvard is on the line…(pause for effect) in Kindergarten.” Teachers referred to
these parents as “helicopter parents.” One suburban schoolteacher stated:

Sheila: (We) have a lot of helicopter parents…they are parents that hover around
the school and their child…parents who are frequently at school…if there is the
slightest issue…maybe the child did not do as well on a test…or another child
says something that their child did not like…we are not talking about bullying
situations…that is never okay… It is over involvement…parents who are not
letting their kids resolve their own problems even for minor things…and children
have to learn from experience too and not every experience is going to be
positive…and I am not talking about depressing or upsetting situations…I am
talking about experiences like not sitting next to the child that you want to sit next
to…there are degrees of when a parent should get involved and those degrees
seem to have been removed. And so, you have to worry when you get those
children in your class…you really have to be on guard…we are a suburban
school, but we do have poverty and you do not see poorer children’s parents do
this. It tends to be going on among middle-class and upper-middle-class parents,
who have a higher education level. And I think the attitude is that their child is
never the problem…I don't know, it is almost like a “style”…a need for perfection
…I just saw on TV that parents are going to their child's jobs and complaining
about their evaluation or job situation, or that their child did not get the job…they
call the company (laughs)...and I have heard that parents call college professors
and complain about children’s grades…these things would be like a joke on a
show if you heard them 10 years ago (laughs). It used to be maybe you had one,
and other parents or teachers just sort of roll their eyes. But, it is almost like it
mushrooms…one parent does it and then the next…and it mushrooms…it spirals out of control because parents see other parents do it and then they don’t want their child disadvantaged because other parents are demanding things for their children.

Sheila’s narrative indicates that there is a fine line between aggressive, competitive, and participatory voice. Once crossed, these behaviors become “naturalized,” meaning they are extended to non-school environments. They also “mushroom.” At the individual level, “mushrooming” denotes that the behaviors get more aggressive. At the group level, it means they snowball to other parents.

We can further explore how teachers differentiated between aggressive, constructive and participatory voice, as well as how they constructed the consequences of each, through the examples they provided. The most frequent examples teachers provided in terms of aggressive voice dealt with services for special education. In this case, aggressive voice related to the fact that public policies afford strong legal remedies rather than different values. Thus, parental demands were often backed by threats of litigation if the school did not comply. Nevertheless, parental demands for their children often adversely affected other children. One teacher, for example, told a story about a student whose parents constantly threatened legal action unless the school provided services above and beyond what were required for their child to be successful in school. By the time the student got to high school, the teachers were legally obligated by the child’s individualized education plan (IEP) to meet with the parents at the beginning of the week and give their lesson plans along with any class materials. They also had to provide test dates a couple of weeks in advance along with a detailed outline and study guide. This prevented teachers from changing their lesson plans and test dates, if needed,

163 Kagan (2003) describes this as “adversarial legalism.”
based on how other students were reacting to the material, thereby impacting “other people’s children.”

Mostly, though, teachers described situations that threatened the safety of other children. Many teachers, for instance, described situations where parents demanded their children be placed in “regular” (i.e., included) classrooms, rather than self-contained classrooms for children with behavioral issues. Then, their child’s behavior was a threat to other children. Another example teachers provided was when parents ignored the recommendations of professionals, such as doctors, counselors, social workers, or teachers, and then their child’s behaviors threatened other children in the classroom. In all of these cases, parental behaviors impeded teachers’ abilities to maintain social control. They also stratified children’s educational experiences because parents at the upper end of the income spectrum were far more likely to push for services and inclusion. In these cases, it was particularly important for teachers to serve as an advocate for “other people’s children.”

In terms of competitive voice, the most frequent example teachers provided involved parental demands for “educational rigor.” This included advanced placement classes, programs for gifted and talented children, and other forms of accelerated instruction. As previously mentioned, these demands increased as tracking was eliminated in terms of “the normalized curriculum” because parents sought to recreate exclusivity in order to advantage their children in the race for college and employment opportunities. Teachers stated that these kinds of competitive behaviors have “snowballed.” In the process, parental behaviors have reduced social cohesion and increased the need for more overt measures of social control by organizing schools as
hierarchical collectives versus egalitarian communities. More problematically, though, these organizational practices also pool children with the most severe academic and behavioral needs together in the same classroom. This creates peer effects similar to those I described in chapter seven.

Often, it was hard to differentiate between aggressive and competitive voice. In this area, most of the examples involved parents who were “in the know” using their information, or their connections to principals and teachers, to advantage their own children. This included having their children (inappropriately) placed in advanced or accelerated programs, or placed with a certain teacher. These behaviors often resulted from “positive” motivations. For instance, a child may perform better with a teacher whose teaching style matches their learning style. Even so, they had negative collective consequences for “other people’s kids.” A suburban schoolteacher described how this works as follows:

Sarah: (In my school) the teachers…make up the classrooms for the class the following year. And, they are supposed to make it balanced…But…for example, there was a person…(in my grade) who…was so strict and…the first grade teachers didn’t want children…to be harmed so she really only got above-average children and the strongly-motivated individuals, and no behavior problems…which was very hard on the rest of us because we did not get any of those kids to balance our classes and bring the class up…(Unfortunately, some parents knew) she had the higher functioning classroom…(and) wanted their kids to be with the gifted kids…so they would request her…we get a lot of letters…when we do the list we are supposed to balance highs and lows, friendships, gender, kids who should be kept away from each other or be put together, so there are a million things to think about and balance. It takes days. We spend hours after school. Usually it goes to like 8:00 at night…(and sometimes) the next day with the principal…until 8:00…then we get called back because maybe one of the special

164 In point of fact, this has always been the case. The sense I got from my interviews with teachers was that the real problem is the switch from the “hidden curriculum” to a “merit-based” system. Under the former, schools overtly tracked based on students’ “choice” to finish high school or attend college, but many students understood it reflected class and racial biases. Now, schools overtly track based on “merit,” but many parents and students know the squeaky wheel gets the grease. Teachers suggest, though, that there is a socio-economic bias under both examples.
ed(ucation) teachers doesn’t like where her child is placed…it’s a nightmare …every year. Total nightmare...(But the disadvantaged kids’ parents) are not “in-the-know” with all the other parents…once again, they are disadvantaged…There is a certain “type” of parent and certain “neighborhood” …it is quite evident that they are networking. So, a lot of parents who volunteer their time…don’t want to come in during computer lab or library time, where we really do need an extra hand, they only want to be in the classroom because they can observe you, their child, other children and figure things out …I have found in second grade that I really don’t want them correcting kids’ papers… because I do not want things to go back to the neighborhood …And, it does go back out, you know kids behavior and ability. So parents use this information …I know there are parents who don’t want me because I don’t really have helpers. They want to be in…observing and in the know…it is the upper socio-economic neighborhoods …they may be lovely people, but they are just so involved in their kids’ lives. They don’t have jobs… They have devoted their lives to these kids…they agonize over every little thing. They do not allow the child to take any consequences…they say, “Oh, my child will be so upset she got a ‘B’” but…that is part of learning. Or, “Oh, she will be so upset she has to go to the workroom because she forgot to do her assignment” and you say “We don’t hang them by their toes in workroom (laughs). It is a learning experience. This is what we do when children don’t do their homework…how they learn about consequences.”

Sarah’s narrative demonstrates that competitive voice impacts the consumption of services by “other people’s children,” but it also shows how these parental behaviors teach children negative life lessons. We are also gaining a sense from her narrative of how parental behaviors create social justice issues.

When schools are aware of these issues, they may be able to mitigate them.

However, all of the aides I interviewed claimed that some teachers were “taken in” by the parents. One aide told a particularly compelling narrative because her children attended the school where she worked and so she knew “the players.” She told me:

Rhonda: Many of them are home and on the higher end of the socio-economic spectrum …(They) volunteer in school, and some of them do it for the right reasons…But the majority of them...(are) only trying to help their own children …get the inside scoop about teachers and other parents and children…butter-up the principal… get their child into the best classes or student council or whatever it was that they felt they needed to do to advance their child. Then other kids, it is this weird sort of thing, but they get ostracized, like parents want their child to play with certain kids but not others and know who to invite over and who to
invite to birthday parties. It is hard to explain…They are very, very savvy. But, the staff doesn’t know…(They) think they are nice people…(But) they are like the “wolf in sheep’s clothing.” They come in and they “help” the teachers or the principal…say all the right things and do all the right things… give gifts to the teachers…participate in the PTA…run the “teacher appreciation breakfasts”…But really what they are doing is spreading anything that goes on in the school, which should be confidential…The staff begins to forget that these are parents because they are always in helping…So, the staff…talks around these parents…Other parents want to know and it is like a network that helps advance certain kids but not others. You know, they tell who was in the principal's office, who gets in trouble, and who is having difficulty in school…they also talk about the families. Who is going through a divorce…having financial difficulties, and so forth. I’ve heard these things as a parent…(so as an aide) I knew where it was coming from. They would talk about who was a good kid for their kids to play with. And, their kids were not choosing these kids. The parents were choosing…because they thought their parents were high-status or… (they) wanted to be friends with the kids’ parents for whatever reason…It is very competitive. They are trying to get their kids into the right things in elementary school so that it carries over into middle school and then high school…(Get) their kids in advanced classes early on…(So they) talk about who are the easy graders, even in elementary school (laughing).

This aide declared that teachers were so stressed as a “result of all the testing” that they relied on “extra hands in the classroom.” In the meantime, some teachers forgot that parents were there to keep their “eyes on the street,” but only for their own children or for the children of the parents who were in their social networks. In this very real sense, testing has combined with a stratified participatory system in ways that leave children from impoverished backgrounds behind.

In contrast to aggressive or competitive voice, participatory voice appears to be benign or at least neutral. Even here, teachers’ narratives suggest that voice often stratifies students’ experiences. First, as Rhonda’s and Sheila’s narratives indicate, participation often leads to aggressive and competitive voice. Second, parental participation often (intentionally or unintentionally) improves services in some schools while the dearth of participation impedes the quality of education in other schools.
Interestingly, this was true *even within* the same district. One urban schoolteacher alleged:

Elaine: We had some elementary schools that had beautiful playgrounds, but they were in the more suburban elementary schools within the urban district. So, even within the urban district, kids from the very inner part of the city had a different experience from kids who are in the more suburban parts of the city. It’s sad. But they had parents who would demand more things and they had people who were able to donate better things to the school. There was a school that was within 10 blocks of where I taught within my urban district, and if you didn't know any better, when you would walk out of that door…you would've thought that you were walking into a suburb and not an urban neighborhood. That school looked exactly like any suburban school…You would go from a 100 plus-year-old city school to a much newer school. They had whiteboards and smart boards. And the families there were probably low middle-class and working class, but it was *such* a different environment.

Elaine’s narrative further demonstrates the link between aggressive, competitive and participatory voice. Her claim that parents demanded services that were not enjoyed by all children within the district is an example of aggressive voice, but then she described how parental participation improved the overall quality of the one school while the dearth of parental participation impeded the quality of her school. Thus, children’s experiences in the district were stratified.

Summing up, teachers’ narratives clearly support Fennell’s (2001) claim that parental participation influences the overall quality of the school. As such, we need to distinguish between voice and participation. On some level, parental behaviors and expectations transfer to their children. They then transfer to “other people’s children” through peer effects. The end result is that schools with a large number of parents who value education (typically) perform better than schools that lack engaged parents. This partly relates to peer effects, but teachers also expressed that there were positive academic effects associated with having children in a class whose families provided a
wide variety of extracurricular and cultural activities. In these classrooms, teachers are able to draw on children’s outside experiences to improve learning in the classroom. For instance, if a teacher is discussing Japan, it makes it more interesting and relevant for students if a student in the class has visited Japan and shares his or her experiences. Even here, though, teachers professed that participation (often) creates social justice issues.

Over half of the teachers I interviewed in some way discussed that children whose families lack the ability to provide them with extracurricular activities and experiences felt marginalized, especially in classrooms where these behaviors were the norm. One suburban teacher declared:

Terry: You know I think it is harder for these kids for many reasons…But it’s harder because of the community they live in. If everyone was relatively equal then they would not stand out. Unfortunately the community is relatively affluent, so they do stand out. They know that they are lacking in things other kids take for granted. And they suffer inside because of it…And…they know that the other moms, dads and kids look at them differently. They just look down on them. One example, one little guy, his mom had a horrible life. It burns me up because I know everything about their lives. So, she had a birthday party and invited all the boys in the class. And I knew not one of the little boys would go. And so I went. And I was right. Not one little boy from the class went. She had put so much effort into that party. She had all the relatives there…And I knew it was because the party was in a trailer park…(And some parents have told me that they do not come into school) because of other parents. Some of them don’t have a high school education. Some of them don’t have good teeth. I know, that sounds like a weird example. They don’t have the “things” that everyone else has. So they don’t come.

Terry’s narrative confirms that parental participation is not a satisfactory ameliorative for the effects of socio-economic inequality on school performance. Families use socio-economic markers, such as where a child lives, to decide with whom their children socialize. Marginalized children and families then feel less inclined to participate. Thus, when parents “look out for their own children,” it is often hurtful for “other people’s children.”
Given these findings, it is troubling that teachers across-the-board suggested that aggressive and competitive voice have become more prevalent in the past 10-15 years. I asked teachers why they believed this was going on, particularly among middle- and upper-middle class parents. They all in some way linked parental behaviors to concerns about "risk." Most expressed risk in socio-economic terms. Here, parents wanted to ensure that their children did at least as well, if not better, socio-economically, but felt that their children’s future was “at-risk” due to the economic climate. Many teachers further claimed, however, that the media and public discourse had created a “culture of fear” through their negative portrayals of society and public schools. Returning to Sheila’s narrative:

Sheila: I think it is like an “over concern”…for safety…the security of never having your child out of your sight…there is a fear that their child is not going to be better off than they are…we think each generation should be better off than the one before and parents are worried that this will not be the case…especially now because things are tough economically…I think everybody wants the best for their children, but this is just really taking it to the extreme. They want their child to be the best (said with emphasis) and they are not going to sit back and let him or her try to figure out things… through the power of suggestion or learning through experience how to improve their own lot because it is too risky…so it is more about maneuvering…parents’ maneuvering …and I think they get used to behaving that way …(and) then it becomes how you're supposed to behave…you don't even realize you're doing it because you get caught up in it all (laughs)…and you are hanging out with people who are doing the same thing (laughs) and talking about it with them. So it becomes the norm…what “normal” people do. And things become more and more competitive, and it seems like everything is on the line even for very small matters…they are doing sports and doing all kinds of other activities … whatever it takes to get into college, but it starts way back in elementary school…it is soooo time consuming… you hear teachers talk about… how kids are not doing their homework because they are so busy outside of school…and this is elementary school…it is affecting kids a lot. I feel badly for kids. And it seems counterproductive because all of this is about getting into a good school but they're not doing their homework because they are sooooo busy …kids today…are not allowed to be just kids… to play and learn from playing… it is a big part of development. But everything is organized for them. And parents can't get them into enough activities because everybody wants that “well-rounded” child, because colleges look at that…but they want even beyond that…
they want that child that is just great at everything, who just has it all (laughs)…
that high performer. We all hope for that, but at what expense? I think…children
are burnt out.

Sheila’s narrative of children being “burnt out” because of parental “maneuvering” was a
very common one among suburban schoolteachers, as was the language of “contagion.”
Parental “maneuvering” was contagious because, when parents see “other people’s
children” gaining advantages, they attempt to level the playing field. In the process,
parents create social justice issues through the downward leveling affects of neglect,
which are discussed in the next section.

Neglect: “Once they get that label, they can’t shake it”

In the last two sections, I showed how exit and voice (often) work together to
increase stratification. They do so because they influence the (within school) behaviors
of those who leave and those who stay. This largely occurs through peer effects. In this
section, I describe the downward leveling effects of neglect. Fennell (2001) does not
theorize how neglect might influence service quality, but it is implicit in her discussion of
voice as a two-part construct that includes citizen complaints and citizen co-production.
She argues, for instance, that parent and student participation are critical for the quality of
services provided by schools, and acknowledges that not everyone has the same capacity
to contribute to the “user pool” (i.e., an individual classroom or a school). Teachers told
similar stories, but their narratives indicate that this description is more in line with
neglect than voice.

According to teachers, neglect, like voice, is not a single construct. It is a
behavior in both the political space and the space where citizens engage in co-production.
Teachers further argued that neglect was not necessarily a passive construct. In its
passive form, neglect involves non-participation or withdrawal. It includes, for example, not voting or not participating in class. In its more active form, neglect involves shirking, and (silent) non-compliance with laws in the political space or school policies in the co-production space. In the classroom, it includes not doing your homework, not studying for exams, or cheating on a test. Teachers also described acts of sabotage, such as stealing a teacher’s grade book. I would argue, however, that these acts belong under competitive and aggressive voice. That way, we are able to keep a distinction between voice in its positive and negative forms, and neglect.

What makes neglect different from (negative) voice is that there is no intent to change things through non-participation or non-compliance. This form of voice exists and includes, for instance, everything from active resistance, to conscientious objectors and civil disobedience. It may even include non-voting if it is a conscious intent to express opposition to either a legal system or the candidates in a particular election. The point here is that voice in the political space is typically accompanied by feelings of political or personal efficacy. It may also be motivated by loyalty (or disloyalty in the case of sabotage or aggressive voice). Either way, it is action geared toward something (positive or negative). Neglect, on the other hand, may be a form of protest or disloyalty, but it is frequently combined with fatalism, or feelings that “you can’t fight city hall.” It may also simply be a way to shirk responsibility or free ride off of the contributions of others.

In the political space, studies consistently show that the poor are less likely to pursue social and political causes, and engage in civic duties, such as voting. However, the findings suggest that citizen non-participation reflects institutional barriers more than
cultural differences (Piven and Cloward 1988). Similarly, teachers’ narratives support that non-participation in the co-production space is linked to socio-economic background, but neglect is (largely) a function of individual capacities and experiences, rather than a cultural or personal disposition toward non-compliance. Many teachers claimed, for example, that disengaged or behaviorally challenged students used these kinds of behaviors to cope with limited capacity or past negative experiences at school.

One suburban school aide said:

Rhonda: (That year) I worked with a group of five students who were very low functioning…(They) were barely reading at a second grade level, and they were in with 5th graders and many of those kids were reading beyond a 5th grade level, and these children were really struggling to read and they had to read in a group…I will say that I think the kids were usually very good at accepting the children who were low-functioning or had disabilities…But the students who struggle definitely felt embarrassed and you could just see it in their faces, like when they were struggling over a word. The rest of the group would be chomping at the bit to say the word, but they knew they had to remain silent and the student who was struggling…They knew and it was embarrassing ...(They also got embarrassed) when they had to leave the room. By 5th grade, they are very aware and they don’t want to look different...don’t want to be different...one kid would get mad. He did not want me to help him in the class. He would act out...be rude to me because he did not want to look different. So, some of the behavioral problems, you knew it was related to the learning issues. They would rather be “a bad kid,” I don’t like using those words, but they would rather be known as the “bad kid” then the kid who had learning issues; if that makes sense...(But then it) is tough for them to lose that label...they are stuck in that same school and it is really hard to shake that label. It is hard for people to forget that...you were the “bad kid” or the “drug kid.” It’s tough for adults, but...you are dealing with adolescents and children. It is tough for them...Once they get that label, they can’t shake it.

This narrative suggests that, in some cases, students act-up (non-compliance) rather than opt-out (non-participation). As Rhonda indicates, they would rather be known as the “bad kid” than the “kid who had learning issues.” Here, negative behaviors result from

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165 Non-voting is higher among young people, those with a high school diploma or less, minorities, and the economically disadvantaged. These groups are more likely to be poor. Meanwhile, minorities and the poor have historically been targeted by legal restrictions on both registration and voting (Piven and Cloward 1988).
feelings of inefficacy and negative experiences at school versus an attempt to change things.

Likewise, studies suggest that prior negative experiences in school affect parents’ willingness to participate.\textsuperscript{166} One urban teacher declared:

Kristin: I will never forget the first back-to-school night. I was so nervous because it was my very first time and, well it never gets easier actually, but I was nervous that I was going to have 25 parents in front of me, and you work hours getting your classroom set up, perfecting it, and there's nothing like your classroom. Your classroom is your home. I am there more than I am at home. It is the children’s home too…these kids are here 9 to 3. I make sure…the kids…respect the classroom because it is our home and so we are going to clean and straighten things up and keep our home nice. And I love my classroom and I still get giddy thinking about walking into my first classroom. It was like buying my first home. This was what I dreamed about. This is my classroom. So the first back to school night…I had only like five or six parents show up, but that was an amazing turnout. The girl next-door had gone home and baked cookies. We would always put out snacks for the parents to make them feel welcome…you wanted them to feel at home… put them at ease. Somebody had told me… “Remember, a lot of these parents did not have positive school experiences themselves. So, just to get them back into school is a big step.”…Anyway…(my colleague had) baked cookies and brought them in and I went to her classroom after everyone had left and I saw the cookies sitting on her back table and I said to her, “Well, how did everything go?” And she said, “Do you want a cookie? I have a lot of cookies because I didn't have one parent show up.”…So, what I do…(now that works, is I call all the parents in my class right) before back-to-school night…It takes a long time. But I say, “I hope to see you tomorrow night. I hope that you can stop in even if it's only for a few minutes.” I use words like “stop in” to make it sound like it’s casual so that they are not intimidated because I am just as nervous as they are up there in front of them speaking. So I say, “Even if you can just pop in…see your child's desk.” And that has helped…And I always have a little snack table because I think food always puts people at ease (laughing).

Rhonda and Kristen clearly convey that “quality-enhancing behaviors” are more costly for some children and parents than for others. Thus, non-participation is not a function of different values. As Kristin mentions, parents that struggled in school themselves often felt uncomfortable coming into school for parent night, let alone volunteering.

\textsuperscript{166} See, for example, Lareau and Horvat (1999). The authors found that past experiences of discrimination and unfair treatment affected the participation of African American parents.
Nevertheless, students’ home environments are heavily linked to their own behaviors at school. As such, students whose parents do not participate are less likely to participate themselves.

Regardless of why children and parents engage in certain behaviors, their input is critical for service quality. Thus, similar to exit and voice, these individual acts often have collective effects. This means that society has an interest in how these individual behaviors impact schools as collectivities. Here, we can use Portes (1998) concept of downward leveling norms to explain teachers’ narratives. Downward leveling norms arise from situations in which group solidarity is cemented by a common experience of adversity and opposition to mainstream society. Social reproduction theorists, for example, argue that adverse experiences at school, as well as perceptions about available employment opportunities, structure low income and minority students’ optimism and conformity to the cultural standards imposed by schools. Students are aware that the deck is stacked in favor of the elite, even as society perpetuates the façade of meritocracy. Some self-select out of college tracks because they perceive their investment will not be rewarded in the academic and/or labor market. Others develop oppositional cultures or countercultures, or refuse to display characteristics that they feel will not be rewarded in school or in life. Either way, these stances limit their compliance with school norms and standards in ways that result in lower academic achievement and attainment (Bourdieu 2000; Bowles and Gintis 1976 and 2000; Fordham and Ogbu 1991 and 2000; Lareau and Horvat 1999; MacLeod 2000; Willis 2000). They also keep some members of the downtrodden group in place, while forcing more ambitious members to

Studies show that peers have an effect on a student’s educational experiences and achievement. But empirical work suggests that students may perform better when pooled with higher achieving students due to behavioral effects more than academic ones. See, for example, Case and Katz (1991) and Figlio (2007).
escape from the group in order to succeed (Portes 1998). In these cases, it could be argued that schools as communities and public institutions are spaces where students develop “social capital,” or relationships, but, as a result of societal stratification, loyalty to the group reinforces disengagement or other behaviors that work against academic achievement and attainment. In consequence, when exit becomes the default mechanism for those who are doing well, it creates a downward spiral by redistributing rewards in ways that promote neglect in the form of downward leveling social norms.

Teachers’ described these altered behaviors both in terms of individual children, their parents and the community at large. In terms of parents and the community, some stopped trying to generate improvements from within (neglect due to the futility of voice). This affects the performance of children at school because, as more than one teacher said, “it takes a village to raise and educate a child.” Teachers partially linked these behaviors to downward leveling peer effects, but many teachers described these behavioral changes as social-psychological. By that, they meant the invisible costs of living in a community where exit had become the primary means of influencing educational outcomes. One urban teacher referred to these invisible costs as “the intangibles.” She said:

Stephanie: Not that the suburban education is what we should all be aspiring to, but there are some good things there that the kids in urban schools do not get to take advantage of. And that bothers me. I try to make up for that but it is hard to make up for certain things. It’s hard to make up for the fact that when you are in a suburban school, it is expected that you go to college. Even me, being a middle-of-the-road...student...it was expected that I would go to college. People would say things like, “What college are you going to?” It was expected. In an urban school, when you have a 40 percent graduation rate, they are just trying to get kids through high school. I don't think the adults in the high school do it on purpose, but you're just trying to get kids to...be engaged enough...to graduate. I had all my students write to colleges. And they couldn't understand why I was having them do it. They said things like, “Why should we do that? They don’t
want us.” I had colleges write us back that *were* really interested in students from that city. But kids take those kinds of things for granted in suburbia.

For the most part, teachers linked these social-psychological effects to living in a community that was struggling economically. In this case, the exodus of resources and capacity removed a vision of what was possible (hope) and replaced it with what was likely because it was “visible” (adversity). The proximity of adversity and remoteness of hope then altered the attitudes (futility) and behaviors (neglect) of those who may otherwise have been predisposed to be what Fennell (2001) calls “quality-enhancing users.” These altered attitudes and behaviors did not reflect differences in “family values.” Instead, students were influenced by their own expectations of what they *could* achieve post-high school (i.e. what was possible) by *observing* those around them.168

When viewed through this lens, exit does not merely impose costs on public schools through the loss of tax revenues. In a very real way, it imposes costs on those who are left behind through the ways it impacts their schools and communities, as well as their individual attitudes and behaviors.

Teachers’ narratives further revealed, however, that exit impacted teachers, students and parents perceptions of fairness. Earlier, I argued that state discourse and policies generate resource and interpretive effects. Teachers consistently argued that parents and students care about distributive and procedural fairness, including social justice and due process, not just performance. They also conveyed that perceptions of injustice or unfairness were highly correlated with negative behaviors at school, including, but not limited to, apathy and alienation. As a result, schools and school and

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168 For example, Sullivan (1989) and Fernandez-Kelly (1995) found that, due to high rates of unemployment in African American communities, teenagers lacked information about available jobs and employer expectations. This limits their ability to obtain legitimate work, and leaves them free for informal or illegal forms of employment.
public policies cannot be evaluated on efficiency and effectiveness alone. Policies are sites of social learning. They teach parents and students about their rights and responsibilities as citizens of a school community. They also inform citizens about who is considered deserving and entitled, and who is not. In the process, they influence the *disposition* of parents and students to participate at school (i.e., neglect as withdrawal), not just how they participate (i.e., exit, voice and neglect as non-compliance).

In chapter seven, for example, I argued that children pull their behaviors in line in ways that promote collective outcomes when they perceive they are part of a caring classroom community. Teachers made similar arguments about schools. When children go to school in highly stratified spaces, it influences how they feel about school, not just how they “do” school. Although this is an extreme example, one teacher described what it was like to work in a district that was highly stratified in terms of race and class, where affluent white parents had a lot of power to influence the placement of their children and how the school was run:

Kassidy: I had no idea how much power the parents had…You had no protection from anyone because the principal was as much at mercy with the parents as you were. In these kinds of communities, the system is very open for manipulation by parents. I hate to say this, but it was not so much about the learning as it was about numbers and prestige …most of the community, even in elementary school, was totally driven for grades because they wanted their kids to get into the best schools because that would translate into the best jobs. It was so much about the grade and about the child being above grade level that it put everything else behind it. Behavior and how they treated one another in the classroom was not at all measured. The parents could care less about that. It was all about whether the children were…in advanced classes, and whether they were going to get a 95 or above…it puts stress on the whole building. The teachers that handled that were the ones that just accepted their environment and played to the parents. And sometimes they were sellouts, and sometimes they were just savvy, much savvier than I was...(I did learn) to make sure that I put up things in my room that were from the New York Times…(and) artwork or things like that so that the parents would see that I was cultured when they would come into my classroom (laughs). And that would win me some kind of favor (laughs)...(so that then) I could get
away with some other kinds of stuff (laughing) like creating a positive work environment, or developing a love of reading, or encouraging creative writing (laughs). Hands down, the prevailing feeling there was that...you are a means to an end for them. They needed to get a grade from you, and they did not need to get it from you in a nice way, or by working for it, because they were just going to fight you for it anyway and they knew that they would win... There was no respect for the teacher...for your professional judgment...you are absolutely beneath them.

She then discussed how these forms of aggressive and competitive voice impacted students within the school, and led to non-participation or withdrawal (i.e., neglect).

Kassidy: (The school was) 90 percent (white)...and 10 percent black and the black kids cleaned the white kids' houses. And, there was such a contrast in their lifestyles, that it was really hard...They were at such a disadvantage in every way...they were so far behind, that by third or fourth grade...they shut down...because they knew that they could not compete...It was hard to work in that environment. The kids were completely segregated. They wouldn't interact with one another. Even as early as fourth grade, it was a hierarchy. They knew that these kids were beneath them. The parents' attitudes totally affected the kids. And the kids would say things like, “You can't do this because my parent is going to x, y, z.” They did not view you as an authority figure. They knew their parents were above you.

Kassidy’s comment that some students “shut down” because they perceived the deck was stacked against them is a classic case of downward leveling neglect. Just as interesting, though, it was clear from her interview that teachers who taught at the upper and lower end of educationally tracked classes bore an unequal cost of caring in her district. At the upper end, they had very little control because parents were more likely to critically voice concerns about how they taught their classes. At the lower end, they dealt with the emotional costs of educating students that “society” (in this case the community at large) viewed as expendable.

Again, Kassidy’s narrative was an extreme example, but many teachers discussed the difficulties they experienced when parents created situations that were unjust or unsafe for “other people’s children. Anger was a prevalent emotion among the teachers
in these situations. In part, this reflected the total disregard for their professional expertise, but teachers also care about social and procedural justice. For them, the larger issue was that the social norms that were prevalent in these communities violated their occupational commitment to social justice. In these cases, many teachers, like Kassidy, exit. In chapter seven, I described these teachers as “ethical leavers.” Even so, her district was considered a “good district” because it was in a wealthy community. And so, she claimed, it was never short for new hires. This supports Hirschman’s contention that exit rarely serves as a recuperative mechanism because it results in the most “quality conscious” fleeing. In this case, the most “quality conscious” were those with ethical principles, who felt their voice was ineffective because parents controlled the school and were happy with the elite enclave they had created through their behaviors.

These kinds of narratives are interesting in and of themselves, but are particularly illuminating when linked to the debates on NCLB. As shown in chapters five and six, implicitly or explicitly, political elites blamed the soft bigotry of low expectations on teachers. Certainly, some studies find that institutional agents (e.g., teachers, administrators, coaches, guidance staff, and secretaries) are less responsive to marginal, nonconforming parents and students and act in ways that discourage them from seeking support (Fine 1991; Gottlieb 1975). Research also documents racial and socio-economic biases in student-school and teacher-parent relationships. It further shows a history of systematic relegation of children by race and socio-economic background into lower-tracked classes and underfunded schools (Lareau and Horvat 1999; Oakes 1985; Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999). Even so, teachers’ narratives suggest that the role played by institutional agents in children’s educational outcomes is quite complex.
Teachers can and do make a difference, yet they too battle the pernicious effects of socio-economic inequality on children’s aspirations and behaviors. Meanwhile, as many teachers mentioned, they only have children for a limited number of hours a day and days a year. Children spend far more time with their families and peers.

Also like Kassidy, teachers typically linked the soft bigotry of low expectations to state-society relations and broader societal issues. These narratives were most frequently told by teachers who worked in what one teacher called “disposable communities.” By that, she meant children who live in communities that have been left behind, and children whose families live on the margins economically in communities that are not struggling. These conditions disproportionately affect minority children, even when they live in minority-majority communities, because their families are disproportionately likely to be poor. However, the problem is pernicious for white children too. Irrespective of racial or ethnic background, teachers claimed that children in these communities felt like they were “stamped” with negative social regard. One teacher described how this impacted the children:

Kim: There was a little girl who was tragically shot in my school…while she was out in the community. The kid who accidentally shot her was 15 years old and…he was from a very specific neighborhood in our school community that has a lot of problems. He was not trying to kill her…(The) school (is not a violent place). I can count on one hand, and I have been there for five years, the amount of fights that I've seen…The kids obey the rules of the school…(Anyways, the) next day, in my classroom, I had a boy whose sister was best friends with the girl who was killed and a boy who was best friends with the boy who accidentally killed her. So, you have two grieving kids in the room and I had to figure out how to handle it…Then, the media was reporting on it and the students realized that the media…made all of the students and everyone in the neighborhood look like they were violent or “bad”…In one article, a reporter said that the kids didn’t want to talk to him and he actually used the word “surly.” The kids wanted to know what “surly” meant…the newspaper had a public blog. And, the newspaper was saying things that implied that all of our students…were violent and…had guns. The public was responding…“They are all gun-toting thugs”
and “welfare recipients that we are paying for.” Because they could be anonymous…the public was making comments that were really brutal and were hurtful to the children. The kids were expressing that it was hurtful. So, I decided to write back…I started a blog and)…for once our school was in the newspaper in a positive way…I had the students expressing their voices…saying a lot of really profound things and, I think because it was students’ voices, it was hard for adults to smack them down, to be so negative…They had to listen to them…The kids felt really empowered …like they had a voice. It was wonderful. It was a wonderful opportunity for them.

Kim’s narrative is an example of what I mean when I say that public schools are sites of social learning. Children encounter messages about what other children, adults, society and their government thinks about “people like them.” These messages teach them who matters and who does not. Returning to her narrative, the children expressed these ideas as follows:

Kim: When we were going through the whole thing with that little girl dying, they did talk about the label that they were thugs. How hurtful it was that people were saying that. And, they have had other things where they were portrayed very poorly…The kids know that people say (mean things about them and they) are not really vocal about it, but they do say things like, “We are not all like that. Why do they say we’re all bad?” and “Why does that store close every day? I can’t even get juice there”…They are talking about how some of the businesses that are near or around the school close the hour after school lets out because they don’t want “those” kids coming in. It is hurtful…I think they believe that a small amount of kids ruin it for everyone. And I think they generalize that to businesses and to schools and to government. They often feel like they are stamped with that impression…that negative impression, and they can’t escape it.

Rhonda’s narrative showed that children find it hard to escape labels that result from their own behaviors, such as “the bad kid.” Kim’s narrative showed how social labels create a situation where individuals need to escape “the collective” (i.e., distance themselves through exit) in order to remove themselves from what society has characterized as an “undeserving group.” Those who cannot afford to flee learn that they are “unworthy” of societal rewards and government attention, and it influences how they feel about
themselves, their communities, society and their government. In the process, it influences their behaviors.

Summing up, as discussed in chapters five and six, members of Congress portrayed parents as “system changers,” meaning parental voice and choice would “raise all boats” by ensuring that public schools and teachers “did right by the kids.” Implicitly or explicitly, parents were framed as caring about children while teachers cared about their jobs or “the system.” These narratives ignore the very real ways that parents, in pursuing their own interests, may actually harm “other people’s children.” They also fail to acknowledge that parents have different capacities and propensities to influence educational processes, and that both are highly correlated with socio-economic status. Within this environment, teachers are often the sole barrier to the pernicious effects of socio-economic inequality on children’s educational outcomes precisely because, as public servants, they care about all children in their classroom, not just their own. In chapter seven, I referred to this as an ethos of care.

A large body of research supports teachers’ claims that parents use their social ties and their cultural capital to advance their own children at the expense of non-connected children and families.169 Research further shows that differences in how parents activate cultural and social capital structure unequal academic, work and life

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169 For example, Senior (2010) describes how upper income parents in New York City begin grooming their children as young as four for Ivy League colleges. This involves using their networks (i.e., social capital) to find out what is required in terms of getting their children into elite prekindergarten and other programs, and providing their children with tutors or test preparation to ensure they possess the cultural capital to perform well on pre-school entrance exams. Reay (2004) found that school choice policies and gifted and talented programs in England have exacerbated inequalities and increased segregation and polarization within and between schools because middle-class families engaged in practices that aide the advancement of their children at the expense of the less privileged. Due to these kinds of cases, Bruegel and Warren (2003) argue that studies need to distinguish between competitive social capital, which is used by parents (or students) to improve individual outcomes, and collective social capital, which is used on behalf of all children in a class or a school.
experiences for children. The literature finds, for example that cultural capital affects the ability of low-income parents to comply with the evaluative standards of public and private institutions. This, in turn, impacts their children because parents transmit their engagement styles by example, and by “coaching” their children on how to interact with institutional agents to improve their educational outcomes (Lareau and Weininger 2003). In terms of social capital, research shows that upper income and middle-class parents tend to have more social capital, and get more “bang-for-their buck” from their social ties. Meanwhile, lower SES, immigrant status, and lower educational levels tend to be associated with less social capital, and to impede the use of social capital as well. Studies suggest that part of this social disadvantage relates to the “architecture” of parental networks. Middle- and upper class parents are more likely to include professionals in their networks. This social advantage provides them with the information, expertise, and authority they need to contest the judgments of educational gatekeepers (Horvat et al. 2003). In this manner, the segregation of parental social

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170 Many studies show that class, race, ethnicity, and gender affect the ability of parents to intervene on behalf of their children. Please see, for example, Abrams and Gibbs 2002; McDonough 1997; Lareau 1989; 2000 and 2003; Lareau and Horvat 1999; Lareau and Weininger 2003; Horvat et al. 2003; McNeal 1999; and Hofferth et al. 1998; Sullivan 1989; and Fernandez-Kelly 1995. In contrast, in her study of working- and middle-class parents in London, Reay (1998) found that many working-class mothers are actively involved in their children’s schooling. Similarly, Chin and Phillips (2004) found that the summer “learning gap” between upper- and middle-class children, and lower income children is a function of economic capital rather than cultural differences. All parents used the summer to augment school learning, but the quantity and quality of these opportunities varied due to economic resources. Middle-class children were exposed to a wide range of environments and opportunities to develop their talents because their parents had the time, income, or support from nannies. Working-class and poor children had to challenge themselves, or rely on free alternatives and familial social relations to develop their talents.  

171 Hofferth, Boisjoly, and Duncan (1998) found that a parent giving, but not receiving, assistance to others is negatively related to school performance for children from families with low socio-economic status (SES). Their study suggests that the nature and quality of parents’ social ties matters. Low SES families may have access to “low resource” ties that help them “get by” but not “get ahead.” This possibility is also suggested by McNeal (1999), who found that, even at comparable levels of investment, single-parents, low SES families and minorities get less “bang-for-their-buck.” Horvat et al. (2003), on the other hand, found that working-class and poor parents were “rich” in terms of kinship networks, but that these social ties did not improve their children’s schooling because parents intervened individually rather than collectively. Meanwhile, middle-class parents organized collective efforts to change school policies in ways that benefited their own children.
networks by class perpetuates inequalities based on income and education (Horvat et al 2003; Lareau 2000 and 2003).

Certainly, this chapter shows that social stratification is often the result of parental choice, but, as shown in chapter three, it is also a byproduct of the Consumer’s Republic. By that, I mean it resulted from public policies that made exit viable for some, but not for others, and a public discourse that eulogized individual consumption as a means of constructing collective voice. Within this environment, neglect, which we typically think of as a negative construct, may actually be a healthy response. One teacher used the example of her sons, who attended the same suburban district where she teaches. In this case, her sons chose an alternate path from their peers out of concerns about the moral climate of the district and society:

Terry: I do think in our community parents put a lot of pressure…(on the school because) they want their kids to…go to good …colleges…and get good jobs. They want them to be the best at dance…be the best at violin…be the best at sports. The kids are over-programmed…And they want their kids to have the big houses like they have. My kids want nothing to do with suburbia. They grew up in this community and…when they were in high school, they (the guidance counselors) put the colleges up on the board for everyone to see and my boys went to a state university…And my boys were told they were going to an inferior school…the kids joking around said it, but it is coming from their parents. The parents all want their kids to go to Harvard. It’s like…well…Harvard is on the line…(pause for effect) in kindergarten. And you know what? My boys are incredibly well adjusted and happy. They went to a state school. They both love what they are doing and will probably both be PhDs. They value school. But they will never, ever live in suburbia…They just don’t like the feel of it…the meanness of it…you have all the clicks…the jocks up here…all the way down the hierarchy. They don’t want to live in a community like that…because it is not a community…My boys just want a kinder life. You know…a life where Harvard is not on the line in Kindergarten.

If it stems from moral or ethical concerns, and spreads to others, neglect may be salutary for institutions, organizations, and society by highlighting that “something is going on” and leading to a dialogue about why people are “opting out.”
Discussion: Loyalty, We Take All the Blueberries

In his book, *The Blackboard and the Bottom Line*, Cuban (2004, 3–5) relates a story about a successful ice cream maker who was speaking to teachers about how they could improve public education by running it like a business. Under cross-examination by a teacher, he admitted that the success of his blueberry ice cream lay in carefully selecting the finest blueberries and throwing out those that did not meet his high standards. The teacher then jumped to her feet and replied, “That’s right . . . (But we don’t) send back our blueberries. We take them rich, poor, gifted, exceptional, abused, frightened . . . We take them all! Every one! And that . . . is why it’s not a business. It’s a school!” A handful of teachers spontaneously relayed this story to me in their interviews. I had read the book, and assumed that this was where they got the story. It turns out that this narrative, like many similar stories I heard, had been circulated through teacher networks because it struck a chord. At first glance, it would seem more appropriate to begin my discussion of “exit” with this story, since it is describing why schools cannot be run like a business. Certainly, the story is alluding to market-like behaviors. Still, what teachers are actually conveying is what gets lost when voice and choice become both the means and ends of public service. By that, they mean loyalty to something bigger than ourselves. In part, this is the common school ideal, but it is also the “intangibles” promoted through our common spaces.

It is this latter idea that reminded me of Cohen’s (2003) argument that something was lost as a result of the Consumer’s Republic. The example she used was how shopping malls in the 1950s were promoted as the new “civic centers” of suburban towns. Yet, over time, people realized that these private spaces were not the same as the
public ones they had replaced. Their private legal status, for instance, enables them to restrict free speech and assembly, which are allowed, but mostly taken for granted, in public spaces outside of urban stores and businesses, including sidewalks, streets and parks. Meanwhile, as shopping malls drew businesses and consumers away from urban centers and small towns, these common spaces fell into decline. Part of that decline was economic, meaning there were fewer people shopping on Main Street. A larger part was social. With less “eyes on the street,” public spaces became less safe (Jacobs 1992). Then, it made sense for citizens to withdraw into private spaces filled with people like them. These kinds of spaces, which are often afforded by suburban enclaves, may be safer, but they also disconnect and isolate people due to the need to travel by car. Moreover, once individuals are spatially isolated from one another, their social ties atrophy and they become isolated by distrust.

Of course, the suburbs have public spaces too. Nevertheless, these spaces are far more likely to afford people the opportunity to engage with people “like them” then with people who are quite different from them, including strangers. This affects our political space for two interrelated reasons. What keeps a democratic society healthy is not just its commitment to limiting “government monopolization” of the private sphere, or even its mechanisms for enabling citizens to participate in the political sphere. Instead, it is those spaces, both discursive and actual, that we create to sustain our public life. Public life in this sense is not political. It is the space where we engage our fellow citizens. Then, through social intercourse, we (hopefully) realize that we share things in common in spite of all of our differences. This is what sociologists mean by social capital. It does not solely include our bonding ties of close friends and family. It also includes our linking
and bridging ties. These ties are important for our economic lives, but they are also critical for democracy. It is the public realm that binds us together as a society. Within that space, people build the social bonds that may lead to political ones. There are many people who will never participate in the political realm. When they do, they may never go beyond the individual act of voting. Others will not go into the political realm alone, but may go there in the company of others. In this way, public spaces conjoin our private and political lives and expand access to politics. They also create space for individuals to construct weak ties that may expand access to private capital. This is what gets lost when our public life is destroyed. Given these ideas, it is disheartening that teachers claim our public spaces, like public schools, are being destroyed discursively (public discourse) and institutionally (public policies) as a result of a political culture that values competition over other public values. They view NCLB as the institutionalization of that discourse, and claim that it has implications for democracy. We see this in how teachers frame charter schools compared to how they were framed in the debates on NCLB.

As shown in chapters five and six, many political elites framed charter (especially public charter) schools as “Davids” in need of protection from the “Goliath” public school monopoly. They were worthy of government protection because they provided a “safety valve” for (largely poor and minority) children who were trapped in failing public schools. Teachers, on the other hand, portrayed charter schools as privatized “public” spaces. First, they do not “take all the blueberries.” One urban public school teacher explained how this works as follows:

Chloe: (The charter schools) cherry pick…because the people who follow up on the lottery are the most active and engaged parents, and so, not always but usually, they have the most active and engaged children. And then, although they say they do not cherry pick, they make it impossible for the kids they don’t want,
for whatever reason, to stay. For example, they suspend them so much. And the parents can't keep staying home. So, when you're nine, 10, or 11 years old, and you are constantly being suspended, the parents have to send them back to the public schools...I do get the need for safety, but this is above and beyond that, and, you also have to remember that we in the public schools are not allowed to the same thing. We have to educate them no matter what and they don't. They don't. And they are allowed to do all kinds of things that we are not allowed to do. For example, they make rules requiring parents to volunteer. I would love to do that. I mean that is not fair. How is that fair that they can do that but we can’t and yet we are now supposed to “compete” in the sense that we are always being compared to these schools? And, by the way, the parent volunteer thing, that right there shows you how you could cherry pick. By creating this rule, they now have the parents who are most able or willing to volunteer. These are the most engaged parents, but also these are the parents who have the ability to take time off from work to volunteer, or the means to get to the schools to volunteer, or available child care to volunteer.

Thus, the population looks the same “on paper” (i.e., demographically), but the charter school is serving less needy children because the most engaged parents opt in.

Second, charter schools set up “contractual relationships” with parents and students. As a result, teachers and administrators have far more control over parent and student behaviors, and are able to reject undesirable blueberries. One former charter schoolteacher said:

Stephanie: We had something called morning meeting...and...(there were different) dances that we would do...I felt like I was in the Twilight Zone (laughing)...the kids were...indoctrinated...it was like brainwashing...there's definitely a whole culture that is like indoctrination. We used to chant things like, “knowledge is power”...It was almost corporal punishment. Students had to stand there with their hands at their side and people could call you out and yell things at you. It was really militaristic...we were told that if a kid talked back to a teacher we all had to gang up on the kid. I do understand that, in places that have problems with violence, it can spiral out of control very quickly. But that was not the kind of teacher I wanted to be. Yet, there are a lot of people who believe that...strict, militaristic punishment approach works. I don't think it did work.

Like many teachers I described in chapter seven, Stephanie became an “ethical leaver” and went to work in an urban school. In part, she did not agree with the teaching
philosophy, but she was also opposed to the way the school would “counsel out” needy students (i.e., encourage exit). Returning to her narrative:

Stephanie: Yet, instead of trying to help them, the charter school would get rid of them if there was even the slightest problem...they were willing to just throw kids away. So you were not really changing anything, they were just throwing these kids out...they would counsel them out. And, they would call parents for every little thing, you know drive them crazy with phone calls. So, the parents would say, “You should be dealing with this. Stop calling.” Then, they would start bringing them in and counseling them to remove their child after they had been driving the parents crazy. They would tell them things like, “If you do not take your child out, we will expel them and it will be on their record forever.” There were ways for them to get these kids out without ever having to go through a formal process, and most of it was just driving the parents crazy through phone calls and meetings but it was called “counseling.” The charter schools say that they are not picking the cream of the crop because anyone can come in. That is true. Anyone can go there. But they weed them out...I went into teaching to make a difference and I did not feel like the school was trying to help...And then, our principal ended up getting shipped out. We did not know why but we heard that it was because he did not want to go along with the plan to start getting rid of or weeding out kids...they offered me all kinds of money to stay but it was not why I went into teaching.

Stephanie’s narrative was repeated verbatim by another charter school teacher, and by public school teachers who had taken in “the blueberries” after they had been discarded by the charter schools.

One charter school teacher combined these narratives to describe why her charter school outperformed the nearby urban public school as follows:

Crystal: Parents and students have to sign a contract with us...you know, saying the kids will be in school, be there on time, be engaged, etc. But our community is incredibly involved... people say that we take the best of the community we are in and I do think that is true. The parents are very involved and very appreciative of the opportunity for their children, and they support us. And ... you can say, “This is what I expect.” It is much harder to do that with a pre-existing school in a pre-existing community. So, we can say “You have to sign their homework notebook every day.” And they have to do it to be a part of our community. We set the rules. We don’t expel kids, but we can actively talk to parents and encourage them to go elsewhere and let them know that we cannot provide what their child needs because we are a small school. And they do leave after being “encouraged” to do so.
In short, voice and choice are misnomers when describing why these schools out-perform public schools. These narratives are all from “public” charter schools. Thus, charter schools are not “Davids” rescuing other “Davids” (i.e., poor and minority children), even in their “public” guise. They are a business. They have different rules than public schools.

Just as interesting, though, teachers also claimed that students learned different lessons about voice in charter schools. Voice in some forms (i.e. participation) was strictly regulated, but competitive voice was encouraged. One charter schoolteacher professed that part of the reason charter schools engaged in the “group building” activities that Stephanie called “indoctrination” was to foster a sense of community. They needed to do so to ameliorate some of the more pernicious side effects associated with running schools like a business. In his words:

Tim: It is very competitive, where we all try to really push each other…If your test scores dip a little bit, then you are going to have a little bit more heat on you because they are trying to get you to step up… I think the idea of education being “a business” removes the joy…and the implicit rewards of learning…Because everything is tied to how well you do… And that creates a very individualistic and competitive environment. And, the students are less likely to help one another and are more focused on what they need to do to help themselves get ahead…it is a tightrope you are walking as a teacher…trying to create a communal discourse because everything is individual and numbers-based. Everything is tied to explicit rewards…So, if a student asks you, “Why can't I go on the field trip?” You say “Well, let’s look at the data. Let’s look at your numbers.” Everything is tied to the numbers…you know data, data, data, data…Administrators are somewhat separate from the staff…to run the school like a business you really need to separate yourself…(And) it was just about you needing to get your data up…to get your numbers up…you were not necessarily being evaluated for what you brought to the table or for who you were as a person…it was…like they wanted you to be a little scared all the time…about whether you would have a job …if at any moment, you were not meeting their expectations, you could be replaced…switched out…So, sometimes it is frustrating…I've been reduced to a number.
Tim alleged that the hand signals and chants were an attempt to create “community” as a result of the ill effects of too much competition. What he actually is describing, though, is that the school needed to create social cohesion as a result of too much competition.

Many public school teachers confirmed his claim that the competitive and individualistic environment at charter schools encouraged parents to engage in aggressive voice. Meanwhile, if the parents were too aggressive, the charter school “counseled them out” and the public school had to deal with their exaggerated sense of entitlement.

Returning to Chloe’s narrative:

Chloe: (In the urban public school where I work, we) get a huge (said emphatically) number of students from surrounding charter schools…But…we have had…students come into our (middle) school…from charter schools who…cannot read, and…all the school did was pass them on…We had these two sisters come into our school and they were failing and they said, “You are not going to fail us! Our mother is going to come in here and she is going to tell you that you are not going to fail us, and you are going to pass us. Our teacher last year (at the charter school) tried to fail us and my mother came and that teacher had to pass us.” And they kept insisting that they were not failing. And we said, “What are you talking about? You are failing everything.” And they said, “No we’re not. Our mother says we are not failing.” What they couldn’t seem to understand was that their mother didn’t run the show here. And from what I’ve seen, that’s true of charter schools. Parents run the show. They want the money and so they allow the parents to dictate more. You know, what I am telling you I have seen first-hand, but it is also coming from other teachers’ experiences. And, if I heard it from just one or two or even three teachers I may question it, but I have heard this from many, many teachers… The kids we get (from the charter schools) come in with this crazy sense of entitlement. This crazy sense of how they are going to control the teachers, which I think is insane. You are one of my 25 students in the class. You are not the only one in this room.

Overall, these teachers clearly agree that aggressive voice is a negative side effect of a system that caters to parents as educational consumers. Teachers also asserted, however, that this model is not sustainable for public schools. Their arguments are complicated, but the gist of what they are saying is that learning involves vulnerability. Therefore, it requires trust. This is true regardless of who “owns” the school (i.e., if it is a public,
private, or charter school). Nevertheless, teachers’ narratives suggest that schools as organizations rely on different forms of trust.

Organic trust is “rooted in faith” and largely unconditional. Members of social systems that are characterized by organic trust share a “broad-based moral bond.” In fundamentalist religious schools, for example, the actions of teachers and administrators are supported largely without question by a homogenous community, which shares attitudes and beliefs about schools and their role in society. This social cohesion serves as a form of social control, and thereby improves performance. Contractual trust is more delimited. It is developed between parties involved in a transaction where obligations and responsibilities are well specified and easily measured. This is what teachers in charter schools were describing to me. Because there is a legal framework in place that binds individuals to carry out their responsibilities, an aggrieved party can take legal action if the other party fails to fulfill its part of the contract. In the case of charter schools, the contract the school and its parents sign, in essence, serves as a form of social control. Relational trust, on the other hand, is developed through sustained associations among individuals, groups and institutions (i.e., loyalty). It is typically found in institutions with multi-faceted goals, like public schools, where the methods of achieving those goals are situation specific rather than part of standard operating procedures. In these types of organizations, obligations among parties are diffuse in scope, rather than based on explicit expectations regarding service provision. As a result, it is difficult for the organization to determine if its members are fulfilling their obligations.

In chapter seven, I argued that you cannot make teachers more accountable without first knowing what accountability (already) looks like, how it is achieved, and at
what costs and benefits to society. The same could be said about schools as organizations and education as a public institution. Public schools are a prime example of what Wilson (1991) calls “coping organizations,” or agencies where neither outputs nor outcomes are (easily) observed. These problems are further complicated by the fact that learning is co-produced. As such, schools need the cooperation of parents and students in order to meet their academic goals and objectives. Meanwhile, all members of the school community cannot easily assess if the other parties are fulfilling their responsibilities. Parents and school board members, for example, cannot be sure that teachers are carrying out their responsibilities within the classroom and teachers cannot be certain parents are positively supporting the educational process at home. Teachers cannot be sure that principals are carrying out their responsibilities outside of the classroom and principals cannot be certain teachers are carrying out their responsibilities within the classroom, except through test scores, which are an incomplete assessment of teacher performance. In short, public schools suffer from what economist Mancur Olson (1971) calls “collective action problems.” It is in the interest of every member of the group to promote school performance, yet no single actor is ultimately responsible for educational

172 Wilson writes that there are four kinds of government agencies: production, procedural, craft and coping organizations. Production organizations are agencies in which both outputs and outcomes can be observed. An example is the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) where managers can observe the activities of clerks and auditors and measure the amount of tax monies collected as a result of their efforts. The problem that managers of production agencies must resolve is the tendency to focus on the more easily measured outcomes at the expense of those less easily observed or counted (i.e., work that produces measurable outcomes tends to drive out work that produces outcomes that cannot be measured). In procedural organizations, outputs can be observed but not outcomes, either because there is no result or because it will occur in the distant future. As a result, the focus is on standard operating procedures and how employees go about doing their jobs at the expense of whether those procedures and doing those jobs produces the desired outcomes. Craft organizations are agencies in which outcomes can be observed but not outputs. Many army and navy units change from procedural to craft organizations during wartime. While their actions are hard to observe during wartime, the outcomes of those actions are relatively easy to evaluate.
outcomes and so no single actor can be blamed. In these cases, there is an incentive to free-ride off of the labor of others.

As a result, “managers” of coping agencies must deal with a difficult situation. They need to recruit good workers, but have little knowledge about what attributes to look for in potential employees. They need to create a productive work atmosphere without being certain what constitutes “good work.” In the meantime, they (typically) deal with complaints and crises without knowing whether a complaint is justified or a crisis symptomatic or atypical (Wilson 1991). Wilson (1991) argues that these issues are likely to create a high degree of conflict between managers and public servants, especially when workers deal with a clientele that is not of their own choosing. Conflict results from the fact that employees are driven by “situational imperatives.” For example, teachers must keep order in the classroom. Principals and school board members, on the other hand, must deal with other constraints, such as complaints from politically influential constituencies. They can reject or deflect complaints if they can show that the behaviors did not occur or were justified, but this is unlikely because actions and outcomes are difficult to observe. Managers must therefore strike a delicate balance. The employee will feel that he or she is not being “backed up” if the complaint is acted on without providing due process. The client, on the other hand, will feel that the agency is “insensitive” if his or her complaint is not addressed (Wilson, 1989). In either case, the resulting conflict may lead to a breakdown in trust and the withdrawal of support from the organization (i.e., neglect). Teachers’ narratives support Wilson’s contention that coping organizations may foster a high degree of conflict between managers and public
servants, but co-production means the same is true between managers, public servants and clients.

Trust in these cases is important because members of the community need to make both normative and positive judgments about whether individuals are fulfilling their obligations. This creates vulnerability, especially in cases where there are asymmetric relations. Parents, for example, are particularly dependent upon the efforts of school professionals if they lack the specialized knowledge they need to advance the interests of their children. The relationship is not one-sided, though, since school professionals rely on parents for reinforcement at home. Relational trust between these groups is strengthened when it is perceived that both are willing to go beyond what is formally required to help the other. When teachers embody a caring commitment toward students beyond what is required by their contract, and parents respond to it in an appreciative and supporting manner, a moral force is created in their social dynamic that then becomes a source for action. Putnam (1995) defines this as generalized reciprocity. Generalized reciprocity involves an ongoing relationship of exchange that may be imbalanced at any given time, but involves an expectation that the imbalance will be rectified at a future date. This requires sustained interactions over time (i.e., loyalty).

What further alters the equation is the fact that public schools bring strangers together and (hopefully) in the process teaches them that they are not so strange after all. Private schools, and even public charter schools, (largely) do not do the same thing as a result of parental sorting. Certainly, as this chapter shows, parental sorting has also stratified public schools. Still, public schools remain one of the foremost places where

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173 Balanced, or specific, reciprocity results from an exchange of equivalent value at a specific point in time.
citizens experience “others,” meaning people who are not like them. On a positive note, this builds social, economic and political capital. On a negative note, schools may become highly charged emotional spaces. This makes it more difficult to construct trusting relationships. One suburban 5th grade teacher described an emotionally charged experience as follows:

Carley: (I had a student who was experiencing a lot of) emotional difficulties…his medication was obviously not on par. One day, this child was having temper tantrums and was very difficult, very disruptive…and he actually struck out at me and he kicked me in the stomach and tried to stab me with a pencil in front of the class…a lot of the kids were crying and upset...(but) luckily I had a classroom that was open to another classroom so I screamed for my colleague and she…(came in and we restrained) the child until a counselor could get there and it was just very upsetting…I felt bad…obviously something was going on and he didn’t have any other way to express his anger, and I felt bad for the kids in the class…What I hadn’t known was that the parents had taken him off his medication because he was having such a great year…this wasn’t done because of a doctor’s note. And…we had…a meeting with the parents and…(they) brought a child advocate and I said “I’m a major advocate for all (said emphatically and emotionally) the kids in my class” including this boy and after that meeting we were on the same page…(I had) a class meeting with my kids and explained that this child obviously didn’t mean to do what he did and it was wrong…I used it as a learning exercise on how to) manage anger and...(we did role playing on how else we could) have solved this problem...(But) parents don’t always know what’s best…They don’t see…(their child) with other children…in a classroom setting. They don’t understand the dynamics of the classroom. They’re not thinking about everybody else in the classroom…I think we all think we know what’s best...(but even I) as a parent…don’t always know what’s best for my kid. If I expect…(my) child to learn and be in a school setting (than on some level I need to trust that teacher and the school)...(I) wish people would trust the schools more.

Carley argued that trust is important because it helps teachers do their jobs. In this case, she mentioned that the situation was remediable because her principal “backed her up,” but also because she was well-respected and had very good relationships with her students and the surrounding community. In fact, the parents told her that they had taken
their son off his medicine *precisely because* he was having such a good year with her. Her narrative about trust, though, is also a commentary on the importance of loyalty.

Phrased another way, exit is loyalty to one’s own but disloyalty toward others. Elaine’s school was not just struggling because the most engaged left and the least engaged stayed. It was struggling because of the constant turnover. This caused the social ties that bind a community to wither. When loyalty is present, on the other hand, communities construct ties of affection and feelings of trust *over time*. Some are bonding ties, but bridging and linking ties are equally important. All of these help build relational trust and reciprocity, which are key components for school (and teacher) efficiency and effectiveness. They are more important in public schools because private and charter schools are often able to rely on organic and contractual trust to perform the same function, meaning to achieve social cohesion and thus minimize the need for social control to improve performance.

The importance of trust for school (and teacher) effectiveness is part of the reason teachers stress social values, such as equality, social justice, trust, reciprocity, caring and cooperation, in addition to a strong commitment to procedural justice. Schools need the (voluntary) cooperation of parents and students. When parents and students feel these social values are absent, they withdraw their support from the institution. While this commitment to procedural justice, and broader moral and social values is necessary for school (and teacher) effectiveness, it is the very thing that teachers described as “going away” due to testing and accountability, and a public discourse that treats parents as
consumers of public education rather than citizen co-producers. One other point deserves mention. Just like voice, loyalty is generally conceived of as a positive construct. Yet, it too may have negative side-effects. Downward leveling norms, for example, may arise in cases where loyalty stems from entrapped allegiance. In these cases, individuals cannot escape the collective. This is harmful to the individual but also to schools as communities, especially if it leads to widespread withdrawal or neglect. Loyalty is also harmful to individuals if it is enforced through asymmetric power relations rather than allegiance.

**Conclusion**

Summing up, this analysis supports Hirschman’s assertion that exit, voice, loyalty and neglect are each important in their own right, but have more profound effects when combined. When large numbers of parents exit from poorly performing schools, it creates an environment where, in some cases, it makes more sense to defect than to participate. This includes exit and neglect, which often work together. In terms of the latter, as more engaged parents and students leave the school, social rewards are increasingly distributed to those who disrupt the school or the classroom. Some children will be driven by peer pressure to avoid succeeding in school. Others will be unable to cope with an increasingly chaotic environment. Meanwhile, public schools and teachers (largely) cannot oust non-cooperators. In consequence, declining trust creates an environment where schools increasingly need to rely on social control because social cohesion is absent. While some members may continue to feel loyalty to the school as a community, many will leave for better opportunities elsewhere.

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174 Recent studies suggest that “social trust,” or an environment characterized by trusting and cooperative relationships is a key contributor to school effectiveness (Bryk, Schneider and Kochanik 1996; Tschannen-Moran 2004).
In brief, when co-producers (i.e., parents and students) withdraw their support (i.e., loyalty and participatory voice), teachers and public schools cannot be effective and schools as public spaces go into decline. What gets lost are the “intangibles.” We see these in a recent picture that was posted and immediately gained over 20,000 views. It shows a Jewish man riding the subway with an African American man sleeping on his shoulder. We cannot tell how old the sleeping man is because he has a hood pulled up over his head, so that just the lower half of his face and hands show, but a witness posted the following tagline:

Heading home on the Q train yesterday when this young black guy nods off on the shoulder of a Jewish man. The man doesn’t move a muscle, just lets him stay there. After a minute, I asked the man if he wanted me to wake the kid up, but he shook his head and responded, ‘He must have had a long day, let him sleep. We’ve all been there, right?’ He was still sleeping soundly when I got off the train 20 minutes later. It was a small gesture, but a kind one. I love New Yorkers! What a wonderful reminder that every moment is a chance to do something good for another person. And not only that, but inspire the others around us with our small but powerful actions.

Shocked by the popularity of the picture, the man in the photo, Isaac Theil, told a magazine:

Maybe the photo wouldn’t have become so popular if people weren’t seeing a Jewish man with a yarmulke and a black man in a hood...they might not necessarily correlate the two. But there is only one reason that I didn’t move. He was simply a human being who was exhausted…I knew it and happened to be there and have a big shoulder to offer him.

Someone characterized Isaac Theil’s act as “the perfect demonstration of empathy,” which is the ability to “draw on past hardship to soften our hearts towards others.”

Like the “narrative of the blueberries,” this story demonstrates how our public spaces afford us the opportunity to move beyond ourselves. In this case, Theil softened his heart.

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175 www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/06/sleeping-stranger-subway-picture_n4228826.html
to a total stranger who wasn’t so strange after all. This is what gets lost when we allow public spaces both real and imagined, like public schools and public education, to go into decline. The market is a powerful metaphor. Teachers argue, however, that excessive competition is unhealthy for children, society and democracy. This is because it destroys our commitment to things that are larger than me, myself and I. In the next chapter, I discuss how conceptualizing schools as a marketplace has impacted teachers’ political experiences, identities and behaviors.
CHAPTER IX
NCLB AND TEACHERS’ POLITICAL BEHAVIORS

Introduction

In the first part of this dissertation, I showed how political elites used ideas and institutions to distance teachers from the political process and achieve political change in the form of NCLB. In this part of the dissertation, I explored how this affected teachers’ social experiences, behaviors and identities. This chapter investigates how public policies and tools impact teachers’ political experiences, behaviors and identities. As public servants, teachers serve as representatives of the state, meaning they are responsible for implementing its policies. Yet, they are also citizens. In both cases, they are influenced by their values and beliefs, but it is also likely they are influenced by their work “contexts.” By that, I mean the physical sites where they work, as well as their organizational and occupational norms. Both of these socialize street-level bureaucrats. In the process, they mediate the effect of public policies on street-level bureaucrats as public servants and citizens. In terms of teachers, these processes are likely to be further complicated by the fact that teaching and learning are co-produced. Thus, teachers need the cooperation of parents and students in order to do their jobs well. Consequently, we would anticipate that teachers’ political behaviors, experiences and identities are impacted by the communities in which they teach. This chapter explores these ideas through 83 open-ended interviews with teachers and former teachers.

Overall, teachers’ narratives suggest that their social contexts strongly mediate how policy tools affect their political experiences, identities and behaviors, but political discourse has both direct and indirect effects. In both cases, social contexts clearly play a role, but political discourse directly impacts teachers. Sometimes this related to their
identities as teachers. Other times it was tied to their identities as citizens. Either way, it was not linked to where they taught in these cases, it was linked to who they are. The first part of this chapter focuses on political discourse. The second examines policy tools. In practice, the effects were interactive even though I am discussing them separately for clarity. I conclude by discussing teachers’ perceptions of how the commodification of teaching and learning has impacted schools as public institutions.

Political Discourse and Policy Feedback: The State and Symbolic Violence

Critical theorists claim the state needs to target more groups for punishment as capitalist societies become less able to deliver on the promise of equality and justice. It does so in order to transfer blame for socio-economic inequality from elites to individuals and groups. Powerless groups are especially attractive scapegoats because they are often stigmatized and therefore likely to remain silent rather than draw attention to the fact that they are part of a poorly regarded group. In this manner, the state downplays societal issues and justifies the inequitable distribution of privileges to advantaged groups.

Earlier, I used the term symbolic violence as an example of this phenomenon. I then showed how political elites used the phrase “soft bigotry of low expectations” to blame teachers for the achievement gap and declining global competitiveness. Teachers expressed similar ideas, but did not portray themselves as “the powerless.” Instead, they constructed themselves as allies of society, who were being targeted for three reasons: first, teachers support public institutions and programs for children in a political climate that devalues both; second, business-economic interests scapegoat public schools and teachers during times of economic duress; and third, teachers are a powerful actor in education policy. Under the second narrative, the focus on teacher tenure, benefits, and
accountability is designed to reduce the costs of public education more than the power of unions, although many argued that this was the end result. Under the third, the purpose is to silence teachers and delimit the power of unions, thereby fostering an elite business-economic education agenda. Retired teachers and more experienced teachers were far more likely to link these ideas to unions, and to express that something similar occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. Alternatively, younger teachers were more likely to blame the current political climate on economic hardship. Both groups, however, were equally likely to frame public education as the “last great frontier” and claim that business “wanted a piece of it.”

Their views were not uniform, but teachers’ narratives across-the-board indicate that negative public discourse has impacted their political experiences, behaviors and identities. Older teachers were more likely to express that the negative construction of unions impacted how they felt about their government, while younger teachers more frequently focused on the negative portrayal of teachers and public schools. Either way, both groups viewed the negative characterizations of teachers and public schools as “personal,” meaning they felt it was an attack on their identities. I use the word felt to indicate that this was happening on an emotional level. Here, their narratives reminded me of Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence. As previously discussed, symbolic violence is the capacity of a class or dominant group to impose social identities on others by controlling normative ideas about what is superior or inferior. Once legitimized, these qualities become standardized throughout society and regulate behavior for everyone while perpetuating social hierarchies (Lamont and Lareau 1988). In this case, teachers’ perceived that political discourse was a means to an end. They believed the state was
imposing risk on teachers as a means of silencing their collective voice, and thereby imposing a business-economic agenda. Then, they claim, the “discourse trickled down,” or became standardized in society and the media. Many argued that this has harmed the occupation in a similar manner to how jokes about state workers relegated them to an inferior position in society. The story they tell is about earning a position of authority in terms of education policy, but then being relegated to an inferior position within the broader cultural political economy as a result of state discourse and policies. This section tells that story. It begins by describing the conditions under which teachers organized. Then, I discuss how teachers’ used their organizational resources to effect political, social and economic change. Next, I explore teachers’ perceptions of how their power was reduced by state discourse, thereby paving the way for political change. I conclude by discussing how these experiences have impacted teachers’ political identities.

*Teacher Mobilization: Teachers as Dependents*

As discussed earlier, Cohen (2003) argues that government policies after World War II were designed to encourage mass consumption as the primary route to a prosperous and democratic postwar America. We see this, for instance, in the way postwar policies, such as the GI Bill and the restructuring of collective bargaining, were designed to promote consumption. Nevertheless, not everyone shared in post-war socio-economic gains. Teachers were one of those groups. Although today we think of teachers as part of the middle class, retired teachers told me that their working conditions and wages were abysmal during the 1960s and 1970s, both in relation to their level of education and when compared to unionized workers in other fields. These claims are evident in a narrative told to me by a suburban teacher:
Paul: When I started teaching, I had 3 days a week where I had no time away from students… Zero minutes…I had to take the children to lunch and eat lunch with them and then I took them out to the playground after lunch…That was part of their physical education. On the other two days, I had one free period because they went to either art or music…that was the only time all week…(I had to) do anything that was not teaching, like grading or lesson planning … I had no time to go to the bathroom. If I had to go, I had to send a student down to the principal’s office to get the principal or the secretary to come and watch my room…You really didn’t go to the bathroom …Our first three children, the pregnancies, were not covered through the health insurance. We had saved for the first one, but we had to take out a loan for the other two to get them out of the hospital (laughs)...I had a better job when I was in high school…then…as a teacher after four years of college. I worked for a baker and we were unionized. If you took my salary, and made it a yearly salary, I would have been paid $5,400 a year (as a baker). I made $4,200 (as a teacher)...I got a 15 minute break in the morning, a 15 minute break in the afternoon and an hour lunch as a baker, none of which I got as a teacher...I had no free time...We also had no personal days. My retired father had to drive my wife to her doctor’s appointments when she was pregnant…I also did not have a personal day to go to the hospital when she was having the baby...It was really an unsustainable system. Because teachers made so little, most supplemented their salaries with part time jobs at night and full-time jobs during the summer.

Teachers’ working conditions were exacerbated in the 1970s by the economic downturn, but declining school enrollments also affected school revenues. These trends impacted school districts around the nation. Still, urban centers in the Rustbelt were particularly hard hit due to a long period of out-migration to the suburbs and the Sunbelt. Many urban schools could not recruit teachers due to difficult working conditions and low pay. One teacher described what it was like to be hired and work during this time:

Lorna: I had worked in a Catholic school and I went to apply for a job in the public school. I walked in with my mother because I was scared to death to be in the neighborhood where the school was located…we walked into the school…the school was supposed to have 120 teachers…they were hiring 20…They called me, and…my mother and I walked up to the secretary, who put her head up and said, “Excuse me, darling, I said next. What are you doing here with this person?” (laughs) I said, “This is my mom.” She said, “You brought your mother?” I said, “I did!” (laughs) She said, “Just a minute” and went in to talk with the principal…she comes back out from the principal's office and says, “The principle
will see both of you (Laughs). Here is the list of openings. Here is a pencil. Just erase the name of anyone who is currently assigned to the class you want… Anyone who brings their mother to a job interview here is a good person and can have any job they want.” (Laughs)...I sat down...with my mom (laughs) and the principal, who was a very dapper looking man. And it was like this dichotomy because here is this dapper man in the heart of the ghetto. There was crime and misery everywhere. There were no rules...no regulations. There was no security in the neighborhood...no guards in front of the schools. There were gangs...in the streets. It was in the 1970s...Anyway, the principal said to me, “You have experience. We don’t usually get teachers with any experience.” I had one-year teaching experience! (Laughs). I said, “Well, I taught in a Catholic school...third grade and I had 64 children in my class...I had three reading groups: 20, 20, 20.”...He said, “You know about grouping? Maybe you could lead the seminar on grouping.” I said, “Oh, okay.” (Laughs) I mean, I’m 22 years old! Sure I’ll lead the seminar (Laughs). Then he said, “Here are the rules of the school.” I get out my pen and my little Catholic school notebook...He says, “You can put your pencil down. There are only two rules: don’t call the office ever ...(pauses for effect) and don’t let them out of your room (Laughs). If that means you have to take your desk and move it to the door to block it, that’s fine (laughs). That is not considered a fire hazard in this school (laughs). Just don’t call us and we won’t call you, and you will get an S (satisfactory) rating.” And that was my first day of teaching...We used to get $600 more a year to teach...That was a bonus (laughing). They used to call us “The 600 Schools” (Laughing)...(We) were the...bottom of the bottom of the bottom...in the City.

Lorna told me that rising teacher unionism and political activism was a direct response to these kinds of conditions. She argued that it was “no accident” that urban teachers were the first to mobilize. Their working conditions were far worse than those in suburban schools.

Even under these conditions, unionism was controversial. Some teachers suggested that this was partly because most teachers were female. Historically, teaching was constructed as “women’s work,” meaning it was less attractive to men due to its relative low pay and poor status, especially when compared to occupations that required a similar level of education such as clerical work (Lortie 1975). Meanwhile, unionization was occurring before the women’s movement “normalized” political action by women (i.e. voice). Teacher mobilization was also stymied by the fact that teaching as an
occupation was characterized by high turnover since it was (largely) viewed as a “secondary income” that women gave up upon getting married or having children (Lortie 1975). Exit worked against social and economic organization because no one had a stake in engaging in collective action. In this case, collective action might benefit “the group” but was unlikely to benefit an individual teacher since many did not remain in the profession. One retired rural teacher talked about how these trends combined to thwart his attempts to gain health insurance for teachers:

Joe: (At the time, we did not have a teachers’ union). The teachers asked me to be their representative for the Teachers’ Association…Nobody wanted the job (laughs)…We had two or three faculty meetings a year and they would ask me to bring a couple of things up to the supervising principal. And…(one of the things I requested was) medical benefits…He said that he could probably get the school to pay for half if the teachers would cover the other half. I went back to the teachers and I told them…The teachers all said… “No way!”…they did not want the townspeople to be able to say that they were paying a teacher’s doctor’s bill. It was a pride thing…And they said…it wouldn't be fair to unmarried people like myself because the school would be covering benefits for…teachers who had families, and single people like myself would get much less. So I said, “That’s okay. I'm getting nothing now. I'd like to get something.” (Laughs) It was not because the Board of Education would not give it to us. It was because we were professionals…Unions are for Teamsters and Longshoremen. Unions are not for professionals. Do doctors have a union? Do attorneys have a union? Noooooooooo. (He is telling this story in a very funny way. He is exaggerating it like he is an old school marm lecturing an errant student on ethics.) At that time, I don't even think that professors had a professor’s union. So we didn't ask for it…Of course that changed over the years, but…(not until) the late 1960s…(early) 1970s.176

As Joe indicates, teachers’ associations were social forums that also served a minimal economic function. Typically, the head of the teachers’ association would meet with the

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176 Other teachers also claimed teachers’ beliefs that “professionals” should not unionize stymied collective action. Returning to Paul’s narrative: “teachers…would say…they could not join a union because they were professionals. The response…was, “How are you a professional? Are you like a doctor or a dentist or a lawyer, who comes up with his or her own price for services rendered?” We had nothing. We had a job just like anyone else had a job, only ours was more difficult because we did not even get a 15-minute break. We had none of the things that even the so-called “unprofessional” workers had. And, we certainly were not part of the “middle class,” maybe the very bottom of the middle class. We were the working class, but I made much less than I made as a baker, and this was after 4 years of college.”
principal to discuss teachers concerns and make requests regarding salaries, supplies, and so forth. But, collective bargaining was controversial in a mostly female occupation.

Eventually, unionization was “normalized,” meaning it became accepted by teachers. Even so, teachers’ narratives reveal that active union participation is not high among teachers. Of the 83 teachers I interviewed, 23 percent had in some way served the union. About nine out of ten teachers who did not hold a union office expressed that their interaction with the union was largely through events where they socialized with other teachers. Perhaps more interesting, this was also true among teachers who actively served the union. Most claimed, for example, that socialization was the end goal. Others said they served because they were complaining to a fellow teacher who said they should “do something about it.” Many teachers also told me they were “guilted” into service by their fellow teachers. Returning to Lorna’s narrative:

Lorna: I was not going to be the chapter leader, but my friend was chapter leader, and my mother had passed away and she used that to guilt me into doing it (laughs). She said, “Your mother would want you to be chapter leader.” My mother had been president of the Catholic Women's Association for years… So my friend knew what she was doing with the Italian guilt…because it was like a sign. I knew I had to do it. That was my Jewish friend using guilt because she…knew it would work on me (laughing)… I said to her, “If she didn't die, what were you going to do?” And she said (laughing), “If she didn’t die, we were going to tell you it would help you get over having to take care of your sick mother. It would get you out of the house” (laughing).

Clearly, teachers’ social ties are crucial in terms of union service, but teachers also told me that early mobilization resulted from the social ties they had formed through teachers’ associations, which were the precursors to teachers’ unions.

Nevertheless, teachers acknowledged that mobilization imposed very high personal and collective costs. Many told stories, for instance, about how going on strike
impacted their families, as well as their relationships with their colleagues, friends, and their local communities. One teacher said:

Brian: I was not a ra-ra union guy…I was not a rabble-rouser…I was not necessarily supporting the union…I did it because my fellow teachers did it. There were some teachers in my building who…broke the strike. And it caused some incredibly hard feelings…awful…it lasted 30-40 years…people still ask, “Why do you think he went in” (laughs)…People went to jail…the union leaders went to jail. I think people thought they would go on strike and it would be over quickly. But 30 days later we were still reeling… I don’t think anyone expected it to last that long…And we lost two days pay for every day we were out on strike…It was tough. But I didn't want to be one of the ones that stayed in …they were never treated the same way again…(I don’t know why I later became a building representative)…I just liked the social aspects of it. I always had good relationships with my administrators…But, there are schools where the administrators do bully the teachers. I have a former student who… contacted me on Facebook…she told me she became a teacher because of me (getting emotional). It really touched me…Her principal is bullying the teachers. It happens…And so, I do think unions are important.

Brian discussed how the strike imposed social costs between those who picketed and those who crossed the picket lines, yet many teachers also discussed how it created bad feelings between teachers and administrators for over a decade. As one teacher said, “It changes the way you feel about a person when they hand you an injunction letter as you are standing on the picket line.” Another teacher talked about the very high personal costs. Some teachers got divorced as a result of economic hardship or because their spouse was opposed to unionization. Strikes also imposed social and personal costs on the community. For instance, they created tensions between those who supported the teachers and those who did not. More than one teacher told me that going on strike is never a “win” for teachers. It is an action of last resort.

In terms of economic costs, teachers did not solely lose their income from the days they were on strike. In the state that is the subject of this analysis, teachers lose two-days pay for every day they are on strike. A teacher in a different school from Brian
told me that, upon returning to school, his first paycheck was $1.12 because the district took out two-days pay for every day they were on strike, as per state law. Still, teachers were not complaining about this law. More than one teacher expressed that they feel lucky to work in a state that does not actively discourage teacher unionization. The sense I got from their narratives was that this encourages feelings of loyalty to their state for treating their right to voice with respect. Nonetheless, teachers experienced high economic costs associated with this policy. Those who were married and worked in the same district, for example, had to support their family with no income. Others were a year or two away from retirement. Because they made less income during the strike, it affected their weekly income for their entire retirement since it is calculated based on your average salary for your last three years teaching. Another teacher said that he usually worked a full-time job in the summer and a part-time job during the school year to supplement his income. That year, he worked two full-time jobs during the summer.

Just as important as how teachers gained power, though, is what they achieved through their collective voice. Teachers said they initially used collective action to lift the occupation into the middle class. This included better salaries and benefits, but also better working conditions. Many teachers mentioned, for example, that they demanded one free period a day so that they could grade, plan their lessons, meet with students and colleagues, and so forth. Interestingly, many teachers also expressed that unionization had unforeseen positive side-effects. In particular, it spread out formal and informal sources of authority. This, in turn, provided teachers with greater control over their work.

Prior to unionization, both male and female retirees described their schools as “paternalistic” places, where teachers were told what to teach and how to teach. Teachers
were not using the word paternalism to denote gender differences. Although most principals were male, teachers argued that female principals also played the role of “father figure.” Rather, the used the word paternal to reflect the hierarchical authority structure of schools as organizations. Just as interesting, teachers were not necessarily claiming that this kind of paternalism was problematic. Their main point was that the role itself provided principals with tremendous moral authority both within and outside of the classroom. Outside the classroom, teachers brought their personal concerns to the principal. The principal also resolved disputes between teachers. Within the classroom, principals played the role of “head teacher,” meaning they socialized and trained teachers. They also dealt with student discipline issues. In fact, the role of principal evolved from the position of “head teacher,” which was often rotated between teachers. Eventually, this position morphed into an administrative position that involved teachers permanently leaving the classroom.

Moreover, despite these paternalistic relationships, teachers declared that they were actually quite close with their administrators and frequently socialized together outside of work. Largely, this occurred through teachers’ associations. In fact, many retirees told me that principals often ran the teachers’ association, as well as the union in the early days before the state prohibited administrators from joining them. One teacher said to me: “You have to remember that administrators were ex-teachers. They were us. It wasn’t really us versus them.” In short, schools were organized hierarchically, but the relationships between administrators and teachers were fluid. The hierarchical or paternalistic nature of schools as organizations was only problematic if there were personal issues between a principal and teacher. Then, teachers had no recourse.
I had many teachers tell me that unionization resolved many of these organizational issues by spreading out formal and informal sources of authority within the building. In fact, they viewed unionization as a prerequisite for teacher professionalism because it established teachers as leaders on teaching and learning, and provided them with greater control over their work, even though it did not remove the hierarchical structures of schools as organizations. Returning to Paul’s narrative:

Paul: (We) became stakeholders. If you knew the people and the socialization of the building, you could actually chart how that paternalism was going to wane…It was not immediate…it was a process of maybe five years, but you could actually see a loss of that paternal grant that teachers had voluntarily given…(The faculty were) less and less likely to ask that principal for a personal favor, or to step into a dispute of some kind…they would go to a union rep…and principals became more like administrators than “father figures” …this did not just spread power to unions. It spread the authority around… (There) was no longer one source, it became many people who were looked at as “helpers.” They’ve done studies on this kind of thing with formal and informal leaders, and that is what happened… So X, Y, and Z, were union reps, but A, B, and C were known for being good at developing curriculum, an expert on a specific topic…good at mentoring new teachers…(had) good techniques for maintaining discipline. And people would go to those individuals for help and advice…it really spread out authority and expertise among teachers. And, that was positive because, mostly, teachers did not have problems with the principal, but, under the former system, it was really a problem if you did because there was nowhere else to go. Leadership got spread out a lot.

When combined with better salaries and benefits, many teachers suggested that becoming key stakeholders in their classrooms, schools and communities increased teachers’ feelings of self-efficacy, as well as their loyalty to the occupation and their schools as communities. They claim that, together, these trends reduced teacher turnover, and encouraged college-bound students to consider entering the profession.177

177 Two suburban school teachers said:
Rose: (Over) the course of my teaching career…(administrators) respected your professionalism more and allowed you to use that expertise…(early on) it was more a paternalistic kind of situation…(the principals’) attitude toward the teachers was more, “We have to tell them what to do.” Whereas, later on, they allowed you to use…your professional expertise ...(and it)
The paradigm of public service provision that teachers are describing is a combination of what I referred to in chapter three as TPA and NCG. Benington (2011) argues that the economic theory of NCG is “public value,” which is created through the activities, investments, services and relationships between co-participants on the frontlines of public service delivery. To use the words of Albert Hirschman, the idea behind NCG is that the state (voice) and market (exit, competition and choice) are insufficient for dealing with an increasingly complex and diverse global society. There needs to be linkages between them (loyalty) to redress issues that have been created as a result of the transition to a “risk society.” By fostering social ties, networks provide individuals with a sense of belonging, meaning, purpose and continuity during times of change. In this manner, social capital allows people to thrive amidst uncertainty (Benington 2011).

Although teachers’ narratives support these ideas, there is nothing about networks per se that would result in the production of public value. As discussed earlier, networks may also be used to promote private value at the expense of communal goals. Instead, teachers’ narratives reveal that their occupational norms, when combined with their social ties, encouraged public-spirited behaviors, thereby creating public value. In this case, they are referring to the ethos of care, or the occupational norm of going beyond their jobs to produce well-rounded human beings. These behaviors were (largely) reinforced by the norms of TPA. Where there was a conflict, tenure and unionization encouraged was more enjoyable for me…I had more autonomy over my job…and could really engage my creativity.

Lisa: In the 70’s, it was the type of administration that…(was more like) “paternalistic dictatorships”… your principal told you what to do (clapping) and that’s what you did…Then it swung over…(in the) late 70’s early 80’s…teachers were asked to give input…We were stakeholders.
voice over neglect. So, the state and school districts still promulgated bureaucratic rules, regulations and standard operating procedures to ensure the consistent and non-partial delivery of public services. Meanwhile, schools as organizations remained hierarchically organized. For example, principals retained control over decisions about hiring and tenure. They also had the last word in terms of how the school was run. But teachers socialized other teachers into the profession, and the norms of teaching were largely policed through informal networks. Teachers’ unions were only involved to ensure procedural justice.

In sum, teacher mobilization cannot be understood outside of their social, organizational and economic contexts. Retired teachers agreed that unionization was expedited through their social ties and their desire to socialize with fellow teachers, rather than their political beliefs. It occurred, however, within the context of economic hardship and limited professional autonomy. Teachers of all ages said, however, that unions are still (largely) a source of social versus political and economic action. These social actions benefit the faculty, but they also benefit the students and the community. Some of the examples teachers provided included adopting families at Christmas, collecting money for student scholarships, raising money for student events, sending baskets, cards and flowers to teachers or families that are in need, and so forth. The union also organizes picnics, holiday parties, and other forums for teachers and administrators to socialize with one another. Many teachers alleged that these socializing functions are critical for schools as organizations and teaching as an occupation. The most frequent responses were that socialization builds trust, morale and teamwork in an occupation that
is “cellular,” meaning teachers are isolated into individual classrooms and have very little free time during the day to socialize or collaborate with one another.

Irrefutably, though, teachers forged organizations from their social ties that they then used to foster economic causes. In return, these organizations provided them with more control over the conditions of their work. Eventually, teachers used their organizational resources to influence elections and public policies. Teachers revealed, however, that they believe this growing empowerment had negative political side-effects.

One suburban teacher said:

Diane: I hear a lot of negative things about teachers’ unions and elections… people asking why you spend money trying to influence elections. I think it has really backfired in terms of public sentiment toward unions. People complain that unions are too powerful …they use their power and money to bully people…to influence elections…they are particularly upset with teachers’ unions because they perceive us to be the most powerful union, but you have to look at why unions were created. I think people don’t know what they have until they lose it and so they take for granted all of the things that we have because of unions.

Diane then linked NCLB to a longer-term movement to silence teachers’ voices, by restricting unionization and removing due process protections, such as tenure and seniority. As discussed in the next section, these ideas were mostly expressed by teachers who were in their forties or older. Younger teachers were far more likely to link anti-union sentiment to the economy.

*State vs. Society: Teachers as “Contenders” and “Deviants”*

As previously mentioned, in 1976, teachers’ unions mobilized for the first time on behalf of a presidential candidate, throwing their support behind Democratic contender Jimmy Carter. Carter rewarded teachers through the creation of a Federal Department of Education (DOE). This increased the prominence of education at the federal level, even as it provided teachers with a venue to express their views about education policies.
Mobilization, however, is rarely a one-way street. By that, I mean it often sparks the counter-mobilization of groups that fear their interests are being harmed or neglected. In the case of teachers, I described how conservatives within the Reagan Administration sought to eliminate the DOE, which they felt embodied the interests of Democrats. Neo-liberals expanded on these ideas by advocating parental choice to force what former Secretary of Education Bill Bennett called “the BLOB” to compete for students and thereby be more responsive to parents as consumers. In chapters five and six, I showed how this language was present in the debates over NCLB and the rhetoric of George W. Bush. Here, political elites framed public schools as “government owned” monopolies, and teachers as “educrats” (i.e., bureaucratic educators) who cared more about “the system” than children. They then used this discourse to justify progressively stronger remedies for “failing schools,” including state takeover, closing the school, or allowing the school to be run by private and public charter schools. Because these schools are able to place limits on teacher unionization, tenure and seniority, many teachers perceive they are an attempt to delimit the power of unions, as well as teacher professionalism.

Unsurprisingly, many teachers in their forties or older, who had expended resources mobilizing on behalf of more autonomy, framed NCLB as “anti-union.” Thus, like their younger counterparts, they expressed that NCLB reflected economic concerns, but many asserted that economic fears, including increased competition with foreign nations, were a façade to “undo” teachers’ hard won gains. Regardless of their age, however, teachers made a connection between talk and action, or words and deeds, meaning they perceived that NCLB institutionalized the way political elites had been talking about teachers and public schools since the 1980s. One suburban teacher said:
Molly: I think this all started with Reagan…(He) was a really amazing performer because he believed in what he was saying and he made other people believe it too. And, he put a compassionate face on things that were not compassionate…(and) legitimized things, like breaking the airline traffic controller’s strike, for example, that had previously been off limits. And conservatives realized that they could do these things…But …they are linking into something in the larger political culture…the whole personal responsibility thing…you know “you can give a man a fish or teach him to fish”…No one is entitled to anything, they have to work for it, and so welfare is now workfare and teachers should not have tenure because it is like a job entitlement. It is not an entitlement. It’s due process. It says that if you want to fire a teacher, you have to give due process. That is the American way, by the way, but teachers are being presented as being a little shady because they have job protection. A lot of people no longer do and so they think teachers are getting special treatment…(It’s like how they provide) tax breaks to the wealthiest few under the lingo that “they’ve earned it” while those “others,” whoever they are (laughing), have not earned it…(And they are) implying there is something seedy or underhanded about unions…(which implies that) teachers…do not earn what they have and yet we know that we work very hard.

Younger teachers, especially teachers in their 20s but also teachers in their 30s, told similar narratives about how state discourse legitimized anti-teacher and anti-public school sentiment. Nevertheless, they were far more likely to express that the discourse reflected economic concerns versus an anti-union agenda.

Despite these differences, almost every interview indicates that teachers believe the economic environment heavily influences the political and organizational environment of public schools. Many teachers, for example, argued that public discourse in the 1980s increasingly eulogized the private over the public because “people were running scared” as a result of economic uncertainty. This gave businesses more clout in politics. Returning to Molly’s narrative:

Molly: I…think…this whole thing about running schools like a business is part of an overall cultural shift that began in the 80s…(pause) that was when business was washing its public face…scrubbing it clean, and they threw their dirty water all over the public sector…things were tough economically and people were scared…it gave business an opportunity to set the tone…demand things and government would give it to them…we need concessions or else we have to move plants and jobs down south where they don’t regulate as much, and then it was
moving them overseas. They kept blaming government regulation for everything
and people listened because they were scared. And now people just take it for
granted that private is good and public is bad. You know, state employees are
lazy and...The state kills jobs through taxes and regulation. People say these
things. And, business always talks about...how the profit motive and competition
promotes the two Es: efficiency and effectiveness. But you never hear them talk
about...(things) like pollution (laughing)...(And) who cleans up the mess?
Government...with our tax dollars, which business is always complaining about.
And when business needs something...They are the first to ask for a handout but
they don’t want to contribute and they don’t want to acknowledge that they would
not be successful without all of the things government has provided, like roads
and bridges and public education. Give us tax breaks but don’t give them to the
little guy. Give us handouts but not the little guy. Don’t make us clean up our
mess, charge it to the little guy. And, if you do make us contribute to the society
that we benefit from, we will have to go overseas because their governments don’t
regulate us. Never mind that we’re creating a global mess. Their governments
aren’t strong enough to take us on. They don’t have unions to hold them
accountable. I think it is one of the reasons they go after schools. Teachers’
unions are strong. The public sector is one of the strongest in terms of union
organization in general. But the other reason is that public education, and really
the public sector in general, is like the last great frontier. There is a lot of money
to be made taking over and privatizing public services...Of course, they’ll only
take the best and brightest because they can’t make a profit off the rest of the
children. So, once again, the public sector will pay for business’ cast offs. I
don’t mean the children are castoffs, just that business will think of them that way
because they don’t have public values. They don’t care about us, they only care
about the bottom line. There is nothing wrong with that if you’re making widgets
but that mentality is completely wrong when educating children.

Similar to Molly, most teachers framed the current environment as resulting from
economic factors. Then, also like Molly, they portrayed politics and political culture as
secondary causal factors. Even so, they were not necessarily cohesive in terms of how
they portrayed the end goals of political and economic elites. Age was clearly a dividing
factor.

Teachers of all ages agreed that people often focus on teacher salaries and
benefits during tough economic times because they link both to local property taxes.
Under this argument, the focus on teacher tenure, benefits, and accountability is designed
to reduce the costs of public education, more than an expression of political sentiments.
Still, many teachers also alleged that political elites were “playing to their political base.”

One urban teacher said:

Michael: In…New Jersey…the governor there is calling teachers greedy…he… (and) others are labeling teachers as the new welfare cheats. Teachers are the new welfare queens because if you can slap a negative label or a negative image on someone, then you can go after them. They want to convince people that teachers are making too much money and that they are taking taxpayers for a ride because then they can justify paying them less. You know, no one goes into teaching for the money, but people need to realize that teaching is end-loaded. You don’t make a good salary considering your level of education when you start teaching but you do pretty well at the end of your career. Of course, you have to work for a long time to get there…I have a friend who started teaching in the 70s, and he started out at $2000 a year. The state pension was good but that was the trade-off…Now they want to take that pension away because times are tough. But they’re reneging on the deal.

Michael is not using the language of Schneider and Ingram (1997 and 2005), but his narrative is a classic case of how political elites label different groups in an effort to serve or regulate them. In this case, teachers are being linked to welfare queens, a term that was used to stigmatize welfare recipients and justify workfare. Under this discourse, welfare was no longer a program to “lift all boats,” it was a program for “blacks,” especially unwedded black “welfare queens,” who had children to increase their welfare payments (Schulman 2007; Katzenelson 2005; Bensonsmith 2007). The end result was that those who supported welfare (Democrats) were left vulnerable to being portrayed as the party of handouts and “wasteful liberal spending” (spending on minorities and the disadvantaged). Here, the implication is that teachers in general, but especially older teachers, do not need to work hard because they have a job entitlement due to tenure and seniority. If Democrats support unions, then they are vulnerable to being portrayed as the party of handouts and “wasteful liberal spending.” Like Michael, many teachers made
similar claims about tenure and seniority, and explicitly linked the narrative to a broader political-economic agenda.

Other teachers also claimed there was a political-economic agenda, but they did not specifically attach it to unions. Under this narrative, the goal is to keep corporate and other taxes low. One suburban teacher charged:

Liam: (Using) property taxes as a means of funding education created a natural antagonism between the community and their schools and teachers. I think corporations want to avoid higher corporate taxes and income taxes, and so this system works well for them. They are very content with this system, and the governors and politicians have turned a blind eye and gone along with them on this issue...by keeping that burden on homeowners, many of whom do not have a stake in the school, they have created an antagonistic climate for public schools. This is especially true during economic difficulties like in the 1970s and now. You really see that antagonism. You can vote every year on the school budget and it is a very visible expenditure...We made progress in terms of getting more state and federal aid, but any real effort to change the system has been stymied. I went to state hearings...in the early 90s about changing the system of funding schools and I remember there was one anti-tax person who was actually making the same argument as I was. He wanted to abandon property taxes as a means of funding schools and switch to funding them from income or corporate taxes. Then, low and behold, one businessman, who was actually part of the same anti-tax group as the first gentleman, stood up and said “We have to keep it on the property tax because it creates tension between the schools and the community and kept pressure on the unions and the teachers to keep costs down and salaries low.” He perceived that tension as a good thing. And that crystalized to me what this was all about. I remember thinking, “Of course, as long as it is on the property tax, it unites citizens behind the business agenda of keeping school costs low.” Now, this guy was retired from a prominent business in the area and had an excellent pension...but he did not want teachers to have benefits. Then, of course, the governor came in and capped property taxes like, “I am on your side homeowners.” While that is politically popular, it is an illusion of reform. He did nothing to bring in more income from the corporate or income taxes. It’s like they think the Sisters of Mercy are going to come back and work for free (laughing). When you go to other countries and try to explain how we fund schools in this country, they think it is a plot in a novel (laughing)...it’s bizarre. It creates such inequality for children.

Like Liam, teachers of all ages discussed the unfairness of how we fund public schools.

Retired teachers, however, further asserted that business and political elites build support
for an anti-tax agenda by linking school expenditures to teachers’ unions, which have a mixed valence in American political culture. Here, teachers are being silenced so that political and economic elites can push their political or economic agendas with minimal opposition.

Michael used the phrase “reneging on the deal.” This was also part of a narrative that was told by teachers of all ages. About 9 out of 10 teachers told me that public schools (and teachers) are not acknowledged when things are good, but blamed when things are not going well. Again, many claimed that this was a way to renege on the deal and save tax dollars. A rural teacher said:

Jim: I think in the…1990s, the economy was doing very well. Private businesses were making a lot of money. The stock market was booming. Everybody was happy. They didn't necessarily care that teachers were not participating in the boom, but they were not questioning teacher salaries either. But neither did they credit teachers for the boom. They didn’t say, “Wow, we must be doing a good job educating everyone because the economy is booming.” But, when things are not going well, they blame the teachers. You know, the economy is doing poorly so it must be those teachers slacking off. And when people in the private sector start to lose their jobs, than they start to question why public servants are making money…why they are still making a salary, why do they still get benefits? I am sorry people lost their jobs, but don’t pick on us because of what is going on in the economy…They didn’t want to share when they were making money but they want us to give up our salaries and benefits when they are not. Yet, we are expected to continue to do the job, and in fact…to do a lot more because…the new requirements and because we are losing teachers due to funding cutbacks. They forget about the fact that teaching is end-loaded…they see a teacher is making $80,000 a year but they forget that that teacher started out at $9000…We paid into the retirement system our entire careers. The people before us…did not. But…they were making even less money when they started…This is their only benefit for decades of public service (laughs).

Jim and Molly’s narratives point to another claim. Teachers did not use this language, but the gist of their argument is that market actors, especially corporations, rose to prominence in government due to economic uncertainty. Then, they used their position to promote private interests over our public life, including public institutions. And, when
things declined economically, they blamed our public institutions, like public schools, rather than accept personal responsibility. Some teachers used this argument to suggest that the impetus behind “reforming public education” is fiscal more than a concern about performance. Others maintained it was part of an effort to privatize education.

Like Molly, many teachers portrayed public education as “the last great frontier” for businesses to conquer, meaning they had exploited our natural resources and moved on to our human and public resources. These ideas are evident in the following narratives told to me by a suburban and an urban teacher, respectively:

Carley: I think businesses are recognizing that education is a frontier for profit. They can mine it like they mined coal or gold or other natural resources…I feel like they almost want us to do this for free while they make a profit…Then you look at the corporate world and they are off golfing during their workday and writing it off as a “business expense”…they have their liquid lunches. We are lucky if we get to go to the bathroom much less eat lunch. They are doing whatever…in the corporate world, spending billions of dollars, and asking the government for a handout when things don’t go quite the way they want to, usually because of their greed…We do not get paid during the summer and we do not get paid for all of the extra hours that we work during the year…I spent a lot of my own money and a lot of my time making sure that that my classroom and my lessons are ready. I’m there until 11 o’clock a lot during the summer.

Chloe: (Now) that the economy isn't doing well, they want to open up our contracts and take things back from us. No, that is what a contract is for. We may not do as well when times are good but you don’t open up our contract and take things back when times are bad…people are running scared…questioning what unions are really for…I grew up in a nearby city that was a huge union town. And I grew up hating a major corporation because of what they had done to that city. They basically destroyed the city. They took everything they could…in terms of tax breaks, and the city didn't want to lose the business or the jobs, and they kept giving in…I think government is allowing big business to control everything. And education is the last frontier. It had been untouchable. But now they're getting their hands in…No Child Left Behind is a boom for big business. The book vendors are making a fortune on test prep. The testing companies are making a fortune on all of the exams. The private tutoring companies are making a fortune. It is a multimillion dollar industry.
These narratives are just the opposite of how political elites framed teachers versus the private sector. As discussed in chapters five and six, Neo-liberal discourse argues that public employees, such as teachers, are able to serve their own interests at the expense of taxpayers and society as a result of their “monopoly” to provide public services. They call this “producer capture.” Teachers portray the state as being “captured” by business interests so that they can “mine” education for profit. Meanwhile, as shown in chapter seven, teachers go above and beyond their formal contracts to “do right by the kids.”

Regardless of why it is occurring, teachers expressed bafflement that political elites framed the public sector as “a them” (i.e., a powerful Goliath) that steals society’s tax dollars while the private sector protects citizens (i.e., David). One retiree explained:

Paul: It’s like this, you can…look at government as this group that is a “them,” as opposed to “us.” Or, you can look at government like it's “we the people.” Similarly, you can look at a teachers’ union like it belongs to “the teachers” and an individual teacher like he or she is a union member. But, we are just people. It could be the teacher doing these things to help their community or it could be the unionist doing these things for his or her community. It is very difficult to distinguish that someone is doing something as a person or as a union member. But, teachers very frequently took out of their own pocket, I can't tell you how frequently, for students. They bought individual items for students who could not afford them, but they also bought stuff for classrooms and for families in our community. If there was a fire or something going on, teachers’ raised money through their union. That was always happening. The union would collect money for students who had gotten in a bad way, through an illness or an accident or whatever, and, by the way, we collected money for other teachers for the same reason.

As evident in Paul’s narrative, teachers view themselves as the “hearts and hands” of their communities, not an alien “other.” Many teachers expressed anger at their government for characterizing teachers and public employees in such a manner. One teacher charged:

Jess: You know, they’re always telling us that government is the bogeyman…Is it so surprising then that, after decades of that, people believe it? … If people are
more cynical and...(pause) less inclined to participate, then maybe we need to
talk about why...Personally, I believe...(it’s because) they’re always hearing
that government is the problem...and I largely mean conservatives but it has
spread across parties...(because) It gets votes...public servants, like teachers...
make a nice target...They’re the reason you can’t get a job. They’re the reason
taxes are too high. If we can change them (said emphatically) everything will be
okay. Really? That’s the problem in our society? (laughing)... Teachers,
firemen, policemen... serve society. No one goes into these ... occupations to get
rich...You would never hear elected officials denigrate our men and women in the
service, and they shouldn’t. God bless them for the service they provide. God
bless them...But we serve our country too. The military protects us from external
threats...and policemen from internal threats, but teachers, firemen, nurses, and
yes bureaucrats, also serve our country. We don’t carry guns (laughs), but we
serve our country. They may be the force but we’re the hearts and hands. Every
day...we go beyond the call of duty, just like those in the military...it’s easiest to
see this during times of crises...teachers in scary situations, throwing their bodies
in front of shooters or during 9-11 carrying children on their backs to get them to
safety...But teachers do the extraordinary...through the ordinary really, every
day...(We develop) human beings...That’s how we serve...We deserve respect for
what we do, not to be called “thugs” (referring to a comment made by Sarah
Palin) because we voice our opinions.

Like Jess, many teachers used the words “community” to convey that schools are not
“government owned” monopolies. They are publicly owned. They serve the public, but
they are also public spaces. By that, teachers mean that public education is a collective
public good, but, discursively, it is also a collective commitment to our public good. It is
a place where we as a society come together to promote collective goals.

Summing up, both public school and charter school teachers expressed bafflement
at the way political elites characterize public schools and public school teachers. The gist
of their argument is that globalization created economic uncertainty, as businesses moved
to the south and then overseas. To counteract the effects of job loss, states increasingly
focused on education's role in human capital development in order to compete for
businesses. Then, businesses took advantage of these trends to push a business economic
agenda. This includes promoting “the business model” for public services. They were
furthered in their agenda by a national public discourse that eulogized the private over the public. This discourse elevated market actors, such as corporations, who then used the state to pursue private over broader public needs, interests and values. Teachers are not using this language, but the gist of this narrative is that Neo-liberalism has privileged the market over the polis. Under this model, “public value” becomes nothing more than the aggregation of individual interests. This privileges those with political and economic capital because they are the most likely to organize. Those with capital are also less likely to depend on public services and thus be impacted when they are cut. In the meantime, citizens who are dependent on public services are harmed. The end result is growing socio-economic stratification. Many teachers posited NCLB as the institutionalization of these trends. They further contend that NCLB has legitimized anti-teacher and anti-public school sentiment. As one teacher phrased it, the “anti-teacher talk trickled down.”

“Waiting for Superman”: The Discourse Trickles Down

Although teachers placed the causal driver on state sponsored discourse, they were not claiming that business and political elites were the only ones “ratcheting up the crisis.” Many teachers blamed the media for creating a “culture of fear.” Others shamed “Hollywood” for portraying teachers in ways that were either silly or demeaning, or for mythologizing teaching in ways that were detrimental to teachers and teaching because they set unrealistic expectations. Still, they posited that political and economic actors used this culture of fear to push their agendas. The agenda teachers most frequently mentioned was privatization. Many teachers cited “Waiting for Superman” as the embodiment of that discourse. One teacher asked:
Carley: (Why) should anyone have to wait for Superman? Why not adequately fund the public school system? Why do we need to privatize it to improve it? We are asking the wrong questions to get the answers that we want to hear, and they are self-serving answers. They help those who are asking the question in a way to get the answer they want. Instead of asking the hard questions, they want to burn and churn teachers.

Urban teachers were especially likely to express concern about how “Hollywood” portrayed teachers. They charged that the tendency to characterize urban teachers in mythological terms gives credence to the claim that teachers’ expectations are the sole driver of student performance. They acknowledge that the teacher is critical in the educational process, but claim that these ideas “take society off the hook.” One urban teacher explained:

Stephanie: (Waiting for Superman is) very misguided…I used to love movies like Dangerous Minds and Freedom Writers. I wanted to be the Freedom Writer teacher. These movies inspired me to teach in urban schools. I was publicly out there talking about it. I wanted to be that success story…Jonathan Kozol…pointed it out and it really hit me. Society’s art, like these movies, is a reflection of the way that society sees us but also influences the way that society sees us. So, if these movies are presenting us like we can solve the world’s ills just by being good teachers, it does my students a disservice because that is not real…It's a myth…that people buy and even teachers get sucked into it. But then it lets everyone else off the hook, like we teachers can do everything. If you are not doing what Erin Gruwell (from Freedom Writers) did then there is something wrong with you. But the truth is, that is a Hollywood version.

Many teachers linked these ideas to George Bush’s comment about the “soft bigotry of low expectations.” This narrative removes “personal responsibility” from the state to redress socio-economic inequality, which teachers place as the primary causal driver of the achievement gap. It also removes personal responsibility from societal actors, including parents.

In chapters seven and eight, I discussed how teachers often used the language of “contagion.” Many teachers claimed that public discourse about self-interested teachers
has trickled down in ways that have fed public resentment about teachers’ salaries and
benefits, especially given the current fiscal crisis. One rural teacher complained:

Sherry: (In) our district this year, when they were doing the budget vote, I got a
question as the union rep, and I did not realize it was actually me and my salary
that the person was talking about, but I was asked why one teacher was making X
amount of money. And then I realized it was me…and they knew they were
talking about me. And I said, “Yes, well I started here making $8600 a year”
(Laughs). They did not know what to say … I have been here for 34 years. They
finally said, “Oh, you really made that little money?” I think people forget
that…(And) someone said … I should retire so that someone else could have a job
because they would make less money; like it was my obligation to retire from my
job so that someone else would not be laid off. And honestly, I would do it if I
thought it would make a difference but I refuse to play that game because that
person will be gone next year anyway when they have to lay off another person. I
am going to go when I'm ready to go. I never pushed anyone else out… older
teachers are being portrayed as “dinosaurs” and I find it incredibly offensive…
when I started, the older teachers were my mentors. Expertise is not the
equivalent of being stale or prehistoric…I am constantly changing what I am
doing…I think this is public rhetoric or public language. You see it in the
newspapers… experienced teachers are being treated as dinosaurs and as being
resistant to change…I’m not ready to leave my classroom. I do not want to leave
my children.

Other teachers declared that this was not just an attack on teachers. It was an attack on
public servants. As evidence, they discussed jokes about “state workers” on the radio and
how the narrative has spread to other public professionals, such as police officers and
firemen. One rural schoolteacher stated:

Jim: It angers me to be honest with you…bashing teachers…We laugh because
they finally went after the state police. There was an article in the paper bashing
the state police about their jobs and all the overtime…you typically don't see them
do it with firemen and police (but that is where we are going).

The gist of their argument is that this is really a story about inferior public goods. Again,
most linked it to the desire to control government expenditures, and therefore taxes,
because these positions are politically popular and play to homeowners and parents. To
use the words of Schneider and Ingram (1997 and 2005), these groups carry positive
constructions within American political culture. They also vote. As such, they are treated favorably by public discourse and policies. Again, teachers consistently made the connection between words and deeds. They claim that, by framing teachers as bureaucrats and technicians, elites could justify delimiting their discretion and controlling their salaries, which are the largest part of school budgets. These ideas are discussed in the next section.

Demobilizing Teachers: Constructing Teachers as Technicians

In chapter three, I discussed how TPA combined bureaucracy and professionalism to standardize public service provision while also enabling social change. In the latter case, they provided professionals with autonomy and discretion so that they could use their expert judgment to promote the public interest. In contrast, Neo-liberals frame both of these groups as “bureaucrats,” and claim they use their public monopoly to promote their own interests over the needs of citizens. To redress this issue, Neo-liberalism advocates using competition and incentives to encourage bureaucrats to serve consumers of public services more efficiently and effectively. Teachers did not use the language of Neo-liberalism, but they positioned NCLB as part of a broader movement to downgrade professionals and other experts. Here, for example, NCLB constructs parents as “consumer experts” that will drive schools to perform versus teachers. This discourse elevates parents, whether they are home schooling their children, or choosing private and charter schools over public schools, while relegating teachers to the role of paid “technicians.” By that, teachers mean they are being reduced to interchangeable parts in the assembly line production of educated citizens. As parts of a system, they may be
switched out at any time, and replaced by newer, cheaper models. Two suburban teachers said:

Meagan: (It) isn’t fair that teachers are being made to feel like they are dinosaurs or that they should leave because they have been teaching for a long time…(It) takes teachers their entire career to get to a point where they have a good income …their salaries are end-loaded…it takes a long time before they receive a paycheck that is commensurate with their level of education and training. I feel like…I don't trust the government any longer. I feel like they are targeting the best of the best. We cost them money. That is the bottom line. And so we have to go. The bottom line is to save money at any cost. Because, don't forget, it also involves the teachers’ retirement system. If you don't get to retirement age, that saves them a huge amount of money too. And, if they don't need good grounds to get rid of you? Great. They can get rid of whoever is the most expensive. It is all numbers. They are trying to run schools like a business. It is about the bottom line. They don't care who they hurt because it is all about the bottom line.

Carley: You know, I always have to laugh when you open up the paper and it reads: “75 percent of a school’s budget goes for teachers.” Really (laughing)? Well of course it does! That is what we do! We are public schools and we teach. Therefore, most of the budget goes to pay teachers…it almost seems like there is a scheme, for lack of a better word, with this new evaluation system and the whole focus on performance, and the move toward eliminating tenure and teachers’ unions and things like that. It seems like they are trying to get new people in who will not question things and get the people out who will. But…(then) the new teachers won’t be so new…and so “Let’s get rid of them” …and teaching becomes about who can we burn out the quickest. But what is lost is the consistency and the community of teaching. We are losing those learning communities. But they don’t care about that because it is all about money. You can’t put a dollar sign on everything. There is value (said emphatically) to these communities.

I specifically used these quotes for two inter-related reasons. First, Meagan and Carley are both in their forties, and therefore not close to retirement age. Second, their narratives link into a claim I made earlier. Carley and Meagan are both expressing cynicism because they feel their government is treating them unfairly, but they were both clearly angry that the government was treating “older” teachers (i.e., those who are close to retirement age) poorly even though neither of them are “members” of that particular group. Thus, their narratives were about fairness in general rather than an expression that
they as individuals were being treated unfairly. Their claim is that teachers’ voice is
being restricted in order to support delimiting teacher autonomy, teachers’ salaries, and
the costs of the retirement system, thereby saving taxpayer dollars. They believed,
however, that older teachers were being unfairly targeted. It was unjust because it is
ageism, but also because, as more than one teacher said to me, these teachers had
faithfully served society and were often the “backbone” of their schools. In terms of this
last claim, many teachers, but mostly those who were in their forties, told me that older
teachers were an invaluable resource for training newer teachers. They were also the
most likely to serve on committees because their children were grown. The service the
provided to their schools and teaching as an occupation made both more efficient and
effective.

Carley and Meagan’s narratives are important for another reason. Like many
teachers, both claimed that the focus on testing and performance was part of a broader
trend to deprofessionalize teaching. Certainly, these ideas are evident in the debates on
NCLB. For example, in the House hearings, Mr. Connor from the Family Research
Council argued that more regulations and more revenue do not equate with better results.
He then alleged that there were no studies showing students excel because their teachers
are certified.\footnote{Their mission statement declares they champion “marriage and family as the foundation of civilization, the seedbed of virtue, and the wellspring of society,” and that “properly understood, ‘families’ are formed only by ties of blood, marriage, or adoption, and ‘marriage’ is a union of one man and one woman.”} He bolstered his argument by saying that the results of home schooling
demonstrate the value and contribution of people who are uncertified teachers (David),
and who do not have the same kinds of revenue streams as public schools (Goliath).
Congressmen Owens and Payne (D-NJ) both challenged this assessment, which resulted
in the following exchange (U.S. House 2001d):

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Mr. Connor: What I said…was that I was not aware of any studies that showed that students excelled simply because their teachers were certified.
Mr. Payne: I didn't hear “simply.”” Maybe that is the difference…I don't think home-schooled children are a good example. People that teach their children at home are not just a typical person…off the street...(And) I am glad you clarified it, because I fly a lot, I like to have experienced pilots…I may have to be operated on, and… I was going to get nervous that this didn't grow and grow…that we simply do not need experience.
Mr. Connor: I am confident you would like an experienced and qualified lawyer representing you before the bar.
Mr. Payne: No question about it. Fortunately I don't have to go before them.

The persistent promotion of charter schools, which in many cases do not have unions, tenure and seniority, were another way political elites promoted this narrative and its preferred reforms.

As discussed in chapter seven, teachers argued that the long-term result of these ideas is that testing and accountability have contributed to the deskilling of teaching as an occupation due to the increased use of scripting and other routinizing mechanisms. It was interesting that their narratives resembled the discussions I had with retired teachers about what their jobs looked like before teachers organized to gain control over their working conditions. For instance, many retired teachers used the word “unsustainable” to describe their jobs, and offered as an example how they could not go to the bathroom all day because they did not have a free period. Current teachers use this exact language, except they voluntarily control themselves. Carley put it into a very humorous narrative to avoid embarrassment, but the underlying problem is clear:

Carley: I really don’t think you can be a slacker and be a teacher. We work with workers. These people are committed, they are professional, and they work very, very hard…I am there at night working during the summer. There I am, disarming and arming the building…(Laughing) You disarm the building when you get there. You arm the building when you leave. I mean, I am there at 10 o'clock at night eating Subway… I literally can't even get over to my desk during the day to blow my nose… We cannot leave the kids unattended even to use the bathroom…You have to make sure you are always supervising the kids. And it
weighs on you. You feel like, “Oh my God, I am locked in.” You are locked.
You are locked in. I often feel like, “Oh my God, is anyone going to come in and
check on me to make sure I am okay?” (Laughing to indicate she is being funny)
You know, “Are you okay down there? Do you need oxygen?” (Laughs)
Because you can’t even go to the bathroom. Sometimes you just really feel the
intensity of that. In fact, when I went to my doctor because I was having bladder
issues, she said that she sees this all the time with teachers. So, like I said, no one
teaches to get an easy pass…Teaching is a very hard job. It is hard on you
physically…emotionally too.

Like Carley, many teachers expressed that they experienced health issues as a result of
high work demands. They have no “free period” because they are meeting with students,
teachers or administrators, making copies, calling parents, and so forth.

A handful of teachers argued that this trend is part of a movement to return
teaching to the days of the one-room schoolhouse, where the teacher, an unmarried
female, was “owned” by the community. Her personal life was not her own. Teachers
linked these ideas to the charter school movement, as well as to home schooling. One
urban teacher exclaimed:

Chloe: (The charter schools) claim that public schools to not have the best
interests of an individual child in mind. This ignores the fact that a school is a
collective body. We have to think of the needs of all the children in the school.
Do we need to focus on individual needs? Yes, but we also have to consider the
needs of the group. I think what charter schools are advocating is that the need of
the individual always comes before the need of the group. It is this idea of the
consumer always being right versus the idea that there are many sides to an issue
and many different needs, and we need to balance all of them. And, I am not sure
how to say this, but I think this ideology perverts things, and it creates…(pause)
this idea that the customer is always right, but what if he or she is not? And what
if what he or she wants is bad for other “customers”…and I don’t even like using
that word, but that is the ideology. You know, as a teacher I am going to work
very, very hard for my students. I think that people go into teaching because they
are caring individuals…they care about learning and they care about children. So,
I think most teachers are going to work very, very hard for their children…for
their students. But, does that mean I am going to stay until nine o’clock at night,
give my home phone number out to my parents or carry a cell phone on me so
that students and parents can reach me at any time? No way. I have a life too. I
am not a…it is almost like the old factory system where you are owned. Why do
I have to work a 14 hour day so that you, the parent, can work an eight hour day? What is that?

Charter schoolteachers confirmed Chloe’s claim that they were required to give their home phone or cell phone numbers to parents. Meanwhile, a handful of teachers used her exact language that we are returning to the days when female teachers were essentially “owned” by the public. This claim seems far-fetched. However, just recently, a Christian college fired a pregnant employee for having pre-marital sex. In a bizarre turn of events, they then offered the job to her fiancé, even though he too had premarital sex (Bindley 2013). This supports my claim that private spaces are not the same as public ones. They are able to place more restrictions on individuals. It also confirms my claim in chapter three that Neo-liberalism frees individuals from state authority for economic purposes but has resulted in more social control. Chloe’s narrative, though, also reminds me of Liam’s remark that: “they think the Sisters of Mercy are going to come back and work for free.”

Just as interesting, every teacher in some way indicated that the job is becoming unsustainable as a result of policy changes, but charter schoolteachers were especially vocal in their use of this narrative. One charter schoolteacher opined:

Crystal: I do not think that we are giving them the rigor that we should…not going beyond the “grill-and-drill” and test preparation…not…making them the independent readers and thinkers that they need to be in order to compete with their counterparts in wealthier districts…I think we are saying one thing…that we are preparing disadvantaged kids for college, but, in reality, we are not doing that as a school… it is discouraging …(because it is) a goal I wholeheartedly support and feel passionate about…I know that there are teachers whose students are not performing on tests where the administrator thinks they should be and now they are targeted…Their support is yanked…and they are told what and how to teach… There is a lot of pettiness…the administrators are just ruthless…just nasty to people who are on the “outs” with them… If it is talking about a model that is supposed to reform the public school…it is not even close…it is not creating a sustainable model…in terms of the teachers, it churns and burns teachers…it
burns them out, turns them over and spits them out. So, it is not creating a sustainable model there... We are creating this clash with the public school system when it seems like we should be helping each other out, but the administrators view themselves as competing with the public schools... to be superior... it is a resume builder.

Like Crystal, other teachers said that the potential for abuse is magnified in charter schools because administrators view their job as catering to customers (i.e., parents) and making a profit. Many told me that charter schools openly say they expect to turnover all of their teachers within five years. In doing so, they delimit voice because teachers are afraid for their jobs. Teachers further claimed, however, that this has been the cause and effect of recent editions to NCLB. As previously mentioned, the Obama Administration proposed a new version of market-based education reforms entitled “Race to the Top” (RTP) (U.S. Department of Education 2009). The state that is the subject of this analysis instituted an initiative that tied teachers’ evaluations to a combination of yearly observations and their students’ test scores in order to secure federal funding. Many teachers asserted that the policy was only politically achievable because of decades of anti-teacher talk, combined with the narrative that mediocre public schools were impeding America’s ability to compete economically.

Almost all of those currently teaching expressed anger, concern, cynicism or sarcasm about the new evaluation system. For example, teachers sarcastically call it “race to the bottom” because it puts such pressure on teachers to teach to the test. Even so, they believe it is difficult to argue against because its catchy name makes it appear like teachers oppose being evaluated or favor a race to the bottom if they disagree with it. In terms of anger, cynicism or concern, teachers’ narratives linked these emotions to the
fact that the state reneged on its deal with the union by trying to increase the percentage of teachers’ evaluations that were tied to state exams. Returning to Chloe’s narrative:

Chloe: Race to the Top is a big joke. Half the money went straight to the state…to the Department of Education. We made a deal with the devil…Now…the governor is completely changing the deal, which was already a deal with the devil, it was a deal made to get federal dollars…But now he wants to have 40 percent of our evaluations based on our student test scores. It is supposed to be 20 percent state tests and 20 percent local tests. But then the state decided only certain tests were good enough and so districts were put in the position where they either have to buy those tests or use the state tests and I think a lot of districts just don't have the money so they will use the state tests.

Chloe, like many others, is also experiencing cynicism because she believes the new system, like NCLB, is a boon to testing companies, book vendors, and tutoring companies. Many teachers further expressed that RTP reflected a natural progression from holding schools accountable for student test scores, under NCLB, to holding teachers accountable. Also like NCLB, they believe RTP rewards and penalizes teachers in ways that are unfair, as well as harmful to children.

The way the system works is that there is a pre-test at the beginning of the year and a post-test at the end of the year. Called “value-added,” this system is a fairer way to evaluate teachers because it takes into account the ability of the child while quieting the noise associated with transferring students between teachers. Still, teachers claim it has created enormous testing anxiety among children, especially at early ages. One suburban teacher said:

Ella: I had teachers in elementary school telling me their students were crying and the parents were complaining because they did not do well on the pre-test or had anxiety before the pre-test because, of course, they did not know the material well. I mean, it was a pre-test. So, parents were up in arms because their child was upset or their child did not perform at a level they thought they should perform…It was very hard for them to emotionally handle these kinds of situations. You are dealing with children, and in some cases very small children, and teaching is an emotional job anyways and…no matter how hard they try to
explain it, the students are upset and so the teacher feels upset. These are small children…over time it leads students to dislike school, and to doubt their abilities.

The other way the system harms children is that, like NCLB, it disproportionately penalizes teachers and schools that serve large numbers of disadvantaged or at-risk students. This creates a situation like I described in chapter seven where these children are then more likely to experience drill and grill teaching.

What was interesting to me, however, was that teachers are becoming savvy in the language of testing, meaning the discourse is trickling down. Here is how one suburban teacher described the “flaws” in the system:

Ben: We got our first state results...(in October which is a flaw because it) is far too late to use them in any meaningful way to improve teaching. We would need them in the summer to reflect and figure out where to go for the following year. In our state this means that we do not get the results until at least the second month of school and in other states, especially southern states, that is the third month of school. It’s flawed. It’s totally flawed. The results are based on how the current group of kids quote on quote “grew” from the previous year, keeping in mind that the assessment is different, the classroom is different, the teacher is different and, in our case, the school is different because now they are in middle school. This flies in the face of everything you learn in graduate school in terms of the factors that impact learning, and everything you learn about test reliability and validity. There is no reliability and validity based on the results the state is using. There may be reliability and validity in terms of how a student did in terms of that exact test, but there is none when comparing the test results from one year to another. You are comparing apples and oranges. There is no basis to do this, and I have not read them but I know that there are a number of universities that have challenged the state in terms of how the state is constructing a teacher’s growth score and that they have shown it is not valid. So, the system just gets more and more flawed the further we go.

These kinds of narratives suggest that the occupation is building a common vocabulary to describe why the language of “diagnose and treat” does not resemble how testing is being used by the state.

Teachers revealed that NCLB had already increased cynicism about the federal government. Now, they felt cynical about the state. In their language, both levels of
government are primarily concerned with punishing “bad apples” but the unintended side effect is that they punish the good ones too. Meanwhile, they claim that neither policy will resolve the achievement gap, nor will they resolve the problem of ineffective teachers. Returning to Ella’s narrative:

Ella: The new evaluation system…has really increased our paperwork…the idea is good but the implementation has been really flawed…I hope that we can fix the system. Right now, we have pre-testing and I actually heard people say, and I think this is really appalling (laughing), but…they tell the kids to go ahead and put all the wrong answer down on the pre-test (laughing). And, I said, “What?”…Let’s face it, if people want to get away with things they will find a way. It is human nature. You cannot possibly design controls to catch everything. I think for the most part teachers work very hard and most want to do right by the kids, but if someone wants to they can make it look like they are a good teacher if the only thing you are doing is looking at a pre and post-test of their students. It’s sad but I’m sure it happens. Then, the other thing…I have a colleague who is a very well-respected middle school teacher who got the lowest score you can get because of his test results and yet I know he changes students’ lives every day. He is an excellent teacher. He is highly regarded by teachers, administrators, students and parents. And, that is sad. Something needs to change when that is happening.

Many teachers also expressed cynicism about their union. They alleged that the governor told the union to “shut up” about the evaluation system because it brought in revenue and at least they still had the right to organize, unlike teachers in many other states. They also heard that the word from the union was “We’re not going to fight this one. Let’s focus on the new Common Core Standards.” Some teachers expressed that they felt like their union had abandoned fighting for teachers’ professional voice.

Teachers charged that, when combined with NCLB, the new evaluation system was creating a “perfect storm” from which teaching as an occupation may never recover. Individually, it penalizes teachers who care while rewarding those who teach to the test. This is evident in Ben’s narrative. In his words:
Ben: I’m going into my 19th year of teaching and I tend to be very humble about teaching and feel there are always ways to improve…I also know that I have a very (said emphatically) good reputation within my district and school, and with parents and students in terms of my teaching. My name is known and a lot of parents request me… With that being said, I met with my superintendent and principal in October and the first words out of their mouths were “We want you to know that we do not feel these test scores in any way show the value you bring to your students and our district in terms of teaching. We know you are an excellent teacher, but it is a document from the state. We have to share it with you…But, we also do not think that there is anything you are doing wrong. We know you are an excellent teacher.” That being said, they handed me my test results and it said that I was a zero. That I was an ineffective teacher according to the state and that I was a zero…I had 90 percent score a 3. I had zero score a 4. I had zero score a 1. The remaining that scored a 2 were all labeled. Now, looking at kids who had received a 3 last year, I had kids that received a higher 3 and kids that received a lower 3 but it was very close in terms of their score from the year before. Let’s make up points. Maybe the cutoff for a 3 was 322 to 365. Last year, the student received a 365 and this year he received a 364 and so he showed “no growth.” We don’t know if they grew or did not grow. We know they dropped a point on a test that is, number one, given in a different grade and so the questions are different. Number two, they are also in a different setting. They are in a different school, they are now in middle school, they have a different teacher, and they are with different students. These are all things that we know impact performance. The variables are enormous. Yet…I am being told that I failed…that I am a zero. Did it bother me? Absolutely. How can it not bother you?

Occupationally, the new evaluation has created enormous strain as a result of added paperwork, but also due to increased pressure to teach to the test.

Teachers further claimed, however, that RTP has strained their relationships with parents, administrators, and other teachers. Earlier, Ella talked about how parents were complaining about the tests and that this created stress on teachers. Many teachers also told me, however, that testing and accountability, when combined with economic uncertainty, have pitted teachers against one another. One retired urban teacher, who is now a substitute in suburban schools, told me:

Elaine: I've seen all kinds of things that I find really troubling…teachers are being pitted against other teachers. This is particularly true in terms of new or young teachers versus experienced or old teachers...I was substitute teaching for this older teacher who has had a lot of…health issues…But, I know…she was a very
good teacher. Anyway, another teacher in the same grade asked me to document everything because they needed to in her own words “nail” this teacher. And it was little things…like not having the “proper” documentation for some of the things I was expected to do as a substitute…what I found out afterwards was that they were cutting sections in their building…so they wanted to get rid of this older teacher to preserve a job for the younger teacher …I also know a lot of the aids in the building, and I spoke to one that I trusted. She told me that the first-grade team has basically shunned this teacher…banded together to force her out. So, they won’t tell her anything that is going on, they will not socialize with her, they don't tell her anything she needs to know in order to do a good job, they don't share things with her and so forth. When she asked them anything, they tell her, “Go ask the principal” …this is what is going on today in teaching…The collegiality is gone…It hurt me to see it…they were writing off a human being. She was not as efficient and so she was expendable.

Like Elaine, many teachers talked about the importance of collegiality. In a collegial environment, schools as organizations work together to foster communal goals and teachers share what works with other teachers.

Teachers revealed that a collegial working environment was critical for high performance, but it also helped teachers counteract the ill effects of what they perceived to be the relentless shaming of public schools and public school teachers. One suburban teacher said:

Brenda: (When) I started teaching, the profession was respected...now I don't think the teaching profession is respected. There is a lot of criticism of teachers now and public schools too. I think it is a respectable profession and I feel proud to say I'm a teacher. And I think my colleagues are important for me because it helps me keep that in mind…it helps you maintain…your sense that, despite what other people think or say, teachers work very hard and that you are part of a respectable profession…it is definitely a feeling of camaraderie. I really love my department. I think we all work well together. We really help one another…So, someone will say, “Hey, I tried this and it really worked” or “I’ve got this really great lesson on this.” I really like that.

They also relied on their colleagues to counteract those demands from parents that are counter to the best interests of other children and society. This was especially true in schools where administrators were not supportive of their teachers.
Also like Elaine, many teachers said RTP was going to perpetuate a “survival of the fittest” mentality where teachers hide their successes in order to “beat” other teachers on tests. Returning to Brenda’s narrative:

Brenda: I don’t think this (new evaluation) system is really going to work… I feel horrible for the teaching profession… We have a lot of people that just want to get out… and I would not recommend that people become teachers… It's that bad. Teachers are feeling like we're going to be attacked. It's not even a concern that we are going to be held accountable because that's okay. Teachers feel like they are going to be blamed… going to be scapegoated. This new system is not going to cure the problem. Maybe the state feels like that is the case, but it’s not… And, this is just an aside, but I read an article about how teachers were doctoring test scores. I think, you know what, it is because…they are being blamed for things that they have little control over… you can see how that would progress… teachers feel like, “I need my job.” I would leave the profession before I’d do that… but you could see the pressure… The teacher's name is the one that is attached to these kids… It is their job on the line… I don’t think teachers… (will) collaborate or share ideas and strategies. It is going to pit teacher against teacher because, if I am doing just a little bit better than my colleague, I look better. So, why am I going to give him or her all of my stuff and help them when I might be the one that is on the low end next year? People do not realize how random it really is. You do not know who you are going to get in your classroom from year-to-year. So, one year I might do great. I might have all of my students pass, but the next year that is some other teacher. I am still working just as hard, but I have different students and those students are more needy than that other teacher’s students so now I am at the low end of the test scores. It is totally random. Last year I had almost no failures and this year I had more failures but it is not related to my effort. It is related to the kids that were randomly assigned to my classroom. Some years you have more students who are struggling. That randomness is hard to handle because you know it is not you, but that is what we are saying. It is all about the teacher. Up until now, we have had great relationships in my department. I think that is going to change. If my friend over here has 10 fewer failures than… I am going to look bad.

In this fashion, market accountability has interacted with economic distress to create a race to the bottom, and marketization has changed how teachers feel about one another, their jobs, their union and their government.

It was clear, however, that growing cynicism among teachers is not solely a product of how the government treats them. It also stems from how government
inequitably treats citizens in relation to one another, and the public sphere in relation to the private sector. According to teachers, the state first reneged on its promise to poor children. Now, it is reneging on the deal for the middle class as it attempts to create a fertile environment for private interests. In the words of an urban and a suburban teacher, respectively:

Chloe: I don’t know if they’re trying to destroy the middle class but they don’t care about it…They only care about helping people at the top.

Jenny: You know what is infuriating me about politics right now is that they keep throwing around the middle class linked to small business owners. Both parties do it…That is the only part of the middle class that they care about. They never, never discuss unions…(They) talk about the need to bring back the middle class of small business owners (laughing)…Both parties have distanced themselves from the unions and it is the unions that made this country strong. They are why we had a thriving middle class. Why is no one talking about that? We would not have minimum wage, shorter work weeks, pension plans, health care, and so forth. And, of course, we would still have child labor…They are constantly blaming unions for the downturn in the economy but never pause to discuss their contributions to the economy. The unions are not what is responsible for what is going on…The economy is not doing well because of corporate greed…(But unions) stand in the way of corporate America making more money. They make more than enough money, but they want even more…unmitigated greed. I want my workers to lose collective bargaining so they have to work overtime without my having to pay…(for it). And they want to extend these kinds of behaviors to the public sector. It is about control and money. If they have control, they can make more money.

As evidence of the pro-business political environment, some teachers mentioned the decline of government regulation (deregulation) and the direct state production of services (privatization and contracting out). Others discussed the ability of corporations to move beyond state regulation and taxation by moving their plants and financial interests overseas. Although teachers recognized that their ability to do so has largely been facilitated by the growth in globalized markets and technological innovations, they asserted that government has allowed these processes to negatively impact school
revenues as businesses obtain favorable tax and regulatory environments through threats
to move (and take jobs) to other countries, states and localities. Due to these trends,
teachers note that it makes sense for citizens to wish to control school budgets. They are
one of the few areas where the “consumers” of public services have direct control in a
time of fiscal austerity. The end result, though, has been a decline of the common school
ideal. This ideal had historically fostered a commitment to a broader vision of public
education than its current portrayal as a consumptive good.

Unlike recent public discourse, teachers portray the state (versus parents and the
private sector) as the most important actor in terms of society’s ability to level the
playing field and achieve social democratic ends. This is because, in a stratified society,
private actors are better able to use their social and economic power to advance their own
interests at the expense of less-connected individuals and groups. In these cases, only the
state is able to serve as a countervailing power for the middle class and the poor.

Teachers further argue that education is too critical for our society to be relegated to
serving rational, economic ends. Many said we needed to reclaim the broader social-
democratic mission of public education. To do so, we need to change the way we talk
about public education, not just how we “do” it. We also need to change the way we
fund it. As Liam mentioned, using property taxes to fund schools creates systemic
inequality even as it creates a “natural antagonism” between public schools,
schoolteachers and their communities. The next section discusses how policy tools have
influenced teachers’ political behaviors, including policy implementation.
Policy Tools and Policy Implementation

As previously mentioned, the public policy literature recognizes that the government employs a variety of tools to move society in desired directions. It also suggests that the choice of policy instrument is linked to political culture. As such, we would expect policy tools to reflect the dominant cultural paradigm, or ascendant ideas about the legitimacy of government intervention in societal processes. NCLB, for example, is a form of what Vedung et al. (2007) call “the sermon” and Weiss (1993) calls a “public information campaign” (PIC). Thus, the policy is designed to change the culture of schools, the culture of teaching as a profession, and the behavior of teachers, administrators, parents and students through the public reporting of test scores, school rankings, and other indicators. Parents then use this information to name and shame schools. The penalties then get harsher over time, but include restructuring, reconstitution and school take over. Together, these tools are designed to motivate bureaucrats (teachers) to serve society and pursue state aims. These tools and their theory of action fit with the narrative of personal responsibility that dominates official discourse as a result of NPM and Neo-liberalism. In chapter three, I argued that those who support alternative paradigms are likely to experience intense value conflict. This was exactly what my findings showed in chapters seven and eight.

In this section, I show that public information is a powerful, yet sometimes undemocratic, policy tool. The end result is that it has affected how teachers feel about teaching and their government. The section begins by exploring teachers’ perceptions of how testing and labeling have impacted students and parents. Next, I examine how naming and shaming have impacted teachers’ political experiences and identities. I then
explore the effects of eliminating “bad apples.” I conclude by discussing how NCLB has influenced teachers’ political attitudes and behaviors. The focus here is on implementation.

Testing and Labeling: Students and Parents

In chapters five and six, I showed how Congress used clinical language to increase the legitimacy of testing as an accountability tool. In this case, tests were constructed as a “neutral” (i.e., scientific) means of diagnosing and treating poor performance. Teachers, on the other hand, maintained that there was no scientific consensus regarding what “cutoff scores” divide passing from failing. Instead, they portrayed standards and testing as part of a political process. It is political because state bureaucrats, corporate elites and interest groups influence what is being taught by constructing what is tested. This shifts control over the curriculum from parents, students, teachers and administrators to these groups. In the meantime, the political nature of testing means that data could be used to support anything. Some teachers, for instance, said the end goal was to reduce taxes. Under this narrative, think tanks and interests groups compare the performance of American students with their foreign counterparts in order to advocate “doing more with less.” Others argued that private interests pushed testing because they “make money off of it.” One suburban teacher exclaimed:

Diane: I do think that these think tanks who are doing all of the research, and the publishing companies and the test making companies are making money off of all of this …we are being blamed and scapegoated, like we're wasting public money. Politicians are talking about how it is the taxpayer’s money and how we use it unnecessarily. They rile up the taxpayer, but it is like a game, like a political game to get elected and to justify their viewpoints...(But) it has real consequences in terms of how people feel (said with emphasis) about public schools and teachers. They are influencing public opinion and public feelings…and these
feelings they create have real implications...the media is always comparing us with other nations but what people don't realize is that they compare our whole to their parts. We educate everyone together. They compare that to their top students because these countries decided at an early age who gets to be “somebody”...and who gets tracked into menial, non-skilled, and semi-skilled jobs. They are comparing apples and oranges, but no one is watching them and checking their performance. Who is watching the watchers? Our state does this...twists facts to get people all riled up, to get them feeling the way they do and it is not factual information.

In short, testing is a means to an end. Teachers also claimed, however, that testing institutionalizes the effects of class, race, ethnicity, and gender on the performance of children, and therefore the performance of teachers. This is because tests overtly and implicitly codify knowledge, skills, and behaviors that are unevenly distributed across social classes and social groups. As discussed in chapter eight, the result is that neglect becomes rational for children who consistently struggle.

Over half of the teachers I interviewed talked about the accumulative negative effects of being labeled a “failed student.” These ideas are evident in the following suburban narratives:

Mary: (How) many times can you keep taking a test or going through another measure, to show that they are still struggling without them feeling like they are failures. I think it is just very harsh in terms of their self-concept and self-confidence...that has become their idea of school and learning...that they take tests and fail them...I think they feel that it is a struggle for them...it sets them apart from their peers...it affects the way they feel about school and whether they want to continue on in school.

Sheila: You see kids shut down... I've had many children tell me that they just put any old thing down... it is very sad because you have these children saying to you during the test “Can you please tell me what this means?” or “Can you just read this word for me?” And of course you can’t so you say, “I'm sorry honey, I can't do that. Just do the best you can.” It breaks my heart. And, can you imagine having this happen over and over and over again because, if you are a fifth grader and you are reading well below grade level, there is very little you can do. So, they figure “What the heck. I'll just put anything down.” And most often they are the first ones done...the kids who are the lowest performing...And they will say to you “Oh, that was easy!” (Laughs)...They are trying to pretend they were not
struggling, and yet (you)…see the head down…the dejection…the tenseness and frustration and agitation…(They) want to do their best but just struggle. They are biting their fingers…They have testing anxiety.

Both of these teachers described how labeling negatively impacts children’s feelings of self-efficacy, self-concept, and self-confidence. Mary’s narrative, however, specifically mentions how labels create social divisions. In her words, these labels set children “apart from their peers.” Other teachers discussed how labeling created social divisions within a school district. In chapter eight, for instance, I described a school district that had two middle schools. One was a lottery school and one was a feeder school. The lottery school consistently outperformed the feeder school. The teachers talked about how students and teachers in the lottery school felt “superior,” while teachers and children in the labeled school felt “inferior.” Meanwhile, they were in the same school district.

Teachers further expressed that labeling made their district feel inferior to neighboring ones. One urban schoolteacher told me:

Ronnie: (Our school was labeled in need of improvement and) I think morale for the teachers was very low then. It’s not like the teachers weren’t working toward helping students achieve. They were doing what they could. They were trying all sorts of methods and it ended up that we were on that list. Just barely, but we were on that list. And for students, I think because we are surrounded by wealthier districts, it’s embarrassing. I think they felt like they were being labeled inferior. The whole school was inferior. I don’t think, if you met one of our students, they would have been forthcoming that they went to that school, if they met someone new. It was embarrassing…It was in the paper. It was talked about. And students that did well on the test were highly insulted that they were lumped together with other kids like, “Oh, we’re in need of improvement.” Well, they certainly weren’t…we had a lot of different reactions…But it was certainly a morale killer for the teachers…you didn’t think it would happen. We know we’re close, but we always seem to be able to pull it off. And the year that we couldn’t, it was tough…(And) some families…wanted to leave, because we have …some poverty and…some fairly affluent students…if the parents moved, I don’t know, 2 or 3 blocks…We are very close to a couple of wealthy districts…there were parents who considered just moving…(to a district that was close by and) not on any lists.
In this narrative, Ronnie claims that some families wished to flee the (stigmatized) district, and some children did not want to tell their neighbors, who only lived a few blocks away but attended a “better” district, that they went to the “failed school.” These ideas are supported by empirical studies, which show that some people seek to distance themselves from stigmatized groups and individuals. In this case, children engaged in “cognitive” exit (i.e., hiding that they were with the “failed” group) and parents contemplated actual exit, but both are a form of disloyalty to one’s group. These stories form an interesting counter-narrative to those told to me by many teachers, who expressed strong loyalties to their schools, colleagues, students and communities even when their schools were labeled or under restructuring. Even so, as discussed in the next section, naming and shaming have clearly created social divisions among teachers.

**Naming and Shaming: Teachers and Schools**

In his study of welfare recipients, Soss (2005) found they engaged in different social-psychological responses to “the state,” bureaucrats, and a policy’s message. This study found something similar. All of the teachers I interviewed reacted negatively to how teachers as a group were being framed. Most further expressed anger about labeling children and schools, even when their school was not labeled. Teachers who worked with disadvantaged populations had especially high negative reactions, even when their school was not labeled. Meanwhile, all of the urban teachers in my sample have experienced increased cynicism. The consistency of these responses across labeled and non-labeled groups suggests that anger and increased cynicism are not self-interested responses to labeling. Instead, teachers believed that their “group” and other “groups” are being treated unfairly by the state. In this case, the group is teachers, teachers serving
disadvantaged populations, and urban teachers. Teachers typically used the language of “fairness” and “inappropriateness” to justify their responses. These findings support my earlier claim that people care about how their group is treated by government and society, yet also care about distributive and procedural justice.

Even so, labeling has clearly divided teachers. This is because some teachers are able to escape the label while others cannot. The latter included teachers in labeled schools and urban teachers. Those who could not escape negative social regard often felt bifurcated from those who could, but, even within these two divisions, policy labels often separated them from one another. This is because many teachers deployed bifurcated identities in order to escape negative social regard. So, their primary identity is linked to their role as a teacher. Then, they retreated into a secondary identity if necessary. Some teachers, for example, identified with teaching in a suburban, rural or urban school. Others said they were primary, middle or high school teachers. Some further focused on their individual subject areas. Others named what one teacher called “their brand,” meaning their actual district or school. Their narratives indicate that teachers need to escape negative social labels because they identify so strongly with their role. Teaching is not something they do. It is who they are. One urban teacher said:

Stephanie: It is not just a job. It’s our identity… When you talk to teachers… They say, “I am a teacher.” It is who they are. It is so linked to their identity that, when people attack teachers or teaching, it really causes damage to a whole group of people because you are not just attacking their job, you are attacking their identities. If this is part of your identity, and then you are told that you are part of a societal problem or that you are the problem, it is really hurtful. It is hurtful for people like teachers or firefighters or police officers. Those are people off the top of my head that I can think of as identifying with their jobs. It is their identities…I have a friend who is a firefighter. I have never seen him without a firefighter shirt on (laughs). Many of my friends constantly wear their school shirts, or carry the umbrella with the school brand on it. We all have those things (laugh). I feel like, if people told my firefighter friend that he was the reason society was going
downhill, it would be hurtful because he is so proud of it. Just like I feel that teachers are so proud of being teachers…proud to tell people they are teachers.

Stephanie’s narrative was repeated in many different guises. Given these findings, it is not surprising that many teachers tried to escape negative social labels. “Teacher bashing” felt like a personal attack.

Teachers also clearly experienced strong emotional reactions to policy labels and “teacher bashing” because they felt their morals or ethics were being questioned. One suburban teacher told me:

Diane: I really don’t think parents know how much of our own time and money we spend on our classroom. It is like a dirty little secret of teaching that you have to be willing to invest a lot of your income in your students and children in order to do the job well. And, honestly, I never think about it, but it is part of the rage I feel when I hear teachers being called greedy. Let’s see politicians invest their own time and money into their jobs instead of asking for handouts from voters. I do it willingly because I love the kids and it is a source of pride for me that my classroom is a warm and inviting place where children feel safe to learn, but it hurts when I am labeled greedy. And, I know that it is not me personally, that it is teachers in general who are being labeled, but it still hurts. You feel like, “Why do I work so hard and why do I care so much when I am someone who is disrespected by the very people I serve?” I mean, if government is labeling me greedy, how can we expect parents and students to respect me? It feels really harsh and unfair. I am not the one who is bankrupting this country. And I am not the one who is in the paper for all sorts of unethical behaviors. It’s hurtful.

In chapter seven, I claimed that policymakers needed to better understand the “feeling” nature of public service work. Diane’s narrative moves from rage to hurt to shaming those she believes are questioning her competency. She worked in a suburban school that was not labeled, but still expressed anger that teachers were being stigmatized, and felt it was disrespectful on the part of political elites. She also alleged that this language influenced teachers’ abilities to do their jobs because it delimits respect from their communities, and teachers need parents and students to cooperate in order to do their jobs. Like Diane, my interviews further suggest that teachers are experiencing anger due
to being negatively compared to private actors, who do not go beyond their jobs unless it is for pay. Meanwhile, teachers are called “greedy” and the private sector is “entrepreneurial.” This finding supports my earlier claim that policy reactions are likely to be relational, meaning people do not just care about how the government treats them. They also care about how they are treated relative to “others.”

Teachers’ narratives also indicate, however, that public information as a means of naming and shaming schools and teachers is a powerful, but sometimes undemocratic, policy tool. This is because “labeling” has a tripartite effect. First, state sponsored discourse engenders disapproval from the government. Then, it influences how “outside others” perceive teachers. These kinds of narratives were especially evident among teachers who felt they could not escape stigma by falling back on alternative identities. As just mentioned, this included teachers who worked in SINI schools, but also urban teachers. In terms of the former, teachers who worked in SINI schools expressed enormous stress associated with being on “the list” (i.e., labeled). An urban teacher told me:

Vanessa: I work in a very (emotional pause) needy school district and this is part of the rewards of my job but it also is something that creates some stress…The school district has a lot of low-income families…a lot of free and reduced price lunch…It's...a SINI school…and we're in corrective action…it's pretty stressful…this is our first year under restructuring. We had three years to turn the school around and then last year the cut points were raised. And so we would've made it under the lower cut points but they raised the bar and we did not make it and…we were put in corrective action …It was very upsetting and now there are a lot of pressures related to that, and it has affected how I feel about the job of teaching. But also the kids themselves need a lot of structure and discipline, but also a lot of caring. They're very needy and…you get the sense that they're not getting as much at home…it's really rewarding to work with them...(but) I have to kick them out of my classroom (laughs) at the end of the period and at the end of the day (laughs). They just want a relationship and they want to connect with and adults, and I really enjoy that part of my job, but it makes me feel very sad too (getting emotional). And sometimes I feel like it's more than I can physically
and emotionally give them, and it's also a time issue as well as an issue of whether it's my place to do this too...they share things with me about their lives...and things that they're feeling...a lot of drama...It's hard to shake it off...I try to counsel them and provide them with encouragement as best I can or get them help but it can be difficult to deal with myself...It makes me sad...I have to go home and be a mom to my own son but I also feel like I'm the mom to my students...It's hard...I pray about it. I pray a lot.

Nevertheless, their narratives suggest that stress did not solely stem from the policy label. It also stemmed from loyalty, or a space of caring. Teachers wanted to “do right by the kids” and the community, but struggled in a system that compares disadvantaged students to “the whole.” By the whole, teachers mean non-disadvantaged children, and the schools and teachers who primarily serve non-disadvantaged children.

In terms urban schools, every single teacher I interviewed expressed that they were not highly regarded by society, even when their schools were not labeled. Many also said they were not highly regarded by other teachers. Most addressed the issue by turning the (inferior) urban label into a “red badge of courage.” In the words of two urban teachers:

Stephanie: People think that “those” (suburban) teachers are better because the test scores are better and so that creates animosity. The teachers at my school are very proud to be urban teachers. They sort of look down on suburban teachers, like they are not really teachers... That is not real teaching to them... (There) is a lot of solidarity among urban teachers. They feel like they are in the trenches together...they’re in a struggling school, but they stick it out. There is sort of a heroism that goes along with being a teacher in an urban school. If anyone has earned the label of hero, it is urban teachers.

Elaine: (The teachers in suburban schools have no idea) what it is like to work in urban schools. They take all of the support for granted...and this is a little mean-spirited, but the word is “over-privileged.” They are over-privileged and they don't get what it is like to work in an urban school, and yet you feel like they are somewhat judgmental about it...about the kids and the teachers who work there...like they buy into the idea that, because our test results are not on par with theirs, that we must not work as hard. It is sad ... the teachers I knew worked very hard under very difficult working conditions.
I called these teachers “urban warriors” because they often appeared militant in their expressions of solidarity and pride, as well as their discussions of how suburban teachers would not be able handle teaching in an urban school.

Despite their warrior language, many SINI and urban schoolteachers told me that state discourse “infected” their relationships outside of work by putting them in a situation where they had to engage in “fight or flight,” meaning they felt the need to defend themselves and their schools, or they tried to avoid people who think negatively about their schools or hide where they teach in order to avoid a fight. One urban teacher really brought this home in her narrative:

Kristen: (The) pressure…is definitely more intense…You don’t want that label…even my in-laws call me and say things after the list comes out like, “Oh, it is good your school was not on the list.” (Laughs)...I take pride in my school. It is a stereotype… I don't even know why. It's not even really just the school community or the parents. It is larger than that. The community is larger than that who is looking at these tests. And, you don’t want that feeling…I work really hard and I'm good at what I do… There is definitely pride of place. I'm going to stick up for my school no matter what. I think there are amazing teachers there. I think they're amazing kids… I think we all work very hard…it does something to your morale. I think we get judged for being in an urban school…our evaluations don’t reflect all of this and right now I am feeling a little defensive…We are labeled “the city school.” And I see myself getting involved in discussions even with family members…they teach in suburban schools and… I really have to bite my tongue. I want to say, “You have no idea what we're up against on a daily basis and, like you, we still have to meet our test score requirements.” …I feel like it's a little bit unfair…our children are in no way comparable…Most of our children are coming in with needs. And the testing is on a bell curve and so somebody has to fail for someone to do better…I am okay with testing…I don't think teachers are opposed to tests. But…you cannot help it. You are constantly looking at the scores…you want to get your 2s to 3s, and your 3s to 4s. You can’t help it. You constantly think about it. You take it home with you…constantly calculating in your head whether you're going to meet those scores. I am kind of obsessed with it because you work so hard (said with emphasis). That is your outcome…your grade…What you did the whole year becomes reduced to that…I know all of the hardships my students face…that affects their performance, but who knows what happened the night before the test and then they come in and have an off day. It is really precarious…Then the whole, “what is going on outside of school.” We have kids going home where no one is helping them with
homework…being compared to children in the suburban schools where their parents are helping them…and giving them every advantage in life. It is just unfair really…I do everything I can…but how can you compete?

Kristen’s narrative also illuminates the second reason teachers believe policy labels are undemocratic. Public information is being used to mobilize schools as organizations and teaching as an occupation to affect the state’s desired changes. In this latter sense, NCLB encourages members of the school community to put pressure on one another to behave as policymakers wish. So, teachers who believe that the means and ends are being implemented in socially unjust ways are forced to go along with the performance. Yet, for them, this policy raises serious ethical concerns.

The second reason teachers claimed that testing, as a means of ranking and evaluating teachers and schools, is unfair is because teaching and learning are co-produced. Co-production means that there is a random quality to teaching and learning that is not controllable at the teacher level, but is also not controllable at the school level due to socio-economic inequality. One suburban high school teacher addressed these ideas at the individual teacher level:

Brenda: I had a lot of failures this year on the state exam…95 percent of them were not surprises. I had kids who struggled all year long…Then, I had a couple of students who were a surprise. That does happen sometimes…I will say that, in my department, there is not a single teacher who does not have students that struggle with math. We do our best but we all have students who struggle…(But I still) feel horrible about losing those students and I worked really hard so that I would not lose them, but it happens… People do not realize how random it really is…It is not that teachers don't want to be held accountable...(or) don't want to be observed. I have never heard teachers say that...(But now it) is no longer about the student's motivation or effort.

In this and her other narratives, Brenda declared that teachers are being held accountable rather than administrators, students, and society. However, like many other teachers, she also said that high stakes tests are harmful for children, especially disadvantaged
children. I discussed all of these issues in chapter seven, but the gist of teachers’ narratives is that testing leads to more authoritative styles of teaching, especially for students at the margins as teachers try to control for student-related randomness in performance.

In chapters seven and eight, I discussed how teacher attrition is a problem in general, but especially in schools that serve disadvantaged children. This section sheds light on why that might be so. Teachers work incredibly hard and yet are labeled “inferior” when they work with disadvantaged populations. NCLB has exacerbated the problem, but the media and “Hollywood” clearly play a role. For example, when movies portray the urban teacher in a positive light, they characterize him or her as Superman, thwarting “the system” to empower children through the sheer force of his or her determination and positive expectations. When portrayed in a negative light, they are Kryptonite, imprisoning children behind a wall of ignorance. Either way, the state and society are off the hook. Naming and shaming perpetuates these myths by framing failure as the result of “low expectations.” Then, when poor performance is constructed as communal, it is framed as the product of a “failed school” rather than the persistent refusal of the state to redress educational inequality. Teachers who work in SINI schools were especially likely to express these ideas because they cannot escape that “stamp” of disapproval.

The third reason teachers claimed that labeling schools, teachers and students is undemocratic is due to the unreliability of tests and the arbitrariness of state actions with regard to the tests. Teachers provided many examples of arbitrary behaviors. Most, like Vanessa, talked about raising the bar after teachers and students worked so hard to meet
it. Others complained about exams that included “gotcha questions,” or were inappropriate in terms of difficulty or length. One suburban teacher explained:

Carley: A lot of these tests are about stamina. Kids need testing stamina…On the third-grade test, they were using passages that were really more for fifth graders. We did a readability…test…And you feel blindsided. At least make it fair…It feels like a big game. Like a fixed game…It was mean-spirited. And then they gave us a field-test a week afterwards. And so, the kids felt like they were done with testing but they had to take this other test…The field-test was evil too…At the end of the year the kids want to please you and they wanted to do well. I had kids in tears at the end of those field tests. They were tested out. They were crying. It was so sad… I'm finding that kids are giving up…we are not allowed to do things that kids need developmentally… because we are spending so much time on these tests and those skills that are needed for the tests…(and) everything has to be done in such a fast pace…the teacher has to keep going whether all of the students have learned it or not…some kids just shut down because they think, “She is going to keep going whether I got it or not. I can't keep up.” It is sad…We are not reaching every child because of these tests. The focus is on those children who learn very well through direct teaching. But…we are losing all kinds of other forms of learning, and therefore children who primarily learn in these other ways, like…kids who are more tactile. They need to manipulate things to learn. And that's just one other form of learning. Those kids and those ways of learning are being left behind. You try as best you can to spend one-on-one time with those kids…but the class sizes are going up because of fiscal issues and kids are coming in with a lot more needs.

Like Carley, many teachers were unhappy with the fact that the state gave a field test right after their students took the “real” one. Many teachers told me that the state was using children for “data collection,” which took time away from learning in the classroom. To them, this was the perfect example of how the state cared more about data than if children were learning.

Summing up, the public policy literature disagrees over the intrusiveness of public information as a policy tool (Vedung and van der Doelen 2007; Weiss 1993). Certainly, public information enhances democracy in many cases. For example, the Freedom of Information Act (1966) provided the public with access to government data, records, and other information. Sunshine laws further require the government to provide sufficient
advance notice of government meetings and to hold them in places that are accessible to
the public. Meanwhile, laws requiring the posting of dangerous chemicals in the
workplace, ingredients on food labels, and so forth have helped protect consumers and
workers. This research, on the other hand, finds that naming and shaming may also be a
powerful, but indiscriminate and undemocratic, policy tool. It is powerful because
people care about what others think of them, and it sends strong moral signals, not just
cognitive ones. It is indiscriminate because students, teachers and schools are shamed
regardless of whether they are engaging in bad behaviors. It is undemocratic because it
blames people for problems that are largely outside of their capacity to redress as
individuals. In this case, teaching and learning are co-produced, but academic
achievement is also highly influenced by poverty and other factors outside of school.
Thus, the policy instrument is not intentionally biased against low-income groups and
minorities, or the teachers and schools that serve these groups, yet that is the actual effect.
In consequence, NCLB disproportionately alienates low-income and disadvantaged
groups who are, in effect, being labeled morally inferior. It is also alienates the teachers
who serve these populations. Just as troubling, teachers’ narratives revealed that naming
and shaming alters the behaviors of policy targets (teachers and students) beyond the time
period and outside of the environments that are supposedly being regulated. By that, I
mean their school; the school day and year; and their school career in the case of
children. Teachers, for example, expressed that it “infected” their relationships outside of
work. They also claimed it influenced children’s relationships to their peers, their
educational careers, and their future well-being as workers, citizens, and human beings.
In short, it influenced children long after they left high school.
Overall, this research clearly shows that teachers’ reactions to the policy label were emotional more than cognitive, even though they existed on multiple levels. First, teachers were angry at being labeled “deviant” even though they were working very hard. Second, many teachers felt that testing and policy labels were arbitrary, or political, more than scientific. Here, their anger was largely directed at “the state” even though teachers recognized that NCLB is a federal policy. This was partly because the state is more proximate in terms of policy implementation, but it was also a reaction to what teachers perceived to be arbitrary behaviors on the part of the state. Third, many teachers expressed anger that the state and federal government were not holding themselves accountable. One urban teacher complained:

Stephanie: We have not gone to takeover yet. We are under restructuring. So, people from the state…have been popping in…(Then, they) came in days before the test and… (gave a report that said) we were focusing too much on the test (Laughing). Well, you came in days before the test, what did you expect? …It was just laughable … and that is why they have no credibility with the teachers in our school. These are also educators… They know what they are seeing when they come in. They say…they know what is going on is not right. So even they undermine the federal government…(They know we’re not holding society accountable. We’re) ignoring poverty… violence and hunger…ignoring things like children not having lights and electricity… Basic things we all take for granted…these are not isolated instances…The problems are systemic. And they affect children’s ability to be successful in school and the government does nothing about them. A lot of these kids are taking care of their brothers and sisters because both their parents are working two jobs…it is very hard for them to study when they are taking care of and feeding and putting to bed their younger brothers and sisters…These things are not being taken into consideration. They live in a different world from kids who are growing up with money … children have problems in every socioeconomic class, but there are a specific set of problems that are endemic with children who are underachieving and at the lower end of the bell curve. These problems are not talked about. It is assumed that it must be the teachers. The teachers must be bad. Yet…all you have to do is stand there in front my school for an hour and write down what you see and what you hear…it is societal…the school is a reflection of what is happening outside of the school…no matter how hard teachers try, you cannot sweep all of that under the rug…(At some point, we have) to deal with these kinds of systemic societal problems. And the government doesn't want to do that.
Many teachers told me that the federal and state government were playing “gotcha” with public schools in order to escape blame for the “real” problem, which almost every teacher explicitly framed as socioeconomic inequality combined with inequitable school financing. Their narratives sound very similar to those told by Democrats early on in the policy debates on NCLB. As discussed in chapter five, many Democrats told a tale about the federal government’s failure to fulfill its promise to disadvantaged children. The next section focuses on schools that are slated for closure.

Eliminating “Bad Apples”

As shown in chapter five, political elites (largely) portrayed testing as a means to diagnose and treat problem areas. Then, if schools refused to change, they could be taken over and eventually closed. According to most teachers, on the other hand, the focus of NCLB is on “eliminating bad apples.” I did not interview any teachers who taught in a school that was closed as a result of NCLB. I did, however, speak with teachers in districts where schools were closed as a result of being labeled a “persistently failing school.” I also interviewed teachers in districts where schools were closed due to fiscal imperatives and declining enrollment, and one teacher had worked in an actual school that was closed due to declining enrollment. In all of these cases, teachers’ responses indicated that the issue evoked emotional, more than cognitive, responses on the part of administrators, teachers, parents and students. Returning to Stephanie’s narrative:

Stephanie: They know the school is labeled. They know that the tests mean something, but they don't always know what…A lot of our kids came from the middle school that was shut down and some of them feel like the school was shut down because they did not do well. They feel like it was shut down because the school was bad in some way. They feel like they were part of that school being bad. That label affects them. We don't really talk about it…(But the) kids who had to move, it was awful for them. Those students were very affected. The
school was in their community. It closed and they had to travel across the community to another school...It didn't end up being a major issue but...They had to go to a community where they were not welcome because there had been a long history of gang warfare between these two communities.

Stephanie’s narrative focuses on the children. She says they felt like the school was “bad” and that they were part of the school being “bad” even though the school closed as a result of fiscal issues. Then, they had to travel across town and attend a school with “good” students. Again, this points to the fact that labeling creates social divisions. We would also anticipate, however, that the situation is worse for students when the school is closed as a result of poor performance rather than fiscal imperatives.

These claims are supported by stories in the paper on schools that have been closed, or slated for closure, for those reasons. For example, a recent series of articles on the decision to close a group of schools in New York City showed that school closings invoked rational, normative, and emotional responses. Emotionally, the decision sparked numerous rallies and hearings where thousands of people showed up and waited in line for hours to speak. Many students waited in line until 11:30 p.m. One teacher said: “Our hearts are broken, our hearts are broken.” Normatively, the narratives told by those involved were quite different. President Obama’s Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, said that closing low-performing schools requires “the courage to do the right thing by kids…When a school continues to perform in the bottom 5 percent of the state and isn't showing signs of growth or has graduation rates below 60 percent, something dramatic needs to be done.” This narrative sounds remarkably similar to the one told by Republican Congressmen Boehner during the debates on NCLB. Conversely, critics blamed school failure on society and the government. That is, the schools were victims of a dearth of economic and social resources. This sounds like the arguments made by
liberals during the policy debates. Others claimed the City’s decision ignores the effects of school closings on local communities. Some further contended that school closings were nothing but a “shell game,” where bad schools were “closed” and then children were sent to other “bad schools.” In the process, the City exacerbated an already segregated system because, as more schools were closed and replaced by charter schools, there were fewer and fewer public options for high need populations, including poor and homeless children, refugees and children with special needs. One critic accused the City of “creating a segregated education system for the people that have the skills and the power to get their children into the more selective schools and the families that do not.” Others noted that the decision unfairly stigmatized teachers who worked with disadvantaged children (Chivas 2010). Clearly this is a complicated issue.

Sociological, psychological and biological theories recognize that people attempt to distinguish their group from others by exaggerating positive traits, especially when compared to poorly-regarded others (Ingram and Schneider 2005). Similarly, Soss (2005, 316) contends that the best-known defense against stigma is what Briar (1966) calls “estrangement,” or the tendency to distance oneself from a poorly regarded group.179 By all accounts, administrators, teachers, parents and students should wish to flee “failed schools” in order to avoid being with the “failed group.” These hearings suggest otherwise. Similarly, teachers in my interviews expressed pride in their schools and

\footnote{179 In terms of AFDC, he found that recipients constructed categories of “us” and “them” (i.e., “good” and “bad” and “deserving” and “undeserving”) to distinguish themselves from poorly regarded “others.” The creation of social distance allowed them to put themselves on the same side as the “moral us” by demonstrating how they were “different” from the “immoral them.” This included personal narratives, which indicated that “they” possessed “normal” or “mainstream” values (Soss 2005). Reay (2004b) found something similar among poor and working-class 10- and 11-year olds who attended “demonized schools” in England, or those schools that anyone could get into but no one wanted to attend, behaved in a similar manner. For example, children described people “like them” who went “there,” but managed to avoid the collective influences that threaten individual achievement, such as drugs, gangs, and bullying (Reay and Lucey 2003).}
strong school loyalty to other teachers, administrators, parents and students, even when
their school was labeled. These feelings of loyalty stemmed from their affective ties to
their schools, which they portrayed as the hearts of their communities. One teacher said:

Emily: (Closing schools) is stressful on the community. You rarely hear people
talk about schools as communities…They are focusing on what the goal is to the
exclusion of the side effects…schools do a lot…(more) than just educate students.
They are the hub of their community. A lot of different services are funneled
through schools, and needy families benefit from a lot from these services. I think
people are blind to it. I live next to a community that does not have its own school
district. So, the kids are bused into the surrounding school districts. There is no
sense of community there…I think it has a much bigger effect than that
community realizes. It also has affected the property values. Who wants to
voluntarily move into a town that does not have their own school district?

This narrative about ignoring the negative side-effects because we are so focused on
exposing rotten apples was a common one. Yet, Emily also described how schools are
critical for their community in general, and needy families in particular, because they
provide many other services. When schools close, the neediest families are impacted the
most. Many teachers made similar claims. Also like Emily, many teachers argued that
schools, as public spaces, build community, and therefore create social value. They also
affect the economic value of the homes in their communities.

Interestingly, school closings were one area where rural teachers emerged as
“rural warriors.” Every single one of my rural teachers expressed that their district was
struggling as a result of fiscal distress. In part, fiscal duress resulted from the economy,
but declining enrollment was also a factor. Many of these districts have contracted out
for gym, art, music, and so forth. Others have consolidated with a neighboring rural
district. Yet, they are still struggling. These teachers were especially likely to discuss
how schools provide many services, not just academic ones. One rural high school
teacher exclaimed:
Jim: (We) don't have a YMCA or some of the other community-type centers. The school is where everything takes place. Everything happens at the school...Our new high school building is really a YMCA as much as it is a high school. They do everything under the sun there...There are districts all over the place that are going to be bankrupt in two or three years if the budget problems continue. Our community lost our major employer. Our tax base is greatly depleted. We have a close friend who is a superintendent at a neighboring district who said they have maybe another 4 years before the district will be bankrupt. We think of schools as a physical entity, but it is a lot bigger than that. Schools are not just a physical plant. They have memories. There are emotions and memories attached to them and they are the hub of their communities. They bring people together for better or for worse (laughs), but they are not their numbers. I think people look at what will be gained fiscally if they do certain things like...merging school districts, but they don’t think of what will be lost...they don’t think of the human cost. And, like I said, our school is where everything in our community happens because there is no other physical space to do it in. That is true of rural communities.

Also like Jim, many teachers claimed that schools cannot be reduced to either a number or a physical plant. They are spaces that have memories and invoke emotions. These ideas compare to how schools were characterized during the debates on NCLB. In this case, schools were portrayed as a business that could be run using market logics.

Many teachers argued, however, that the business-economic discourse is trickling down to administrators. One rural elementary teacher, for instance, told me that her new superintendent told the staff “Listen, this is a business. Education is a business and I have to take personalities out of the equation when I make my cuts to the budget because I have to balance my budget.” She then described the devastation these cuts had caused in her small rural community “where everyone knows everyone else.” She concluded:

Sherry: (They) are trying to make it more like a business and take that community piece out of it, but...people don't realize that rural schools are the hub of their communities... My school is where everybody comes together... the business model is taking the heart out of teaching and it has become teacher against teacher. It has divided our community.

Jim and Sherry’s narratives clearly reveal that emotions are a powerful motivator in public life.
Sherry’s narrative raises one final point. Teachers’ stories suggest that NCLB is not working alone. Like many others, teachers are scared about their jobs as a result of fiscal distress and a weak economy. Some teachers alleged that schools as organizations were using this fear to make inappropriate demands on teachers. In chapter seven, I called these Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools. Teachers in these schools further complained that their district was intentionally making younger teachers angry with the union and the older teachers in their buildings as part of a “divide and conquer” strategy. One urban teacher told me:

Lorna: (The school was labeled and they) got books and funding…also a lot more supervision. And…money for test prep… the kids got forced to go to…Saturday Academy…The teachers…were supposed to have a choice… but the principal told them that if you are a teacher for a testing grade, than you have to teach Saturday Academy… So they all did it. The school exceeded their expectations and got off the list, but they also won the merit contest, which was a contest for pay…and so all the teachers got a $3000 bonus. But then…the principal…said she was going to keep all of the money for school improvement…It is a whole psychological game…(The) mayor…wants everyone to think…that (it will fix the issue)...if the teachers will vote for merit pay and to get rid of tenure…because the excellent teachers will have jobs and the so-called “deadwood” will be gone…(He) wants the new teachers to feel this pressure so that they will turn on the older teachers…believe all of their problems are being caused by tenure and the seniority system…He wants parents to believe that the schools are falling into disarray because the union will not give up their…(position on) merit pay…tenure, and… seniority…the young teachers, the new ones, are becoming anti-union…My former principal…did not want me to tell the new teachers why the union was important. She wanted them to think that merit pay was the only way to go. She would say things… like, “Look, you are such a fabulous teacher. You do not want that old person down the hall, that average, mediocre teacher, to keep their job just because they've been here forever when you deserve the position more than they do, do you?” And then, I would have to say to the new teachers, “One day you are going to be that person and you are going to have a principal who was 20 years younger than yourself…and you are going to be considered ancient at 45 because nobody's going to make it beyond that because we are knocking them off at an incredible rate in order to save money.” So, the whole thing was this plot to turn the younger teachers against the older teachers and against the union.
Many retired teachers said that these kinds of behaviors went on in the 1970s due to fiscal distress, and were part of the reason teachers had mobilized. What separates then from now, though, is decades of state-endorsed stigma against unions. Older teachers claimed that this has reduced social solidarity, which means that collective action is unlikely, especially given resistance on the part of young teachers to unionization.

Summing up, policies that use information as a tool assume that people are rational and respond to information in similar ways (Weiss 2007, 1993). In contrast, this section showed that administrators, teachers, parents and students respond to information emotionally more than cognitively. In terms of students, policy labeling and persistent failure on state exams creates a system where it makes sense to “opt out.” Thus, as Bourdieu predicts, students relegate themselves to mediocrity. In terms of teachers, they care about their communities and wish to do right by the kids, but are experiencing strong emotional responses to a policy they believe sets up an undemocratic and socially unjust system. Earlier, I argued that public policies are unlikely to work when government is misinformed about the values, beliefs, behaviors and incentive systems of policy targets and implementers. They may even create the very problems that the government is trying to resolve. These findings suggest this is true. The next section explores these claims by examining policy implementation.

Policy Implementation

Although TPA and NPM represent different models of public service provision, they both (largely) blame bureaucrats for observed differences between public policies as adopted and public policies as implemented. Where they differ is in their recommended mechanisms for social control. Thus, I theorized in chapter three that the switch from
one to the other was likely to create value conflict among citizens and policy implementers. This section begins by discussing differences between TPA and NPM. I then use Hirschman’s concepts of exit, voice, loyalty and neglect to explore teachers’ responses to the change between these two paradigms of public service provision as a result of the adoption of NCLB.

TPA portrays implementation as a top-down process (Odden 1991b; Honig 2006b). As previously mentioned, the empirical literature recognizes that professional and occupational norms play an important role in terms of how street-level bureaucrats do their jobs, but focuses on how to control these behaviors rather than exploring the conditions under which they occur and what benefits they might produce for society (Lipsky 1980; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003; Meier 1993; Muir 1977; Pressman and Wildavsky 1979; Rourke 1984; and Wilson 1989). In terms of social controls, TPA advocates confining and channeling discretion through rules, regulations, and standard operating procedures (SOPs). Conversely, NPM portrays implementation as a top-down process, yet blames bureaucratic rules, regulations, red tape and SOPs for the inefficient, ineffective and unresponsive actions of policy implementers. It further claims that bureaucrats use their monopoly over public service provision to pursue their own interests. In consequence, it deploys “bottom up” solutions, meaning it advocates using competition and incentives to encourage street-level bureaucrats to pursue state aims while more efficiently and effectively serving consumers of public services. Despite these differences, both paradigms contend that bureaucrats resist implementing policies that threaten their self-interests (i.e., job security, chances for promotion, status in the workplace, current working conditions, and so forth). Moreover, both largely sideline
how policy implementation is complicated by different social contexts as a result of competing values.

McDonnell (1991), on the other hand, argues that value conflicts are at the root of many implementation issues. In terms of education policy, for example, teachers often have competing loyalties to their schools as organizations, the norms of teaching as an occupation, their “clients” (i.e., taxpayers, parents and students), and their school communities. In chapter seven, I described how these competing loyalties have interacted with teachers’ school contexts in ways that have challenged their commitment to the norms of teaching, as well as broader social democratic goals. This has created intense value conflict. Chapters seven and eight also established teachers’ concerns that the increased reliance on a scripted curriculum, backed by relentless testing and public shaming, is harmful to all students, but especially disadvantaged children. In this chapter, teachers expressed that policymakers are so concerned about sanctioning “bad apples” that they ignore the very real ways the system sanctions good ones. This was especially true in high poverty schools. All of these issues raised ethical questions for teachers.

Similar to parents, teachers who experience dissatisfaction at work have four options: they may voice their complaints; exit from their schools as organizations or teaching as an occupation; remain on the job but withdraw from organizational life (neglect); or fulfill their obligations while awaiting change (loyalty). Mostly, teachers’ narratives suggest they choose to remain loyal to their students, colleagues, and occupation, while taking actions (voice) to alter their organizational or political environments in ways that make them congruent with their values. In this case, loyalty
existed on multiple levels, as evident in a narrative told to me by a teacher who worked in the South, but decided to return home after the events of September 11th:

Kristen: I identify with other urban teachers because they are experiencing the same thing...(we have) to stick together because we were being stigmatized. I told you that (in the southern state where I taught) they were building new schools and that the “better” students were going to those schools and that most of them were white. So many of my friends were transferring out of my school to go teach in those schools. I never wanted to do that. There was a school in the county next to ours and their test scores were always amazing and I knew that I could get a job there. I would've gotten that stipend every year because the test scores would be amazing. I always had that, I don't know what it is...loyalty I guess. I always felt that loyalty to the person who had given me a chance...given me a job...given me the chance to teach. You hear people complaining about administrators, but I always felt loyalty because I had been given a chance to teach...(I also feel loyal to my current administrator and district and) that loyalty is one of the things that keeps me motivated in and of itself...Even when I hear people talk about my school in the south now, I feel loyalty and I am not even there any longer...(But) I just needed to be home after 9/11...my dad had flown 9/11. He was fine, but he was up in the air that day. And truthfully...It was scary...At that point I needed to be with mommy and daddy (laughs)...I was alone and I just needed to be home. I had never done that before, because as a teacher you always put everyone else first, but in this case I needed to put my feelings first. I've always felt guilty about it though...even though I know they got a great replacement. I flew down in April to see them again. The school was amazing when I left. They brought me to the bus port. I had 25 students come to see me off. They were crying and I was crying. That is how attached I was to them (getting emotional). I'll never forget...I had an amazing paraprofessional who was my second mother. She and her husband actually let me stay with them in the days after 9/11 because she knew I was living alone...She said, “Come stay with us. This is a scary time.” And I did... (Certainly, my) classroom is a family but our school was a family too... your behavior is important for you, but it is also important for the group...We don't have to love one another, but we have to live together and we have to treat each other with respect. You know, it is sort of like a family where your brother can get on your nerves but he is still your brother (laughs).

Kristen describes five kinds of loyalty. She is loyal to other urban teachers (because they are being stigmatized), her district, her administrator, her colleagues and her students.

Teachers also mentioned being loyal to their occupation. When these loyalties compete, it creates value conflict for teachers. As evident from Kristen’s narrative, this is problematic because loyalty is one of the things that sustains teachers in the profession;
keeps them teaching in high needs, low-resource schools; and motivates them to work hard. Here, Kristen’s loyalty to her own family after the events of 9/11 competed with her loyalty to her school in the South. She chose to exit (go home), but says she still feels guilty about putting her “feelings first.” Although she does not say this, implicitly she feels that putting her own needs ahead of her job violated teachers’ commitment to “do right by the kids.” Just as interesting, though, she also chose to remain loyal to what drew her to the profession. By that, I mean she chose to teach in a high-needs urban district after she returned home because she felt loyal to urban teachers, who she perceived were being unfairly stigmatized, and a calling to work with disadvantaged children.

Like loyalty, voice existed on multiple levels. For the most part, though, it included formal or informal protests to administrators. Here, the goal was to alter or adapt state and district policies in the process of implementing them, so that they were less harmful to children. One suburban teacher offered the following example:

Carley: Well, a little boy had no school clothes and I bought them for him. I don’t know if I should have done that because it sets a precedent but…Sometimes you just have to go with your heart. And, they wanted to have our report cards on line. I fought tooth and nail to keep the paper report card. A lot of parents don’t have computers, and they said, “Well they can come to school to look,” but these are the same parents who don’t have cars or don’t have flexible work schedules where they could do that…it is not great for the environment, but I kept thinking about one little boy in my room whose single father is working so hard and did everything he could to juggle his work schedule so that he could come in to the parent teacher conference, and I had to have him sign a form that said the report cards would be online. And he said to me, “I don’t have a computer” and so I said I would look into what we could do. And I fought tooth and nail to keep the paper report cards. You couldn’t do that if you didn’t have tenure because it was not a popular thing to do but it was the right thing to do. It was what my heart knows is the right thing to do…And they did change it back.
Many teachers, like Carley, expressed that tenure and experience on the job fostered voice, especially when it involved “taking on parents” because teachers were not afraid of losing their jobs if parents complained. These ideas are evident in a narrative told to me by an urban teacher:

Lorna: One day, I said to my principal, “you have this bilingual program that you're not doing anything with… It doesn't work (laughs)...You need the children to speak English. The principal was Hispanic…this school was about 90 percent Hispanic…The community itself was a very nurturing community. It was fabulous. So… I said to him, “You need to do more ESL and have less segregation. It’s making the kids feel like they are compartmentalized…like they are…segregated in the school. Everybody calls them… ‘Them’… Do you want your children to be called a ‘Them’?” So, he said to me, “Will you speak to their parents because the parents think they want their children in separate classes… They want them speaking Spanish because they do not want them to lose their culture or to lose their language.” I said, “They’re not going to lose their culture and language. They will acquire a real feel for English and their second language will be Spanish. They will still be bilingual, but you will flip it.” He said, “Will you explain this to the parents?” I said, “Yes, but you will have to translate because I don't speak a word of Spanish.” He stood next to me and we did it. I said it, he said it, I said it, and he said it (Laughs). We convinced them and then he made me go get my ESL license because that was my punishment for having a big mouth (laughing a lot). My friends wanted to kill me because they had to do the same thing too because what we did was open an ESL class on every grade. It was almost like immersion, which they had back a hundred years ago and is the best way to learn…That year, all of my children in kindergarten…passed the test and tested out of ESL. That had never happened before. Then it continued to grow throughout the school. So, the school became well-known for their ESL program. And…the school became a place where people wanted their children to go. Because…we had a school where children could gain the skills they needed to do well in life. And, I had said to their parents, “You want your children to be anything they set their mind to…to be president of the United States if that is what they want to do. You are not going to have that if your child… (does not speak English well). Your child should be bilingual, but their primary language should be English because you don’t want anything…holding them back.”

Lorna’s narrative demonstrates what I described in chapter three as a process of social reconstruction. Teachers, like many other professions and occupations, engage in social reconstruction, which may create adversarial relationships. Social reconstruction may
also lead to neglect if it involves asymmetric power relations, where the only way for clients to challenge “outside others” is to opt-out.

Teachers argue that tenure and seniority encourage professional voice on behalf of their clients, as well as the norms of their profession in two ways. First, they encourage teachers to stay in the profession. Teachers agreed that experienced teachers are more willing to voice than novice teachers. Second, they provide teachers with protection against arbitrary treatment based on the personal biases of parents and administrators. In turn, this helps parents, children and society. Primarily, it helps these groups in the form of more experienced teachers. As previously mentioned, research suggests that experience improves performance. Just as importantly, though, it also fosters the willingness of teachers to challenge school policies and parental preferences that, in their professional opinion, are harmful to children. Frequently, they are challenging policies on behalf of parents and children, which is important in cases where there are asymmetric power relations. In this case, they are providing parents and children with voice so that they do not opt out.

Nevertheless, the interviews clearly indicate that voice and loyalty are not necessarily positive, nor do they always imply allegiance. Voice could be used, for example, to advance the interests of a teacher at the expense of other teachers, children, or the school as an organization. Earlier, Sara told a story about a teacher who took all the best students. The “squeaky wheel got the grease” but it negatively affected learning because the other teachers had disproportionately large numbers of at-risk or labeled students. Thus, these teachers struggled to maintain social control, which impacted their
own performance and the performance of the children in their classrooms. This example resembles what I called aggressive voice in chapter eight.

Teachers further distinguished between what we could call loyalty with allegiance and passive loyalty. Loyalty with allegiance included active behaviors. In its active form, these sentiments induced teachers to go above and beyond the call of duty, without being asked or encouraged to do so, to promote organizational and occupational goals. These ideas are suggested by Kristen’s narrative, but evidenced more fully in chapter seven. In the empirical literature, this is called organizational citizenship behaviors. For teachers, it included volunteering for school committees or chaperoning school events. We could also develop the concept of occupational citizenship behaviors to denote that mentoring new teachers and taking student teachers help the occupation thrive. In either case, these behaviors alter loyalty from a passive sentiment, which needs to be combined with voice and exit to form an active construct, into an active construct in its own right.

Passive loyalty, on the other hand, was closer to a form of neglect. In Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools, for example, passive acceptance often reflected feelings of entrapment. Entrapped allegiance is different from neglect in the sense that teachers comply with their work requirements and do nothing to harm the organization or occupation. But, like neglect, they displayed a high degree of job dissatisfaction and isolation, and no longer went beyond their formal role requirements. Some retained their bonds at the interpersonal level, yet expressed feelings of pessimism about the organization. Others expressed distrust of their colleagues, but faith in their occupation. Either way, they viewed their choices as either adjusting to a bad situation (i.e., making peace with their work environments or public policies) or leaving. Silence in these cases should never be
misconstrued as optimism, acceptance or even a belief in the organization or its fellow members. Instead, it involves passive withdrawal while carrying on with business as usual. These teachers were biding their time until they could get out (i.e., retire, leave the school or district, or leave teaching altogether). Within the occupation at large, entrapped allegiance is evidenced by the cynicism many teachers expressed toward the state and the federal government, even as they continued to implement testing and the new evaluation system. Here, teachers feel they have no recourse because their voice has largely been ignored, or portrayed as something that needed to be “managed” but not listened to.

While loyalty with voice was the most common reaction, some narratives indicated that teachers do resist by engaging in neglect. This most often involved “token” compliance. In schools that required scripting, for example, many teachers said they would speak the scripts when administrators popped in but then return to “the real business of teaching” when the administrator was gone. In one school, teachers described neglect as “flying under the radar,” or avoiding the attention of a principal who was engaging in overt favoritism and unprofessional behaviors. Meanwhile, the district as an organization was engaging in what teachers considered unethical behaviors. In this case, but also in other similar schools, teachers’ narratives indicate that most follow the norms of teaching while subversively neglecting organizational directives. These behaviors are actually a form of passive voice in organizations that heavily sanction unscripted and unsolicited participation. One teacher provided the following example:

Debbie: Last year, I had a student who…wasn’t…reading…(or) even understanding any of the letters or sounds…when I talked to my administrator…she continued to say, “He just needs time to grow…” Well the Mom kept coming to me and saying, “I don’t think so anymore. My motherly instinct is that we need more help”…So…I gave her, word for word, what my administrator said…But…said it…with a face…and…an odd tone…And I said, “Did you want
to talk to your doctor about this? And maybe get a letter from him?”…luckily…she (did)…And…come to find out, he has a learning disability …A year would not have let him grow… So…I broke the rules. I went against what I was told… but…without coming out…and saying, “You have to call your pediatrician because our administrator isn’t going to do anything about it.” …I would have lost my job.

According to Debbie, and other teachers in her school who I also interviewed, administrators in the district had adopted an informal policy of pushing the “gift of time” for children with special needs. The purpose was to reduce costs associated with providing special education services. Here, district efficiency goals conflicted with teachers’ occupational imperative to “do right by the kids.” Thus, neglecting the organization’s policy was actually a form of professional voice.

I would argue that, when large numbers of teachers engage in neglect, it indicates that something is going on with the organization, society or public polices. Teachers’ narratives clearly show that they expect their schools as organizations to create a “caring climate,” or one that encourages a widespread commitment to higher ethical standards. They also expect the state and their schools to promote egalitarian ideals. This includes a commitment to social justice, but also relative equality among teachers. They further expect the state and their schools to provide procedural justice to teachers and students. Many teachers, for example, expressed that they viewed tenure as the embodiment of a commitment to procedural justice. In the absence of this climate, teachers withdraw from organizational life and retreat into their classrooms. One teacher described what this was like:

Claire: Everyone kind of responded in different ways …some people took the abuse…held their tongue …There (was) a lot of weight gain in the building… some people ate to … survive…some people had…physical and mental issues …a number of people…experienced chest pains…if there wasn’t food, there were Kleenex, because people cried daily at work …some people isolated themselves.
Walk in the door, go to your classroom, close the door…come out when the kids arrive…close the door to teach …you stay hidden…we called that “flying under the radar”…everybody was in survival mode…get through the day, have another day…one more off the calendar…how long do I have to endure this?

We need to be careful, however, about implying that these kinds of behaviors solely relate to how schools are organized or the behaviors of administrators. I also had teachers provide examples of what neglect looks like when it is a response to parental behaviors. One suburban teacher said:

Robin: I really feel like teaching is a thankless job…I don't feel like we have any respect in the community. Parents tell us how to do our jobs and if it comes to a battle between our professional opinions and parents wants, opinions, or preferences, they will win hands down regardless of what it is…(Part of it is my district) but…it seems to be something that's going on with teaching at large. And…it's been going on for a while…I'm embarrassed to admit this but I tell people not to go into teaching because is not about teaching. It's about making sure children can pass a test, documenting what you do to make sure children pass, answering parental e-mails and doing anything a parent wants you to do when they want you to do it regardless of whether, in your professional opinion, it's in the best interests of their child and regardless of how the parent’s request might affect the classroom as a whole. We've had cases where teachers have been told to apologize to parents and they had absolutely nothing to apologize for. For example, a parent may be upset about a comment on a report card that says…”we noticed a decline in their reading skills so it would be great if you could read more at home while we work on those skills in class.” And it's clear as day that they're not reading at home and, in fact, the kids are telling you that they're not reading at home, but the teacher gets in trouble for making the comment on the report card and is told to apologize to the parent…it came to a conference between the principal, the teacher and the parent, and the principal totally threw the teacher under the bus…that’s happened several times where the teacher was not backed up. And so we have learned not to voice our professional opinions. And we certainly don't bother fighting anymore for what we believe in. We just do whatever the parents ask us to do even when we don't agree with them. So, for example, I have parents that insist their children need modified tests… even though the child was not labeled and does not have an IEP. The parent insists this child struggles even though what I see in class is totally different. But because it's a parental request, even though I don't agree with it, I give special tests that are easier and I give her modified study guides that are different from the rest of the class. I give them whatever they want because the whole building knows this family and we know not to mess with them because we'll get in trouble and it's just not worth it…my principal just rolls his eyes and says "if that's what she wants.” And that's what they get because that's what they want…we don't have a
lot of professional autonomy either from parents or from administrators… You know, we kind of quietly do our own thing where we can but you really have to pick and choose (laughs). We just try to stay within the lines as much as possible because it's not worth it to try to go beyond them (laughs)... I think the parents feel like Harvard is on the line in kindergarten. So...they get very upset if their children get a bad grade on the report card, not because the kid did poorly. They're upset because it's documented somewhere...to them it's on paper forever that their child got a 70 in math...And this is elementary school where no one is going to see these grades.

Robin’s narrative is actually about a combination of parental and administrative behaviors. Still, her claim that teachers have learned not to voice their professional opinions, do not fight for what they believe in, and just do whatever parents ask them to do, even if they do not agree with it, is a classic case of neglect in the form of “you can’t fight City Hall.” In this case, though, City Hall is the parents.

Either way, these behaviors have real consequences for schools as organizations, teaching as an occupation, and society. Schools as collectivities require teachers to be present in the hallways and to engage in other voluntary behaviors, such as chaperoning dances, supervising clubs and activities, attending sporting events, and serving on committees. These behaviors serve as a form of “eyes on the street,” but also allow schools to (efficiently) offer extracurricular activities since (mostly) teachers are not paid to do them. When teachers forgo these behaviors, it serves as a signal that something is going on. If schools heed these warnings and alter their policies or behaviors, than teacher neglect serves a positive function. If they do not, these behaviors may negatively impact organizational and occupational performance, as well as student progress. The latter (largely) occurs as a result of teachers no longer being willing to “stick their neck out” on behalf of children. However, it may also lead to situations where neglect translates into more overt acts of negligence, such as absenteeism, showing up late for
work, and so forth. Although I did not have any teachers express that absenteeism and showing up late for work was a problem, the fact that teachers in what I described as Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools experienced health-related issues suggests this may be a problem in some schools.

Although most people view neglect as a shameful, and even subversive, behavior, teachers’ narratives indicate that it sometimes has ameliorative effects. As discussed in chapter seven, teaching is unique because teachers are able to withdraw from schools as organizations by “closing their classroom doors” while still fulfilling their obligations in the classroom. This enables them to remain in the occupation and slowly work to alter the situation from within. Teachers’ narratives further indicated that neglect serves two other ameliorative purposes. First, as previously mentioned, teaching has a clinical side that sometimes requires (emotional) distance in order to diagnose and treat problem areas in the classroom. Second, as shown in chapter seven, the emotional and physical demands of teaching as an occupation are quite high and often unsustainable over long periods of time. In these cases, withdrawal does not reflect low job satisfaction or work motivation. Instead, it is a way for teachers to manage stress by (temporarily) conserving resources given the (often) unsustainable demands of teaching as an occupation. Many teachers expressed that this was one reason why “having the summer off” was so critical. Teachers used this time for work-related activities, such as knowledge gathering and lesson planning, but the break from providing intense emotion work helped them reconnect to their occupational ideals. Given that there is a correlation between teacher effectiveness and years of teaching, neglect in the form of temporary withdrawal is likely to be beneficial if it helps to stem exit from the organization and the occupation.
When teachers have exhausted all internal avenues of redressing their issues with public policies or their schools as organizations, their final option is to exit. In the case of teaching, this includes resigning, retiring early, requesting a transfer to another school within the district, or taking a job in a different district. My interviews indicate that all of these have occurred as a result of NCLB (Please see Graph 6 in chapter four). As evident in chapter seven, NCLB has clearly altered the organizational and occupational landscape in ways that have led to increased value conflict. In some schools, teachers felt that exit was their only recourse. These behaviors were especially prevalent in Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools because teachers felt they could not voice their concerns and therefore ameliorate some of the more pernicious aspects of federal, state and district policies. Sadly, teachers who worked in schools that were labeled, or were not labeled but served high numbers of disadvantaged students, made similar claims. Here, though, value conflict related to the fact that learning is co-produced. In these schools, teachers experienced emotional reactions to their inability to meet public expectations in a political environment that valued test scores above everything else. These feelings of personal inefficacy caused them to question remaining loyal to their schools and occupation. Others could not deal with working in a socially unjust system. In chapter seven, I called these teachers ethical leavers.

Summing up, Neo-liberal discourse promotes exit as a means of dealing with inefficient and ineffective public monopolies. My interviews with teachers, on the other hand, show that exit has had destructive effects. First, high need schools have disproportionately lost large number of teachers, who have been replaced with less effective, novice teachers. Second, Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools have replaced their most
vocal teachers with those who are willing to remain quiescent in the face of serious
problems. When combined with the very high exit rates in some schools and districts,
teachers’ narratives clearly suggest they expect their state and their administrators to
(formally and informally) provide a caring climate. In a climate characterized by
competition, a lack of due process, and the absence of social justice, teachers will engage
in acts of organizational neglect and leave their schools or districts in large numbers.

One teacher said:

Annie: I’ve never thought of leaving my profession. I’ve always loved it, and
can’t imagine doing anything else…the reason for me wanting to leave in the past
year has to do with the administration and things that are going on in our district
…(that) made it very difficult to be a teacher…We’ve had about 19 teachers retire
early, quit, or leave in the last year and a half. And…the atmosphere and the
morale in our building is extremely low…I’ve thought of leaving, just the district,
but I’ve actually seriously considered (emotional pause) leaving the profession
because it has just affected me so tremendously …losing that many friends and
colleagues…is really disheartening…a lot of very good people…leaving…A lot
of lives have been destroyed…people have been financially…ruined…it’s
affected health…many people on medication at this time…the distrust in our
building…(But) I just can’t leave it yet…This is my life. I love this job…I am
always happy (here)…Even with all of this. I am always happy with the
children…There are just so many people in our building who couldn’t go on…
(they felt they were losing) their health…their dignity, their respect for
themselves. How long can you…have been a respected person in your field and
suddenly… have no say anymore…you are just a robot who goes in and does
things one way because someone has decided that this is the way you should
teach?…Many of the people who left said, “I started to lose respect for myself”
(starts crying).

These behaviors are a clear signal that either the organization is in decline, or that public
policies have created an unsustainable work environment or a socially unjust system.

Yet, the system will not change if teachers continue to leave while remaining silent, or
withdraw their support from the organization and the occupation. In some cases, the
ability to withdraw and retreat into the classroom provides a safety valve, but, if the
conditions causing these behaviors are not redressed, the state and schools as
organizations will diminish the capacity of the occupation to recruit new members. These ideas are evidenced by the difficulties urban and high need schools had recruiting teachers before they earned the right to collective voice, and the ongoing difficulties they experience competing with suburban schools for well-trained teachers. They are further suggested by the fact that the majority of teachers told me that they would not recommend teaching as an occupation to someone they care about as a result of the current political and economic environment.

As a whole, these interviews show that teachers’ occupational norms play a very strong role in the behavioral choices they make at work, including how they do their jobs. They also affect how teachers feel about their jobs if they result in value conflict. Even so, teachers are also clearly influenced by their school communities, as well as their individual views about fairness and appropriate action. Narratives of resistance, for example, were more prominent in Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools where test scores were often used to “weed out teachers,” but the behavior was not uniform. Some teachers were willing to “teach to the test” in these environments. Others exited rather than allow themselves to be (inappropriately) blamed and shamed for problems society was unwilling to address, or engage in behaviors they believed were inappropriate. Occupationally, most resistance involved things that teachers believed were harmful to children. Here, teachers more typically chose voice over neglect, but were willing to engage in subversive acts in unethical environments. Others engaged in variegated neglect, meaning they complied in some areas, engaged in token compliance in others, and modified or outright disobeyed some directives. Typically, these responses were not
harmful to students. Still, they may decrease the effectiveness of schools as organizations and the occupation.

These interviews further show that teachers care about procedural and social justice. In an unfair and unjust system, many teachers become “ethical leavers.” This included perceptions about institutional justice and fairness, meaning public policies, as well as organizational justice and fairness, or how schools treated teachers and students. Teachers valued schools as caring communities, and expressed discontent in the absence of positive relationships between administrators and teachers, teachers and teachers, and parents, students and teachers. Teachers especially expressed conflict related to parents acting in ways that harmed “other people’s children.” All of these conflicts resulted in dissenting voice and subversive neglect.

In concert, these findings indicate that policymakers need to take values into account, as well as emotions. If policies force teachers to violate their occupational norms and principles, they will voice but then withdraw. Over the long term, many will leave the profession. When teaching and learning are examined from a moral or ethical lens, versus a business-economic lens, we remove the focus from catching bad apples to redressing the underlying issues that affect school performance. Under this lens, socio-economic inequality is a moral issue. It needs to be redressed by government because it harms children, not just because it harms society as a whole. To do so, we need to change the way we think and talk about public education, not just how we “do” teaching. There is a powerful connection between words and actions, and thoughts and deeds.
Discussion: Parents as Consumers vs. Citizen Co-Producers

Cohen (2010) contends that government policies in response to the Great Depression changed the way our nation thought about emergency assistance and public services. During this time, many Americans came to believe that living in a county, town or city entitled citizens to a minimum level of services, and that these services were not dependent on private side-payments. As this dissertation shows, these beliefs began to change in the 1980s when political elites increasingly advocated transforming Americans from community members into customers. According to this view, basic services are not a right but a privilege. One interesting example of this was discussed in a recent article about firefighters. The article describes a situation in a small rural community in western Tennessee where firefighters watched a mobile home burn to the ground because the homeowner had not paid a $75 municipal fee. They were under orders to only respond to those who had paid, and so they doused the borders to protect the neighbor’s house, but let the mobile home burn (Frayer 2010). Like this article, this dissertation suggests that the notion of what citizenship entails in terms of personal rights and communal responsibilities is still under construction nationally, as well as locally. The implications of these trends are spatial, institutional and ideational.

In point of fact, access to quality public services has always been spatially influenced by what Bourdieu (2000b, 127) calls geographic and social positioning. He writes:

those who are deprived of capital are either physically or symbolically held at a distance from goods that are the rarest socially; they are forced to stick with the most undesirable and the least rare persons or goods. The lack of capital intensifies the experience of finitude; it chains one to a place.
As shown throughout this dissertation, the state has not been a neutral actor in these developments. Institutionally, state policies have ensured quality services for some while chaining others to place. Ideationally, these policies were supported by broader paradigms of public service provision, and backed by an even broader vision of state-society relations. Cohen (2003) calls this broader vision of state-society relations the “Consumer’s Republic.”

The Consumer’s Republic posed that the private marketplace, supported by government resources, would deliver economic prosperity. In the process, the market would accomplish important social democratic goals, including political freedom and participation, but also social egalitarianism. She argues, however, that the growing commercialization of the public sphere increasingly created the “Consumerized Republic,” where self-interested citizens viewed the government and its policies as similar to market transactions. In this case, political elites and citizens judged our public life by how well it serves our own interests, versus whether it promotes the collective good. Certainly, NCLB supports her conclusions. During the debates, political elites in both parties portrayed parents as “system changers,” meaning they would put pressure on public schools to “do right by the kids,” both through their everyday acts of participation (i.e., voice) and by exiting from poorly performing schools (i.e., choice). Implicitly and explicitly, they assumed that parents’ pursuit of their own interests would “raise all boats.” Largely left unacknowledged were the very real ways parents use their social and cultural capital to advance their own children at the expense of non-connected children and families. Elite narratives also failed to acknowledge that parents have different capacities and propensities to influence educational processes, and that both of these are
correlated to socio-economic status. Thus, the market empowers some consumers, while chaining others to place.

Meanwhile, as shown in chapter eight, parents are not necessarily savvy consumers. That is, their decisions of where to place their children do not solely reflect the quality of the school or its teachers. Many teachers claimed, for example, that parents did not choose teachers based on their effectiveness and that, even when they did, they were often not well informed about who was and who was not an effective teacher. One suburban elementary teacher told me:

Meagan: (In) our community, parents are very involved…they think they know what teachers are like but they really don't. It’s a popularity contest. It is not what you do …It is… showy. It is showmanship. It is not the meat and potatoes of being a good, successful teacher. It is more, “Who has the best party? Who takes them out more? Who plays games with them?” It is about who they think is “fun” and even who wears the best clothing. And, a lot of it is who knows the parents who have good social connections and who caters to the parents…(Parents) really don't know, they just think they know…So, I think we have to be careful of the whole popularity contest because it is there.

Teachers also alleged that many parents choose their children’s school for its proximity to their workplace, as well as the kinds of services that are available in the community, such as childcare, rather than the quality of the school per se. More problematically, these decisions often reflected assessments about “other people’s children,” meaning parents choose schools by socio-economic markers.

All of these mean that exit is unlikely to improve public education because it is not necessarily based on educational quality. More importantly, it will not close the achievement gap because it exacerbates socio-economic stratification, and therefore the effects of inequality on school performance. In the meantime, as described in chapter eight, education is not even a true marketplace. It is a public service that is also a public
good. The quality of the school affects everyone in the community, just like the quality of public education affects everyone in a society. That means that exit is metaphorically, but not actually, possible. Just as importantly, education is not a product in the traditional sense of the word. It is co-produced, meaning parents and students are involved in its production, not just its consumption. Because the variegated behaviors of parents and students affect everyone in the consumption community, it is unlikely that state coercion and parental choice will serve as effective mechanisms for encouraging “producers” (i.e., public schools, administrators and teachers) to improve educational quality.

The language of market accountability poses other unacknowledged problems. It conveys, for instance, that parents and students can discipline teachers and administrators to make them more responsive. This assumes that the customer is always right, and that schools should personalize and individualize services. This assumption negates the professional judgments of teachers and administrators, and interferes with the ability of teachers and schools to meet collective ends. One suburban teacher explained:

Diane: That is the problem with treating parents as consumers. It is like the customer is always right but what if they are not? But there are also cases where helping one person is bad for other people…What is in the best interest of one person may lead to bad things for the whole. I think we have promoted this idea that parents are always right, but parents are mostly only looking out for the interests of their individual child. You have to have people who are thinking about the whole. Teachers need to do this and it is not always popular. But, if you look in the newspaper, there is article after article about how the taxpayer has all of these rights, and how the taxpayer should know everything about me because they are paying my salary. They should have ownership over me, not just over my career, but over me because I work in a public job…That is wrong. But…we are always talking about taxpayer rights like those are the only people who matter.

Many teachers agreed with Diane that parents looking out for their own children (often) negatively impacts “other peoples’ kids.” This affects service quality, but it also has
implications for education costs. First, it ignores the fact that, as a public service, school funding is constrained by political decisions. Thus, educators cannot provide unlimited services. Second, discourse that creates a sense of over-entitlement, as in “the customer is always right,” may lead to growing issues with adversarial legalism, as parent consumers are increasingly unwilling to accept limits on their service entitlement. These ideas are evidenced by teachers’ narratives in chapter seven about special education. Third, conceptualizing parents as consumers creates troublesome links between public service provision and payment. Most especially, it creates a logic of dependency for children whose parents cannot afford the price. One teacher told me a story, for example, about a wealthy suburban district that “encouraged” parents to “donate” a certain sum per child to the school every year. The newspaper then published the amount parents contributed to “recognize” (i.e., reward) those who donated above the amount and acknowledge those who contributed the suggested amount, even as it shamed, through silence, those who did not contribute. Here, the stigmatization of those who could not afford the price resembles how welfare recipients and the working poor are stigmatized in the wider consumer society. As one teacher said, “they do not have the things that others have and so they don’t want to participate at school.”

More globally, teachers’ narratives suggest that market accountability is not the same as democratic accountability. In the case of NCLB, testing has shifted authority and power away from teachers, administrators, and citizens (i.e., the “public” in public schools) to state bureaucrats, corporate elites and interest groups, who use their authority to influence what is taught by constructing what is tested. Meanwhile, the public assumes that there is a consensus in terms of what constitutes passing and failing (i.e.,
that the cutoff score is scientific), but there is a lot of ambiguity in testing. Thus, the actual cutoff score is neither objective nor scientific. It is constructed through a political process.

Envisioning public schools as a “marketplace” and parents as consumers also has implications for the ethical delivery of public services. As discussed in chapter seven, teachers argue that the ethos of care improves service delivery by moving beyond a narrow focus on fulfilling the academic outcomes of a school toward developing children as well-adjusted human beings who voluntarily contribute to society. The customer orientation, on the other hand, transfers these ethical considerations about autonomy and due process into market calculations about outcomes. In brief, the ends replace concerns about the means. The ends include efficiency and effectiveness, as measured by test scores or consumer satisfaction. What gets lost is the democratic tradition, including procedural justice, but also other values such as fairness, equity, social justice, and universal care. Yet, this dissertation clearly shows that teachers, parents and students care about these values, not just quality or even the price of public services.

Finally, teachers argued that envisioning public schools as a “marketplace” and parents as consumers has implications for democracy. When we think of education as a good that is produced by teachers and consumed by individuals, versus a good that is produced collectively for the benefit of society, we jeopardize the broader public goals that are provided through a strong system of public education. In the process, the language of teachers as technicians and parents and students as “consumers” crowds out their roles as citizen co-producers. The lesson that teachers, parents, and children learn is that “what’s in it for me” is more important than anything else. Teachers and
administrators “do” teaching for good evaluations, parents “maneuver” to advance their own children, and children “do” school to get ahead. In this way, learning becomes reduced to a performance that is devoid of any social value. This perverts the fact that administrators, teachers, parents and students are “members” of a community, meaning they have obligations to those around them. For teachers, this includes a willingness to go beyond the technical aspects of their jobs. For children, it involves participating in class and helping fellow students. In society, it includes civic participation and a willingness to contribute to redistributive policies. In short, democracy and the free market are not synonymous. Democratic participation means the willingness to accept the collective responsibilities of citizenship.

**Conclusion**

Summing up, like chapters seven and eight, this chapter mapped the similarities and differences between the assumptions of public policymakers and the lived realities of teachers. Together, these levels of analysis capture how state-society relations interact to resolve or perpetuate public problems in education, and the impact of these interactions on teaching and learning, as well as on the democratic social purposes of schools. During the debates on NCLB, political elites framed education as critical for redressing broader economic and social goals. When translated into economic logics, public education was characterized as the means to promote a competitive race to the top. When characterized in social terms, public education was portrayed as the means to redress individual and societal issues. Either way, testing and accountability were framed as the means to achieve efficiency and effectiveness by diagnosing and treating problem areas.
Unsurprisingly, then, teachers charge that public debates have become “monopolized” by market values, such as efficiency, effectiveness, and competition. They view NCLB and RTP as the embodiment of these values, and claim that both are fostering a race to the bottom. In their words, testing and accountability are about blaming and shaming, and measuring and punishing. Here, students are characterized as parts of a system, and teachers are employed as technicians on the assembly line production of future consumers. Teachers, on the other hand, collectively expressed that education is critical for the development of children as human beings. It is also critical for the cultural, socio-economic and political well-being of the nation. As such, it should not be relegated to serving rational, economic ends. They advocated reclaiming the broader social democratic purposes of public education as the means of creating a productive and caring society.
CONCLUSION
THE CIVICS LESSON: BRINGING THE STATE BACK IN

Sociologists call the accepted customs, conventions, and moral attitudes of a group or society social mores. They argue that social mores, like glue, hold a society together. In the process, they affect democratic performance by fostering social cohesion and social control. Toqueville (1994), for example, recognized that habits and beliefs were just as important as the legal and political system for sustaining democracy. By habits, he meant the less visible aspects of democracy, such as morals, manners, ideas, and emotions. He believed that American democracy would not survive unless citizens continued to engage in “habits of the heart,” but was concerned that democracy was at-risk due to American individualism, which he placed as both the cause and consequence of social equality. Both encouraged citizens to withdraw into their private lives, including their world of family and close friends, because individuals did not need to rely on the collective to meet their daily needs. In consequence, America’s propensity to form voluntary associations would wither, and social equality would decline.

The gist of Toqueville’s argument is that Americans had forged strong social bonds through their propensity to create voluntary associations. These social ties were a prerequisite for engaging in habits of the heart. They were also a source of economic well-being. Because he viewed voluntary associations as a counterweight to powerful political and economic interests, including a centralized state, he predicted that the withering of voluntary associations would make citizens increasingly dependent on the central government for economic, political and social assistance. But, lacking strong social bonds, citizens (i.e., David) would no longer have the ability to join against powerful social and economic actors. These groups could then use an increasingly
centralized state (i.e., Goliath) to achieve their interests. Then, socio-economic equality would decline and put democracy at-risk. Thus, Toqueville placed culture and societal forces as the causal driver for the construction of social capital and democracy.

Teachers, on the other hand, suggest that the government has played an active role in both the decline of social capital and democracy. Their narratives resemble the arguments made by political scientist Benjamin Barber (1996) in his article entitled “The Civics Lesson.” Written over a decade ago, the article was commenting on the rise of “Washington-bashing” as a means of securing electoral votes. Barber points out the irony of politicians, who are part of government and supported by tax dollars and the Washington bureaucracy, running against government and bureaucrats, and implying government steals from us when it taxes our hard-earned income. His words still resonate given growing concerns about the tenor of political debate, including its links to the attack on Senator Giffords and 19 others in Arizona. They are also relevant given teachers’ narratives in this dissertation.

Barber argued that politicians who campaign against democratic representation and government do not deserve our vote. They need a civics lesson instead. His civics lesson is two-fold: First, representative institutions are not an “it” that steal from “us.”

We are the government and the government is us. Barber (1996, 21) writes:

In democracies, representative institutions do not steal our liberties…they are the precious medium through which we secure those liberties. Our Founding Fathers understood…that in the absence of government we get what Thomas Hobbes called the war of all against all: liberty in theory but, in practice, lives that are “nasty, brutish, and short.” That is why…(they) did not say they were going to abolish government to secure liberty, they said they were going to “ordain and establish” government…to secure liberty but also to “form a more perfect union” (not downsize it)…“establish justice” (not leave it to the states—that’s what the Articles of Confederation had done with such dismal results); and…“insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general
welfare” (not privatize them in the vain hope that selfish individuals and commercial markets would somehow get the job done).

Second, if we do not like how government spends our money, we should elect new leaders rather than deprive the government of the revenues it needs to act on our common behalf. In Barber’s words (1996, 33), when the government taxes Americans:

“It” does not steal from “us”…we pool our resources so we can act on behalf of the commonweal—the weal (well-being) common to us...Taxes are not tithes imposed by tyrants, they are self-imposed duties that permit our government to discharge our common purposes. To cry “Give Americans back their hard-earned tax dollars!” is a disingenuous way of saying “To hell with establishing justice, promoting welfare and securing the blessings of liberty!” It’s nothing more than a cynical bribe to citizens calling on them to give up on one another and go it alone.

He then continues with a geography lesson. He writes: “Bashing Washington in favor of Russell, Kansas” is not only “another way of bashing democracy,” it also ignores a geographic reality. Today, most Americans live in large urban/suburban metropolises. America is more like Washington than Hope, Arkansas or the other small towns cited by politicians during elections. He claims that the passing of small-town life, with all of its neighborly amenities and common assets, is why governmental remedies are increasingly important. He does not portend that small towns are immune to struggle or economic hardship. Americans across-the-board suffer from inadequate transportation, housing, health care, and poverty. Rather, he argues that politicians need to redress these problems rather than opine the vanished magic of small town life. Teachers’ narratives suggest that, in order to do so, we need to change the way we talk as well as how we act. The next section supports their claims through historical discourse analysis and trends.

Public Discourse as Symbolic Violence

Earlier, I discussed Hugh Heclo’s (1974) claim that political elites “power” and “puzzle.” In the 1970s, many were puzzling about the balkanization of American life,
and the strange combination of resignation, apathy and anger that had taken hold of Americans. At the 1976 Democratic convention, for instance, Congresswoman Barbara Jordan warned that “the great danger” now faced by America is “that we will cease to be one nation and become instead a collection of interest groups; city against suburb, region against region, individual against individual. Each seeking to satisfy private wants” (Troy 2005, 29-30). Of course, the United States has always been diverse, but her comments reflected a growing concern that Americans were fragmenting into enclaves of individuals who identified with physical, biological and other markers, such as race, gender, ethnic origin, sexual preference, age, and so forth.

Many also expressed concerns about public opinion polls, which showed a growing mistrust of public and private institutions. For example, trust in government declined from almost 80 percent in the late 1950s to about 33 percent in 1976, and confidence in business fell from around 70 percent in the late 1960s to about 15 percent in 1977. Meanwhile, in 1959, 85 percent of Americans surveyed said that their “political institutions” were “their greatest pride in their country,” yet 66 percent in 1973 were “dissatisfied” with government. Concomitantly, those who believed their opinions did not “count much anymore” in government grew from 37 percent in 1966 to 61 percent in 1973 (Troy 2005, 29). The public further expressed declining faith in traditional forms of authority, such as the media, military, doctors, lawyers, and teachers. Just as ominously, for the first time in the postwar era, Americans claimed that they were disappointed with the present and fearful about the future (Collins 2007, 14). As their faith in government declined, many Americans abandoned the public sphere. They also were less willing to bear collective burdens, as evidenced by a new phrase “Not in My Backyard,” or
NIMBY. This phrase emerged as an increasingly distrustful America refused proposals to build landfills, prisons, factories, and sometimes even schools, near their homes (Troy 2005, 30). As shown throughout this dissertation, all of these affected support for TPA and the Keynesian welfare state.

In times of crisis, Americans have often looked to their schools. The late 1970s were no different. Many looked to public schools to redress what Schlesinger (1992) would later call “the disuniting of America.” Others pinned their hopes on education as a means of fixing America’s declining economic competitiveness. Some also viewed public education as a means to redress socio-economic inequality. Teachers asserted, however, that political elites increasingly blamed the public sphere, including public schools, for issues within the broader cultural political economy, and even blamed Americans themselves. In the process, they justified market solutions for public problems and a disinvestment in the public sphere. This dissertation supports their conclusions, as evidenced by the move from TPA and Keynesianism to NPM and Neoliberalism. We can further support these claims by examining how political elites and commentators framed America’s abandonment of the public sphere, declining economic competitiveness, and growing mistrust of one another.

In 1976, writer Tom Wolfe created a new phrase, “The Me Generation” to describe “Baby Boomers,” or the generation of Americans who were born between 1946 and 1964. He then contrasted them with their predecessors, a group that Tom Brokaw would later refer to as “the Greatest Generation.” Wolfe argued that the Greatest Generation had come of age during the Great Depression and World War II and therefore

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180 Social trust has continued to decline. Only one-third of Americans say most people can be trusted. Half felt that way in 1972, when the General Social Survey (GSS) first asked the question. And, a record high of nearly two-thirds say "you can't be too careful" in dealing with people (Cass 2013).
learned the value of hard work and self-sacrifice. The Me Generation, on the other hand, had not shared in those kinds of collective experiences. And, having been given too much, were self-absorbed, selfish, spoiled, and more concerned with personal gratification than pursuing social or political causes, or engaging in civic duties, such as voting (Wolfe 1976; Winerip 2012).

As mentioned in chapter two, Putnam (2000) draws very similar conclusions. He explored the decline of social capital in the U.S., which he defined as “features of social life—networks, norms, and trust—that enable participants to act together to more effectively pursue shared objectives” (Putnam 1996, 56). Putnam’s concern reflected his belief that social capital was a public resource (i.e., a public good) that facilitated the ability for individuals to engage in collective or coordinated action, especially those on behalf of one’s community or society (Putnam 1993, 1995 and 2000). He theorized that people who lived in societies characterized by norms of trust and reciprocity were happier, healthier, and lived longer. They were also more productive. This is because they experienced lower costs of transacting since most people obeyed the law and honored formal and informal contractual obligations (Putnam 1993 and 2000). Like Wolfe, Putnam (2000) largely suggests that the decline of social capital in the United States was cultural and reflected different formative experiences between generations. However, he also argued that increased access to “individual” forms of entertainment, such as television, had delimited engagement in communal entertainments, such as

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181 Putnam (1993 and 2000) claimed that, once internalized, civic norms, such as paying debts on time and giving to charity, become a collective resource for others to draw on. For example, in societies where most people obey traffic laws, people are safer driving and experience lower insurance and police costs. This definition of how norms structure behavior is traceable to Durkheim and Parsons, who argued that norms and values are “introjected” during childhood and become internalized as obligations to behave in a certain way (Portes 1998; Woolcock 1998).
bowling, which had previously built social ties among participants and thereby fostered collective action.

In contrast, Piven and Cloward (1989) show that political institutions have played a prominent role. Voting, for example, has consistently been structured in ways that have disenfranchised the least educated, the poor, the disabled and minorities. Because they looked at institutions, rather than focusing on the characteristics of non-voters, such as attitudes, preferences, and resources, their research provides a counter-discourse to most accounts of “why Americans don’t vote.” Schattschneider (1960) goes one step further. He argued that the political system itself mobilizes bias in favor of the wealthy and most educated. These ideas are supported by research conducted by Eric Uslaner. He, like others, shows that trust rises with wealth, and has declined as the gap between the nation's rich and poor has grown because more Americans feel shut out and have lost their sense of a shared fate (Uslaner 2010). In an interview, Uslaner explains:

People who believe the world is a good place and it's going to get better and you can help make it better…will be trusting…If you believe it's dark and driven by outside forces you can't control, you will be a mistruster (Cass 2013).

Together, research and political polls support teachers’ claims that racism, discrimination and a high rate of poverty destroy trust and affect our public life. African-Americans have consistently expressed far less faith in "most people" than white Americans, and are less likely to participate in public life (Cass 2013; Piven and Cloward 1989; Uslaner 2002; 2012). Just as interesting, though, the decline in trust is largely being driven by changing attitudes among whites. Nearly 8 in 10 African-Americans in the 2012 survey felt that "you can't be too careful." That figure has largely remained steady across the 25 GSS surveys since 1972 (Cass 2013). Perhaps more interesting is the fact that the most
trusting years of the GSS poll coincided with Watergate and the Vietnam War. Trust dropped off in the more stable 1980s (Cass 2013), which was also a time of growing economic inequality. These latter arguments provide evidence for how teachers characterized the problem, both in terms of what they face as public servants and where they place the blame.

Yet, an analysis of elite political discourse suggests that many told similar narratives to Putnam and Toqueville. Certainly, some blamed political institutions, events and actors (especially the snafus of their opponents), but many others framed Americans as (culturally) deficient in some way and blamed the public sphere for these (moral) deficits. In 1979, President Jimmy Carter combined these narratives in what would later become known as his “malaise” speech. He began by discussing an “invisible” threat that “strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will.” He said that this “crisis in confidence” has resulted in a “growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives” and a lack of national unity. As evidence of this threat, Carter notes that:

For the first time in the history of our country a majority of our people believe that the next five years will be worse than the past five years. Two-thirds of our people do not even vote. The productivity of American workers is actually dropping, and the willingness of Americans to save for the future has fallen below that of all other people in the Western world…there is a growing disrespect for government and for churches and for schools, the news media, and other institutions.

He then largely blames this threat on Americans worship of “self-indulgence and consumption,” but also acknowledges that these changes occurred gradually as a result of “shocks and tragedy,” including the murders of John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, and political issues, such as “the agony of Vietnam,” Watergate, and
our “growing dependence on foreign oil.” He further indicts the government by noting that, when the people turned to Washington, they found it was “isolated from the mainstream of our nation's life...an island...incapable of action” because Congress was “twisted and pulled in every direction by hundreds of well-financed and powerful special interests.” He quickly adds, though, that spending alone is not the solution. “We can spend until we empty our treasuries, and we may summon all the wonders of science,” yet that will not resolve the problem. Instead, we need to “tap our greatest resources -- America's people...values...confidence” (Carter, “The Crisis of Confidence Speech”). In short, Americans needed to find the solution within.

In the days following his speech, Carter tried to renew Americans’ faith in their government by purging his cabinet (Collins 2007). Then, in October of 1979, he signed a law that created a new cabinet level Department of Education. His actions were a sign that education would increasingly become both the problem and the source for its solution. They also signaled the growing political power of teachers unions. Many retired teachers alleged that this growing political power would eventually make them a target of people who wanted to change “the system.” This dissertation supports their claims.

Of course, Carter’s view of the crisis and how to fix it was not hegemonic. For example, Republican candidate Ronald Reagan contested his portrayal of Americans, saying “I see no malaise.” Yet, he too pointed to a growing incapacity of the federal government, especially its weakness abroad. As evidence, he cited a series of diplomatic and military defeats, including the fall of Vietnam, the Iranian hostage crisis, the botched attempt to free the American hostages in Iran, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan
(Collins 2007). He further blamed the government for the stagnating economy. He then asked Americans “are you happier today than when Mr. Carter became President of the United States?” (Reagan, “Election Eve Address”). Americans said “no,” and elected Reagan president in 1980. As shown throughout this dissertation, teachers argue that this began a protracted period of America’s retreat from public life and collective action, as Americans were told that individuals pursuing their own interests would aggregate into a more prosperous America.

In sum, to a certain extent, political elites acknowledged that events had fostered public concerns about the capacity and legitimacy of American public institutions. Less discussed, though, were concerns about private institutions, such as businesses, or concerns about the negative effects of capitalism and technological advancements on society, families and individuals. Economic and technological advancements have certainly increased Americans’ standard of living overall, but these gains have often come at the expense of other important aspects of their lives, including their overall health and the quality of their lives, but also the viability of their social ties to one another and the natural world around them.

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that there is another way to puzzle over collective events. We can analyze government actions and rhetoric. Teachers made similar conclusions. For example, we can examine how political and intellectual elites describe the government, including its efficiency and effectiveness, but also its obligations to the people it serves. We can also explore how political and intellectual elites depict citizens’ obligations to one another and to their nation. We can further study how they portray citizens in general and groups of citizens in particular. And, we can
analyze how the state treats people and groups of people through government institutions, public policies, and rhetoric.

Earlier, I used Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence to convey that words matter. We can use a few examples to illustrate a trend since the 1960s. Johnson argued on behalf of using the federal government to create a Great Society. Nixon, Carter and Reagan all, in some way, told Americans not to expect too much from the federal government because it was part of the problem, not the solution. Bill Clinton boasted that "the era of big government is over" (Clinton, "1996 State of the Union Address"). John F. Kennedy said “ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country” (Kennedy, “Inaugural Address”). Nixon told Americans it was not selfish to want to keep their money (“Radio Address on the Philosophy of Government,” 997-1000).

Building on the tax revolts of the 1970s, Reagan argued that cutting taxes for the wealthiest Americans would (eventually) trickle-down to help the rest. George H.W. Bush said “Read my lips, no new taxes” (Bush, "RNC Acceptance Speech", August 18, 1988). Discussing Clintons proposed tax increases to balance the budget, Representative Bob Goodlatte (R-GA) said that "Small businesses generate the bulk of this Nation’s new jobs...they will be the hardest hit...(and) when you raise taxes, you kill jobs."

Representative Christopher Cox (R-CA), on the other hand, said that the tax increase was the "Dr. Kevorkian plan for our economy. It will kill jobs...businesses...kill even the higher tax revenues that these suicidal tax increasers hope to gain" (Garafolo 2010). And, House Minority Leader, and former Speaker, John Boehner (R-OH) claimed that
raising taxes, to reduce the federal deficit or replace pending budget cuts as a result of sequestration, would be like stealing from Americans (McAuliff and Siddiqui 2013).

In terms of how government characterizes Americans, Nixon told citizens it was not insensitive or racist to be upset about affirmative action (“Radio Address on the Philosophy of Government,” 997-1000). During his 1976 presidential campaign, Reagan enjoyed telling the story of a “welfare queen” from Chicago who had “eighty names, thirty addresses, twelve Social Security cards and is collecting veteran's benefits on four non-existing deceased husbands.” She was also “collecting social security…Medicaid…food stamps, and…welfare under each of her names,” so that her “tax-free cash income” exceeded $150,000. In his 1988 campaign against Democratic Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, George H.W. Bush ran an attack ad about a convicted felon named Willie Horton. While serving a life sentence for murder in Massachusetts, Horton was released on a weekend furlough program, and attacked and raped a white woman while her fiancé was forced to watch. The ad stirred up racial fears. Meanwhile, throughout the campaign, Bush referred to Dukakis as a “tax and spend liberal” who was “soft on crime.”

More recently, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-GA) suggested that it might be better to put children in orphanages rather than provide welfare to poor mothers. And, while speaking in Iowa in 2011, he said that poor children in poor neighborhoods did not have good work habits because "nobody around them...works. So they literally have no habit of showing up...staying all day...no habit of I do this and you give me cash, unless it's illegal" (Blake 2012; Blow 2011; Cannon 1991, 518; Farhi 2004; Van Biema 1994). Then, in an address he made at Harvard, he declared that child labor

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182 Dukakis inherited the furlough program from his Republican predecessor and eventually ended it.
laws condemn children to poverty, and exclaimed “You say to somebody, you shouldn't go to work before you're what, 14, 16 years of age, fine. You're totally poor...You're in a school that is failing with a teacher that is failing.” His solution was to “get rid of unionized janitors” and hire children to clean the school. That way the “kids would actually do work, they would have cash, they would have pride in the schools, they'd begin the process of rising” ("Newt Says Schools Should Fire Janitor, Use Students Instead"). Building on his ideas, his colleague, Representative Jack Kingston (R-GA), proposed having poor children sweep the cafeteria floors in exchange for their free and reduced price lunch. He then acknowledged it:

would be an administrative problem, and...would probably lose you money. But think what we would gain as a society in getting people -- getting the myth out of their head that there is such a thing as a free lunch (Terkel 2013).

Apparently, the administrative problems and fiscal costs were more important than the embarrassment low-income children would suffer as a result of sweeping the cafeteria floor in front of their wealthier counterparts, who were able to sit and eat lunch, and talk with their friends, thanks to the free lunch provided by their parents. Just as interesting, he did not talk about the “free lunch” that the government provides to the food industry as part of government subsidized agribusiness.

In September of last year, Representative Trey Radel voted for Republican legislation that would allow states to make food stamp recipients get drug tested to prove they are not on drugs. In justifying the legislation, he said that “nearly 30 states have introduced legislation to drug test for welfare programs...We have a moral obligation to equip the states with the tools they need to discourage the use of illegal drugs.” Radel was then arrested for possession of cocaine. He defended himself by claiming he
struggled “with the disease of alcoholism, and this led to an extremely irresponsible choice” (Delaney 2013). Meanwhile, many people who struggle with the same disease are in prison due to tough drug laws, poor health insurance, and the lack of affordable treatment for low income populations.

Just recently, a Texas teenager was sentenced to ten-years-probation after he caused a fatal accident that killed four people and severely injured two others. Some of those who died had come to the aid of a stranger whose car had gone off the road. The sixteen-year-old was driving 70 miles an hour in a 40 mile an hour zone, and had a blood alcohol level that was three times the legal adult limit. He also had valium in his system. He was spared a prison sentence because he suffered from “affluenza,” a condition where the extremely wealthy do not understand that there are consequences to their actions because they lead a life of privilege and have never been reprimanded (Patinkin 2013).

Throughout this dissertation, I have claimed that the silences in public discourse are just as critical as what government says and does. Teachers made a similar claim. Almost all of them mentioned that the government is not talking about how socio-economic inequality affects educational outcomes, as well as the fact that poverty is growing among children. As previously discussed, income inequality sharply increased in the 1970s just as Reagan’s changes in social policy reduced the safety net for low-income families. So, the poor had less money with fewer social supports (Katz 1990; Phillips 1990). And, after a period of decline between 1959 and 1969, child poverty rates have continued to increase over the past 40 years from a low of 14 percent to 22 percent in 2011. Meanwhile, African American and Hispanic children are three times as likely to be poor (38.8 and 34.1 percent, respectively) as white children (12.5 percent) (Children’s
Defense Fund 2011). This is important because poverty predicts educational achievement regardless of race or the school a child attends, and studies suggest the achievement gap has widened as a result of growing income inequality (Reardon 2011). Unsurprisingly, minorities lag behind their white peers on standardized tests.

Yet, during this same period, the government proposed using standardized tests to rate and rank public schools and public schoolteachers, thereby holding them accountable for student performance. Also unsurprisingly, then, teachers portray this policy prescription as part of a persistent refusal by the state and federal government to redress socio-economic inequality, or any of the other historical issues that have resulted in segregated and unequal schools, including inequitable school financing. According to them, these policies are unpopular not just because they take away from the haves and give to the have nots (Robinhood). They are unpopular because they impact people who vote. Accountability, on the other hand, conveys the message that disadvantaged children (and their teachers) need to “pull themselves up by their bootstraps.” While this resonates with the popular narrative of personal responsibility, it has generated growing cynicism among teachers as citizens and policy implementers. They claim it has also sent the message to children who struggle that government does not care about people like them, even as it conveys a sense of entitlement to students whose families possess the social and economic capital to ensure that they do well in school. In this environment, it makes sense for many students to “opt out,” thereby relegating themselves to “mediocrity.”

As a whole, teachers’ arguments sound remarkably like those made by Schneider and Ingram (2005a). The authors attribute self-interested political behaviors and growing
cynicism about politics to the persistent use of stereotypes and stigmas in political discourse. They suggest that, over time, the deserving and entitled grow stronger, as the “undeserving” unwittingly collude with the powerful to perpetuate their own subordination. This is because social constructions empower some over others, but come to be viewed as the “natural” order of things. As such, the advantaged, who have rarely experienced a government that neglects, burdens or punishes them, are unlikely to empathize with dependents and deviants. They are also likely to view the government as being on “the wrong track” when it confers benefits on poorly regarded “others”; blame the government, rather than themselves, when policies are ineffective; and advocate private alternatives to public services, which only they routinely have the means to afford. These include private schools, private security systems, and mental health and drug treatment services. In short, not viewing themselves as “claimants,” the advantaged argue that dependents should have their needs met through their families or religious organizations, while deviants should be punished, because their problems result from failures of individual will or morals, rather than political, economic or social institutions.

Contenders, on the other hand, learn to get what they can through “back doors.” This is because the state typically provides benefits through “side payments,” such as tax incentives, government contracts, and deregulation, in order to avoid the appearance of favoring groups that are perceived to have gained their positions of power in society through unfair, underhanded or self-interested actions. Conversely, dependents and deviants are unlikely to perceive the benefits of mobilizing, lobbying or voting since they experience the government as a random or unjust force in their lives. The end result is that policies benefiting advantaged groups and punishing deviants become
oversubscribed, while policies directed at dependents are undersubscribed and the costs of policies that benefit contenders are increasingly “hidden.” In the process, government policies become “degenerative,” or fall into a pattern of allocating benefits and burdens in ways that are ineffective, inefficient and unfair (Schneider and Ingram 2005a).

Like Schneider and Ingram (2005a), teachers suggest that education policy has increasingly degenerated into “punishing bad apples” rather than fixing the problem because that would require state actors to take on powerful groups on behalf of poor children and the schools and teachers that serve them. Like Stone (1997), their narratives suggest that (1) degenerative politics induces feelings more than producing change and (2) policies derived from degenerative politics create perverse consequences. We see this in teachers’ descriptions of how an obsessive focus on punishing “bad apples” has resulted in growing cynicism. Another perverse consequence was increased neglect on the part of students who consistently struggle to perform on tests. Here, “opting out” made sense. A third consequence was that policy labels socially bifurcated children, schools and teachers from their peers. A fourth consequence was that testing and labeling demobilized teachers, as their social ties withered in an increasingly competitive environment that teachers characterized as pitting “us” against “them.” These last two findings were similar to those of Soss (2005), who found that stigmatizing language bifurcates the poor in ways that contribute to their inability to mobilize collectively. Like all of these authors, teachers consistently made the connection between talk and action.
“The Power of Talk”

After Gabby Giffords was shot, political commentators argued that we needed to create a more civil political climate. Teachers made similar arguments. In the words of one teacher:

Jess: I’m not going to say this right, but...we need to change the way we talk about our public life...The whole “sticks and stones thing”...it would be nice if that were true but words hurt. They hurt just as much, maybe more so, than physical violence. We know that. That’s why (gossip and other forms of verbal) bullying is such a big issue. Words wound the individual they’re directed at, but...(pause) they also persuade individuals and groups of individuals to do things that maybe they wouldn’t have done on their own, the whole bandwagon effect...And...(pause) I think we can expand this to politics...politicians...(are) portraying the government in general and people who work for the public in really nasty ways. The ways they describe people who challenge their agendas, or who dare to think that government has some kind of positive role in our society, have become increasingly hostile and just mean spirited I guess. You know, Sarah Palin acts like she was only speaking in metaphor when she said something like...(pause) it was something like she put a picture of Gabby Giffords, on Facebook maybe? But it was a picture of Gabby Giffords crossed out with rifles saying “do not retreat, reload,” or something like that...she put a big fat target on her head. Is it such a stretch then that Gabby Giffords was shot? He did reload, and he killed six people, including a child...Why are we so surprised when this kind of violent language instills violence? They’re the first to talk about violence on TV, movies, and in music. I’m not even disagreeing with that idea, but heed your own words.

Many other teachers told the same narrative, but linked it directly to children. These narratives viscerally contrast to the ones told during the debates on NCLB about children, public schools and public schoolteachers. One suburban schoolteacher said:

Lisa: I truly love the children...there is nothing more rewarding, when you look at a child and you’re introducing something to them and helping them to learn about something...(getting emotional) to do that for someone is to change them forever. And that’s what you do. You don’t teach them, you help them to learn. There’s a difference...You facilitate. You put it out there for them in such a way that they’re going to want to grab onto it and hook into it, and love it, and love to learn the rest of their lives. And that’s what it’s about...(tearing up) I am so blessed...People who aren’t in education, they don’t see it. We certainly aren’t in education for the money, because you don’t make money. You make money the last few years of your teaching...you are in it to change people’s lives...The light
goes on, and they have it, and they understand it. And now, they’re going to run with it. And you gave it to them. What more could you ever do for anyone? It’s like you set their little feet on the right path…the academic part is…a lot of it…(but there is)…so much else…(It is an awesome responsibility because) you can set them up for success or failure their whole life. Do you realize if you put a kid down – and every once in a while, people will say things, teachers, everybody, parents, not meaning it, sarcastically or something, or just a little comment – but when you put a kid down in school, it takes more than 33 put-ups to get that kid feeling where he should be now to learn? The power of talk. We have such power in our talk…not only for the negative, but also for the positive. I taught a kid once, and my husband had an angioplasty, so I said to the doctor, “Can I have that little balloon? Can I take that to school to show my kids?” And he’s like, “You’re not supposed to do this (Laughs). Let me get you another one.” And I brought it to school, and I showed them how the balloon worked and what it did…And years later, I find out he’s going to be a doctor. And he said, “Remember that day you brought the balloon?” Hello! So, what I’m saying is we are in such a position where we can affect change. It’s scary sometimes. But it’s so rewarding to know that we really make a difference…I think I’m blessed to have this job.

Like Jess and Lisa, teachers consistently made the connection between words and deeds. Talk produces feelings. People draw on these emotions and they act, for better or for worse. This is why teachers claim we cannot change our public institutions unless we change the way we talk about citizens and our public life. In a nutshell, we need to undo the “Consumer’s Republic.”

*Undoing the “Consumer’s Republic”*

In chapter three, I argued that there have been two dominant paradigms for public service provision: TPA and NPM. These paradigms are linked to a dominant economic system and a dominant way of organizing social relations. I suggested that NCLB, as an event, occurred within a paradigmatic shift from TPA to NPM. I then showed how NCLB has interacted with schools, as public institutions, the norms of teaching, as a public service occupation, and society in ways that have increased social stratification. Teachers characterize this paradigm shift as a movement away from a more collectivist
vision of public education to one where education is portrayed as a consumptive good. By that, I mean it is judged by how well it serves individual wants. The overarching theme is that, by serving their own interests, parents will drive schools (and teachers) to perform in ways that aggregate up into a better educational product for society. Thus, the switch from TPA to NPM was ideational but also reflected a shift from collective means of social organization in the 1930s to individual ones in the 1980s.

Many theorists have commented on the swing between collectivism and individualism in American life. Morone (2003, 13), for instance, contends that there are two traditions in American politics. The “moral tradition” focuses on “personal responsibility” and favors individual punishment. The “social gospel” tradition stresses “communal responsibility” and favors collective social welfare programs. He claims these traditions have had a lasting impact on American social policy and political institutions because “cultural pictures frame the political agenda and focus policy debates.” Similarly, Hirschman (2002) argues that there is a swing between “collectivist” and “individualist” methods of social organization due to a cycle of euphoria and disillusion. Mobilization and euphoria turn into disillusion the longer one mode of social organization has been in power because it increasingly becomes blamed for the ills of society. Concomitantly, the opposite mode of organization increasingly looks attractive the longer it has been out of power since its flaws have become forgotten. His arguments are very similar to those made by GGCT, which predicts swings between collective modes of organization in public life (egalitarian and hierarchy) and individualistic ones (individualism and fatalism) due to “surprise,” as the dominant mode of organizing is unable to deliver on the promises it has made.
Teachers largely view our collective life as a casualty of surprise combined with concerns that the government had failed to fulfil its promise under the ESEA. In either case, they mean that the government has not delivered on its promise of relative socio-economic equality. In general, they expressed that the perverse gap between those at the top and those at the bottom, when combined with the shrinking middle class, have contributed to growing numbers of citizens opting out of our public life. Thus, in order to regenerate our public life, we need to redress these underlying issues. By “public life,” however, they are not just referring to public institutions, like education. They are also referring to how we talk about our public sphere. Unlike the language of the Consumer’s Republic and Neo-liberalism, teachers contend that our public life is not the sum of individuals acting on their private wants. It is a commitment to something that is larger than ourselves. It is the space where “members” have obligations to those around them. In the classroom it involves participating in class and helping fellow students. In society, it includes a willingness to contribute to public goods, including redistributive policies. Teachers clearly recognize that public schools have a political and an economic function, but their narratives suggest that public education cannot be reduced to those ends. Schools, as public institutions, are spaces where “we the people” come together socially, as well as politically and economically.

This latter idea was one of the key differences between how teachers talk about public schools and how public schools were portrayed in the debates on NCLB. Political elites portrayed public education and public schools as a means to an end. They then talked about the “proper” means and amounts of federal intervention. Teachers, on the other hand, infused public spaces, like schools, with emotions and memories. According
to their narratives, school performance is not solely the product of what we “do.” It is a reflection of who “we” are. To use the words of Woolcock and Narayan (2000), if national policies favor narrow interests, or promote inequality between communities or groups, some communities and groups may function quite well while others are characterized by coping, exclusion or overt conflict. It could be argued that these outcomes exist in some American cities, suburbs and rural areas, where elite groups live in exclusionary enclaves; public services have either broken down or are chronically underfunded; gangs or private policing are the primary source of law enforcement; and economic life is sustained through the informal or illegal economy because community residents suffer from political, social and/or economic isolation and impoverishment. Teachers argue that, in this environment, some schools will perform quite well while others will struggle to educate their children. In short, the “proper” amount of state intervention depends on the community. Under-governed and over-governed societies are both likely to be places where individuals, groups, private institutions or governments use social, economic and political capital for unproductive and destructive ends (Woolcock 2001).

Teachers’ ideas are reflected in Figure 6, which I displayed in chapter three and reproduced on the next page. Overall, their narratives suggest that the state has historically played a prominent role in the construction of society even as society also structures our political life. In brief, state policies have failed to redress socio-economic

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183 See, for example, Vankatesh (2002; 2009). Detroit provides an excellent example of these ideas. The city filed for Chapter 9 bankruptcy in July of 2013. The filing is the largest municipal bankruptcy filing in U.S. history. It has an unemployment rate of over 18 percent, and is one of the most violent cities in the nation. The Detroit Police Officer Association passed out flyers at a rally that said “Enter Detroit at your own risk.” Local citizens formed “the Detroit 300” to fight crime. Among other things, they make citizens arrests (Lewis 2013; Snyder 2012).
inequality, and silenced the voice of some while empowering others. The end result is that the state has fostered a decline in social capital and democracy. Even so, teachers expressed that, in an unequal society, the state is the only actor that can redress these outcomes. In the words of one teacher, businesses “don’t have public values. They don’t care about us, they only care about the bottom line. There is nothing wrong with that if you’re making widgets but that mentality is completely wrong when educating children.”

Figure 6. Paradigms of public service provision

Summing up, John Dewey (1927) said the “public does not naturally exist in society; it has to be…called into existence.” Throughout our nation’s history, many state actors have done so and, in the process, rallied the public behind communal goals. He also recognized, however, that there are multiple definitions of the “public good.” In highly unequal societies, this may mean that the “public good” is defined in ways that create “public bads” for the many on behalf of the few. Similarly, Stone (1997) claims that, in American political culture, the state is often portrayed as a “neutral referee”
between political and economic interests, but she and Lindblom (1982) suggest that political and economic power are intertwined. Lindblom further charged that there could be no “mutual benefit society” because we do not all share the same interests. Thus, the government is not, nor can it ever be, a “neutral referee.” It must choose. Teachers add that you can tell a lot about a society by how it treats its weakest members. Societies that turn on their weak are not only unjust, they are also mistrustful. As a result, they rapidly degenerate into spaces of “us” versus “them,” and thereby create lives that are “nasty, brutish and short” for growing numbers of citizens. Their narratives suggest that, if we seek to redress these issues, then we need to change the way we talk not just how we act.
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R-11


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R-42


Appendix A
Content Analysis of Public Discourse

Title of Research Project: Policy Feedback and No Child Left Behind

I will be conducting a content analysis of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The purpose of this analysis is to examine the political and social construction of administrators, teachers, students, and public schools, as evidenced by congressional and presidential discourse, statutory and regulatory language, and federal and state Department of Education websites. The focusing questions are grounded in the public policy literature, but include:

- What is the problem that is being resolved based on the words of members of Congress and the president (as evidenced by their discourse)? Who is being blamed for the problem? What solutions are being offered?
- What kind of reasoning is used? What is the character of the debate? What kinds of symbolic devices are being used? What kinds of causal stories are being told? (Stone 1989 and 1997)
- What “public values” are being represented in the discourse (both as symbols and ideals to be maximized, and as a means of justifying policy designs and policy tools)? How are they interpreted? (Stone 1997)
- What kinds of policy tools are Congress/the president using to resolve the problem? Do the policy tools and policy design fit the problem as defined by Congress/the president? (Salamon 2002; Schneider and Ingram 1990)
- How are the targets of the policy characterized (i.e., How are the targets of the policy politically and socially constructed)? Do the targets make sense given the definition of the problem? (Schneider and Ingram 1990 and 1993; Ingram and Schneider 1991)
- Who are the direct/indirect beneficiaries of the policy? How are they helped by government policy? Are the beneficiaries hidden or explicit? Are the benefits direct, indirect, or a charade? Who is penalized? How? Are the penalties enforceable, explicit hidden or a charade? (Schneider and Ingram 1993; Stone 1997)
- How are students, parents, teachers, administrators, schools, state governments, and the federal government characterized (this is coming out of the above analysis regarding the policy’s targets but also in general)?
- How are public versus private institutions characterized (this is coming out of the above analysis in terms of the policy’s targets but also in general)?
- What does dissent/consent look like for “problem definition”? For the policy tools/policy design used to address the problem? For the characterization of the policy’s targets?
Institutional Review Board: DHHS FWA00001970
Notice of Approval
IRB Protocol Number: 11-055
Date: March 28, 2011
Principal Investigator: Jody Schmid
Title: Policy Feedback and No Child Left Behind-Non-Specific Teachers and Administrators
Review Type: □ Full □ Expedited Approval Type: New EXPEDITED Category # 7
IRB Board00008081

| Approval Date | March 24, 2011 | Expiration Date | March 24, 2012 | Review Cycle | 1 Year |

1. Provisions of Approval: n/a
2. Consent Forms: All subjects must receive a copy of the consent form as approved with the University at Albany Institutional Review Board stamp. Copies of the signed consent form must be kept on file unless a waiver has been granted.
3. Adverse Events: Any adverse event(s) or unexpected event(s) that occur in conjunction with this study must be reported to the Office of Research Compliance within 10 calendar days of the occurrence.
4. Principal Investigator Responsibilities: It is the responsibility of the PI to ensure that all investigators and staff associated with this study meet the training requirements for conducting research involving human subjects, follow the approved protocol, use only the approved forms, keep appropriate research records, and comply with all School at Albany Policies, federal, state and local laws, Declaration of Helsinki and the Belmont Report.
5. Research Records: Accurate and detailed research records must be maintained. All research records (including all IRB correspondence) must be kept for a minimum of 3 years after the completion of the research. This research is subject to an audit under the terms of the IRB's Quality Improvement Program.
6. Changes: Any changes in the above referenced study may not be initiated without prior IRB review and approval. Changes include (but are not limited to) study personnel, consent forms, protocol, procedures, addition of funding source.
7. Lapse of Approval: If approval for this project lapses, all research must stop IMMEDIATELY until continuation approval is granted. If approval lapses before the continuation is reviewed, your project must be resubmitted as a new protocol.
8. Yearly IRB Approval Continuation: Approval is valid until the expiration date above. You are required to obtain annual IRB approval continuations prior to your expiration date for as long as the study is active. An annual continuation reminder will be sent to you, but it is your responsibility to ensure that you submit and receive the yearly approval in a timely manner.
9. Funded Research: If your research is funded, you must also submit sponsor information and a copy of the grant/funding application for IRB review with the human subjects section(s) highlighted. This is true whether the source of funding is internal or external.
10. University Permissions: A) Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness (IRPE) permission may be required if your research participants are recruited from the UAlbany campus. It is the responsibility of the investigator to contact IRPE at (518) 437-4791 for a determination. B) All UAlbany permissions (e.g., classroom, team or organization permissions) must be kept on file with your research records.
11. Posters or Flyers: All flyers posted to recruit participants must have the IRB stamp. If postes or flyers are to be posted on the UAlbany campus, they must be registered with the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership in Campus Center 130 prior to posting on the academic Podium.
12. External Permissions: All external permissions (e.g., schools, businesses, organizations, etc.) must be kept on file with your research records.

Upon receipt of this letter you may begin your research. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

Mark Muraven, Ph.D.
IRB Chairperson
On behalf of the Institutional Review Board

Cc: Alethia Jones
Appendix B  
Teacher and Administrator Interview Consent Form

**Title of Research Project:** Policy Feedback and No Child Left Behind

**Researcher:** Jody Schmid  
**Academic Title:** Doctoral Student, Public Administration and Policy  
**Rockefeller College, State University of New York at Albany**

**Description of Research:** This research explores how No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is interacting with public school administration, teaching as an occupation, and schools as organizations and public institutions to structure the experiences, behaviors and identities of teachers, administrators and students (if at all).

**Description of Human Subject Involvement:** In order to understand your work before and after NCLB was implemented, I will ask you a series of questions about your background and experiences, including those important, but less observable, influences on your identity and development as a teacher or administrator. These questions will also explore your understanding of how schools were organized and operated prior to the implementation of NCLB. Then I will ask you a series of questions that explore life after NCLB. I am particularly interested in your understanding of how it has altered teaching and public school administration, but also how it has impacted the experiences and behaviors of other groups within the school community (if at all). I will conclude the interview by asking you questions about other things that influence teaching and public school administration, including for example your perceptions of public attitudes about both.

The interview will last for approximately 90 minutes to two hours. I do not anticipate that there will be a need for future sessions. Your answers will be audio-recorded. These recordings will be deleted once the interviews are transcribed. The transcriptions of these audio recordings will be kept for future studies.

**Risks and Discomforts of Participation:** The principal risk associated with your participation in this study is the potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Another risk associated with this study is that some of the questions may make you uncomfortable.

**Measures Taken to Minimize Risks and Discomforts:** All audiotapes and/or digital voice recordings will be destroyed once the contents have been transcribed. There will be no real names used on these transcriptions. I will never share any information from this interview with school administrators or other school personnel. I also will not share the transcript of this interview with other researchers without your written consent. I will never identify you in any paper, published or unpublished. Finally, you may decide to leave this study at any time. You may also choose not to answer any question or refuse to complete any portion of the research for any reason. You do not need to specify why.

**Expected Benefits to Subjects or to Others:** This research may be used to inform public policymakers about the impact of NCLB on teachers, administrators, students and school
districts. To the extent it identifies problems and strengths associated with the law, it may result in changes that are beneficial to these groups. Thus, although you may not personally benefit from your participation, others may ultimately benefit from the knowledge obtained from this research.

**Confidentiality of Records/Data:** All information in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required under law. In addition, the Institutional Review Board, the sponsor of the study and University or government officials responsible for monitoring this study may inspect these records.

The only form linking you to this research is the written consent document, and a list of participants in this study. This information will be kept in the researcher’s home office in a separate locked file along with the research records. There will be no personal identification that links the information from the interview to the written consent form. This includes any code that could reasonably link the interview to a specific participant.

All conversations between you and the researcher and any supporting material you provide during this interview will be kept strictly confidential for all time. I will never share any information from this interview with school administrators or other school personnel. I will not share the transcript of this interview with other researchers without your written consent. I will never identify you in any paper, published or unpublished.

Data (voice recordings and their transcriptions) will be maintained in the researcher’s home office. Voice recordings will be kept locked in an exclusive use file cabinet. All audiotapes and/or digital voice recordings will be destroyed once the contents have been transcribed. There will be no real names used on these transcriptions. I will keep a list of false participant names linked to a code for their schools in a separate locked file. There is nothing linking the false names of the participants to their real names. The list of school codes for each school will be kept in a separate locked file. Computerized data will be stored in password protected files on a detachable storage device that will be housed in a separate locked file.

**Audio/Video Recording of Subjects:** With your permission, I will audio-record our discussion. Please refrain from using names or any identifying information about yourself or third parties. If you do use an identifying name or piece of information, I will stop the recording device and erase it before resuming the interview. All audiotapes and/or digital voice recordings will be destroyed once the contents have been transcribed.

You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to have the interview audio-recorded.

**Please sign below if you are willing to have this interview audio-recorded.**

Signature: __________________________ Date: __________________________

**Voluntary nature of participation:** Your participation in this project is voluntary. Even after you agree to participate in the research or sign the informed consent document, you may decide to leave the study at any time. I will retain and analyze the information you have provided up
until the point you have left the study unless you request that your data be excluded from any analysis and/or destroyed. You may choose not to answer any questions and may refuse to complete any portions of the research you do not wish to for any reason.

One copy of this document will be kept together with the research records of this study. You will be given a copy to keep. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator or if you wish to report any concerns about this study, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at 518.442-9050 or orcc@uamail.albany.edu.

I have read, or been informed of, the information about this study. I hereby consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _______________________________ Date: _______________________________

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Jody Schmid, Doctoral Student at js7535@albany.edu or Dr. Alethia Jones, Assistant Professor at 518-442-3940.

I agree to abide by the conditions stated in the Consent Form.

Signature of Researcher ________________ Date: __________________________
Appendix C
Script to Recruit Teachers and Administrators for Interviews

**Title of Research Project:** Policy Feedback and No Child Left Behind

**Researcher:** Jody Schmid
**Academic Title:** Doctoral Student, Public Administration and Policy
Rockefeller College, State University of New York at Albany

**Recruitment Script:** I am a student at the State University of New York at Albany. I am a former teacher working on my PhD in public administration and policy. I am studying how No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has influenced public school administration, teaching as an occupation, and the organization and operation of public schools.

In order to understand your work before and after NCLB was implemented, if you agree to be interviewed, I will ask you a series of questions about your background and experiences, including those important, but less observable, influences on your identity and development as a teacher (administrator). These questions will also explore your understanding of how schools were organized and operated prior to the implementation of NCLB. Then I will ask you a set of questions that explore life after NCLB. I am particularly interested in your understanding of how it has altered teaching and public school administration, but also how it has impacted the experiences and behaviors of other groups within the school community (if at all). The final set of questions will examine other influences on public school administration and teaching, including for example your perceptions about public attitudes toward both. At the end of the interview I will ask you to pass on my contact information to anyone else that you think may be interested in participating, but it is not necessary for you to do so.

The interview will last for approximately 90 minutes to two hours and take place in a venue outside of your school that is convenient for you. I do not anticipate that there will be a need for future sessions. I would like to audio-record your answers, but I would delete the audio-recording once the interview is transcribed. The transcription will be kept for future studies. You may still participate in this study if you do not wish to be audio-recorded. At the end of the interview, I will ask you to pass my contact information on to anyone else that may be interested in participating.
Appendix D
Interview Questions for Teachers

This interview protocol involves a series of mostly open-ended questions that are designed to explore teachers’ perceptions of how public policies and political discourse interact with informal norms, work practices, and patterns of social relations within teaching and schools to structure the experiences, behaviors and identities of teachers. The questions are also designed to illicit teachers’ perceptions of how public policies and political discourse impact children’s educational outcomes and the democratic social purposes of schools.

Section 1: Questions 1-17

- **Questions 1–5 explore teachers’ backgrounds.** These questions enable me to “sample for difference,” meaning purposively sample teachers from different subject areas, including tested and non-tested subject areas; grade levels; professions (e.g., teachers, speech pathologists, counselors, psychologists); age cohorts; and so forth. When combined with the information collected on their schools and districts from the state education website, these questions also enable me to sample teachers from districts and schools that differ along several key factors, including: district size; level of needs/level of resources; racial and socioeconomic composition; policy label (school in need of improvement, school under restructuring, or school in good standing); and geographic location, including whether a school is located in an urban, rural or suburban community. Sampling for difference will help me disentangle the multiple meanings ascribed to a federal policy by divergent communities, while also distilling those meanings that are held in common.

- **Questions 6-17 are largely "personal experience" questions.** In general, these questions are designed to help me understand how teachers experience their occupations and schools. Specifically, they are designed to illicit information on the informal norms, work practices, and patterns of social relations that structure teaching as an occupation and schools as communities. But they will also help me understand whether teachers use any of these to negotiate or challenge the culture of policy, including its language, structures, or both.

**To be read before asking questions in this section:** In this first part of the interview, I am going to ask you questions about your background and career, as well as questions that explore important, but less observable, influences on your identity and development as a teacher. These questions also explore your understanding of how teaching as an occupation and schools as organizations operated prior to NCLB, and how this influenced the experiences, behaviors and identities of different groups within the school community.

1. How long have you been teaching (how long did you teach if you have retired or left teaching)? How long have you been in the current district, if different?
2. What grade(s) do you teach? What subject(s), if applicable? What special areas, if applicable (e.g., speech, reading, school psychologist, classroom aide, classroom assistant, etc.)?

3. Where did you go to school as an undergraduate? What did you study?

4. What is your highest level of education (Show Card 1)?

   **Card 1**
   ___ BA/BS
   ___ MA/MS
   ___ MA+
   ___ PhD

5. I am going to show you a card and, if you are comfortable with it, I was wondering if you would pick the decade that reflects your age (Show Card 2).

   **Card 2**
   ___ Less than 30
   ___ 30 to 39
   ___ 40 to 49
   ___ 50 to 59
   ___ 60 or older

6. I was wondering if you would tell me why you chose to become a teacher (Probes: What were the major attractions of the job? Do you remember any qualities about yourself that you felt would fit well with teaching as an occupation? What person or people, or experiences influenced your decision to become a teacher? Did you consider any other occupations at the time? If yes, what and why?)

7. Did you feel well prepared to teach when you got your first job? (Probe: Basically, I am trying to understand what experiences you think were most influential in terms of teaching you how to teach and what to teach. For example, what classes, experiences or jobs were best in terms of preparing you to teach?)

8. Was teaching different from what you expected when you made the decision to enter the field? (Probe: If yes, how was it better or worse?)

9. Could you tell me a little bit about some of the rewards of your job?

10. I guess no line of work is perfect. What are the things that you like least about teaching?
11. Could you tell me about a negative experience from your career as a teacher? What about a positive experience?

12. Have you ever considered leaving teaching? (Probe with TLC: What was going on at the time? Why did/didn’t you leave?)

13. Purely hypothetically, if you received a number of job offers at the same time, please rank the following in terms of importance to you. You may leave something blank if it is not important to you (Show Card 3):

   **Card 3**
   ___ Working with children or adolescents
   ___ Salary
   ___ Professional prestige
   ___ Administrative influence
   ___ Professional freedom and autonomy
   ___ Summers off
   ___ Job security
   ___ Something that interests me
   ___ Other—specify (you do not need to add any):

14. I wanted to talk a little bit about time. I was wondering if you could tell me how many hours on average you spend on the school premises each week (this would also include attending school functions)? On average, about how much time do you spend away from school doing schoolwork, this could include planning, grading, reading, studying, etc.? (Probe: If they talk about spending extra time at school or at home, probe for the kinds of activities they do and why. Probe whether they do other kinds of volunteer work, or volunteer for nonteaching/student related activities or organizations.)

15. Different jobs have their own language and humor, sometimes even in the form of “sick jokes” that they use to converse with each other, build camaraderie, and relieve tension. Does teaching have that? (Probes: I am trying to understand if teachers use humor to release tension, and whether they share these jokes or experiences with one another?)

16. Most organizations use rules and standard operating procedures as a way of ensuring efficiency and behavioral consistency on the job. Can you explain one or two standard rules for doing things that are used by your school as an organization or the teachers in your school? (Probes: It would be nice if you could apply this to your job as a teacher. It would also help me, in terms of understanding how your school as an organization works, if you would give me at least one that you think makes your job a lot easier and one that you think imposes difficulties on your work environment.)
17. Let’s talk a little bit about relationships. How important are relationships for teaching, if at all? How do you view the relationships in this school between (Show Card 4):

Card 4
- Central administrators and building administrators
- Teachers and administrators
- Teachers and teachers
- Teachers and students
- Teachers and parents
- Administrators, teachers, and the community

Section 2: Questions 18-32

Questions 18-32 are designed to get teachers to talk about NCLB and how it is impacting different groups and different aspects of teaching and schooling. They will not be followed verbatim (and may be barely followed at all) in an effort to allow teachers to narrate their own experiences under NCLB.

To be read before asking questions in this section: In this part of the interview, I am going to talk with you about how No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has altered how you teach and why you teach, as well as how it has impacted the experiences, behaviors and identities of different groups within the school community (if at all).

18. Could you tell me a little bit about what you know in terms of NCLB?

19. In your opinion, what are some positive aspects of NCLB (if any)? What problems (if any) have occurred as a result of NCLB?

20. In your professional opinion, how useful are standardized tests in terms of measuring student performance? Teacher performance? School performance? How do you use standardized test results, if at all? How does your school use them? Has this changed as a result of NCLB? (Probes: How do you evaluate students? What do you look for in terms of learning and growth? Has this changed as a result of NCLB?)

21. Has NCLB influenced the way you do your job? (Probes: If yes, how and why? Do you view these changes as positive or negative? It would be okay if you would like to talk more generally about how NCLB has affected how teachers do their jobs rather than you personally.)

22. Has NCLB influenced the way you feel about your job? How you feel about your school? About your government?
23. Has NCLB influenced relationships in your school? (Probes: If yes, how and why? Do you view these changes as being positive or negative? Why?)

24. Has NCLB influenced the way teachers are evaluated, penalized or rewarded in your school? If yes, have these changes been positive or negative? (Probes: Maybe we could start by discussing how teachers were evaluated before NCLB, and then discuss changes in how teachers are evaluated now. It might also help me if you talked about how you know if you are successful as a teacher. How do you know if you are doing the kind of job you want to do? What do you watch for as an indication of your effectiveness?)

25. Has NCLB influenced the way administrators do their jobs? How the district is being run? Do you view these changes, if any, as positive or negative?

26. How have students reacted to NCLB, if at all? In your opinion, has NCLB impacted individual students or different groups of students differently? If yes, how so?

27. What about parents, how have they reacted to NCLB (if at all)?

Questions 28-32 apply only to teachers in public schools that are being closed or restructured.

28. Your school has been in the newspapers lately because it is being closed (restructured or labeled in need of improvement). Could you tell me what you know about this, if anything?

29. Could you tell me a little bit about how … (your district being closed, restructured or labeled in need of improvement) has impacted you as a teacher? (Probes: Has it influenced how you feel about your job? About your district? About the state? About government in general?)

30. Could you tell me a little bit about how … (your district being closed, restructured or labeled in need of improvement) has impacted the students here? What about their parents? Other teachers? Administrators? (Probes: Have any of these groups talked with you personally about this issue? Have you been present at meetings where it was discussed by any of these groups?)

31. Did you take any action to … (remove the label, influence how the school was restructured, change the district’s decision to close the school)? If yes, how was it received? (Probe: What about other teachers, did they take any action that you know of? What about the teachers’ union? Administrators? Students? Parents?)

32. What are your plans for when the school closes? (Probes: Will you continue teaching? Do you know where you will be going?)
Section 3: Questions 33-41

Questions 33-41 continue asking about teachers’ “personal experiences,” but the focus is much broader than earlier questions. These questions are designed to bring the interview to a close while also probing about other influences on public school administration and teaching as an occupation, including forces within society at large.

To be read before asking questions in this section: In this last part of the interview, I am going to return to questions about teaching, but the questions are somewhat broader than the personal experience questions I asked you earlier. I would particularly like to discuss other influences on public school administration and teaching, including forces within society at large.

33. Some people think that schools should be operated like a well-run business with clear lines of authority and clearly stated responsibilities and roles. Others think that schools should be organized more loosely and that relationships among school staff should tend toward equality. Which of these two views comes closest to being yours? (Probe: Do you think schools have changed over time toward one model or the other?)

34. Some people feel that we need differential policies to retain teachers. This might include, for example, creating ranks from “beginner” to “master” teacher – similar to a university system where there are lecturers, assistant professors, and so forth. It might also include a policy to retain science teachers or to encourage teachers to teach in high needs districts. It might also include merit pay (differential pay scales). How do you feel about this?

35. I was wondering if you would take a look at some recent headlines and comment on them for me (Probes: In your opinion, what do you think is going on? What is the issue? What is at stake? Had you seen any of these stories or similar ones? Do teachers discuss stories like these with one another? With administrators? Do stories like these influence how you feel about your job? About the state? About government in general?) (Show Card 5)
Card 5

- “School board in Rhode Island votes to fire all teachers in a struggling high school to improve school performance”
- “New Jersey governor urges voters to reject school budgets in districts where teachers did not accept pay freezes. Calls teachers’ unions ‘greedy’” □ “For kids' sake, power to fire teachers crucial!”
- “Washington D.C. public schools fire 226 ‘ineffective teachers’”
- “Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker signs law restricting union bargaining rights”
- “Idaho Governor Butch Otter signs law phasing out tenure for new teachers, restricting collective bargaining, and instituting merit pay”

36. I have heard teaching referred to as an art, a job, an occupation, a profession, and a vocation. Which comes closest to describing your views about teaching? Have your views changed over time?

37. Would you describe teaching as an “emotional job”? This could be because you have to manage your own emotions to do the job well, or manage other people’s emotions, or the job itself brings out emotions.

38. Do you think the “job” of teaching has changed over time (Probes: What about the “job” of public schools? It would help me if you would explain what you think the “job” of public schools is, and then explain whether you think that “job” has changed over time.)

39. What about people’s attitudes about teaching and public schools, do you think they have changed over time? (I mean here the general public, government officials, students, parents, etc. It would be okay if you would like to choose a specific group or if you prefer to address this question in general.)

40. Do you think society has changed in ways that have impacted public schools and/or your job as a teacher?

41. If you were allowed to go back and “do it all over again,” would you become a teacher? If not, what might you choose to do? If someone close to you said they wanted to become a teacher, how would you respond?
Appendix E

Table 16. Teaching as Emotion Work

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<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
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<td>Donna: When I was teaching kindergarten and all of the sudden they were reading…they were all excited and crying and we’re all excited and we’re all jumping up and down doing the dance…the reading dance…and saying “Yeah!”</td>
<td>Peter: Ever since I can remember I have lived and breathed science…always running tests…My mom…getting mad at me because I would have jars of things in the refrigerator…I would lose a tooth…and I had to keep my teeth in different liquids and see how they would dissolve and stuff (laughs)…(It) drew me to the profession…that creative side of it…where I could craft lessons…and I liked that I could be goofy…the whole mad scientist thing… I can be myself when I am working…become that character…use humor in my job…to engage children in learning.</td>
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<td>Terryl: I stand on my desk and march and sing to them…I have a tiara and I am the “Learning Fairy.” I bestow magic learning dust on them…1st graders just go “Yea-yah. Yeah. This…is it!”(said while shaking her fists high up in the air to emphasize each word). My own kids are grown…but every day I get to go and be a kid again with my kids in school. When they ask me how old I am, I say, “I am six years old, but trapped in a 53 year old body.” They laugh (she is laughing too). And I truly feel that way. In my heart, I am six years old. I am six years old in my soul. And that’s what counts.</td>
<td>Joe: I had a student who was a senior and he got arrested for breaking into a shoe store…he was the son of tenant farmers and he lived in a dirt floor cabin, and apparently he had a shoe fetish. He liked to wear women’s shoes…they had put a camera in the place…and they had him on film…So he was put in jail. At that time I was newly married, and I went to the sheriff in the county and I said the kid was a good kid and I was a senior and I would love to have him graduate…So, I got the court and the sheriff to let me take this kid home, and…he lived with us the last three or four months …He graduated and I gave him a suit…and he put it on and…walked across the stage. The folks came over and they didn’t even say thank you to my wife, but I feel very good about it today…I think if you are worth anything as a teacher, you’re going to get involved personally with your students…try and help them with their problems beyond the classroom …So, the academic relationship is one thing and it develops into other things.</td>
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<td>Brian: You spend 7 hours a day…five days a week, 180 days a year, sure you develop feelings for them. You do… I was never afraid to show my emotions. I would read the story and I would have to stop and compose myself if it was sad. And the kids would say, “Look, he’s crying!” (speaking in a whisper) I was not afraid to show anger if it was deserved. I tried to get them to understand that I was a human being too…I'm not a robot (laughs). I'm a human being. You are a human being. You feel emotions. I feel emotions too…it's an emotional job. When you see a kid come in and it’s the middle of January and he doesn’t have a coat, or he is dirty and hungry…The district where I taught was a very, very, very, high needs, impoverished district. The children really didn't have a lot and it was heartbreaking. When you read in the newspaper…that your student’s father was killed in a drug-related shooting…and then you have to go into school on Monday…So, I tried to make it as pleasant as possible (tearing up).</td>
<td>Peter: I had this one student two years ago who was really into astronomy…This is one of my favorite stories…A couple months before my student’s birthday, I got in touch with…(a famous astronomer) and… I gave him something my student had written…He sent a book of his and he had written a note addressed to my student on the first page…I presented the book to the student and he was really excited when I told him that someone had signed it inside. He said, “Did you sign it Mr. So-and-So?” And he was really excited thinking that I had signed it (laughing), which was really nice, but I said, “No, no, it's even better!” You can imagine how excited he was when he saw the note. I'll never forget his face. He was dumbfounded. He carried that book around with him for the rest of the year. It never left his side (getting emotional).</td>
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<td>Fred: I lost my dad in 2004 and…It was a lot to take. But…It was something real…Showing them how you deal with pain, with life. Nobody talks about this stuff. No it’s not fun, but they need to hear it and see it. They need role modeling. That is how we learn. I remember hanging up my wall phone in my room, the kids…said, “What’s the matter?” and I said, “My father just died.” And… this was 2 days before the moving up ceremony. I came back for the moving up ceremony…to read their names as they go by. So cool, so hard, but I spent a year with these guys. I couldn’t just go and leave them. I had to be there.</td>
<td>Joe: I had a student who was a senior and he got arrested for breaking into a shoe store…he was the son of tenant farmers and he lived in a dirt floor cabin, and apparently he had a shoe fetish. He liked to wear women's shoes…they had put a camera in the place…and they had him on film…So he was put in jail. At that time I was newly married, and I went to the sheriff in the county and I said the kid was a good kid and he was a senior and I would love to have him graduate…So, I got the court and the sheriff to let me take this kid home, and…he lived with us the last three or four months …He graduated and I gave him a suit…and he put it on and…walked across the stage. The folks came over and they didn’t even say thank you to my wife, but I feel very good about it today…I think if you are worth anything as a teacher, you’re going to get involved personally with your students…try and help them with their problems beyond the classroom …So, the academic relationship is one thing and it develops into other things.</td>
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### Table 17. Teaching as Emotional Labor

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<th>Public School</th>
<th>Charter School</th>
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<td>Kelly: (We) hand in a schedule in the beginning of the school year that indicates what we are doing every 5 minutes of our day, from 8:20 until 3:20…And she (the principal) has to approve it…Teachers don’t…plan their own lessons. They “teach to the book”…I actually heard a first grade teacher say that she…opens up the book…and says to the children, “So and so says (the author of the book) that when you need to stretch out a word, this is how you do it”…Because…after 20 years of teaching, if that’s what they want her to do, that’s what she’ll do. But she refuses to make the children believe…that it’s her idea…(But) you do what…you’re told…Because if you don’t…well, then you might not be meeting standards. And…they can…fire you…and that has happened… I use some of… the little mini lessons from the books…but improvise…except during my formal observation. I go verbatim from the book. Exactly…I stay and memorize the words from the book.</td>
<td>Tim: It is very competitive, where we all try to really push each other…If your test scores dip a little bit, then you are going to have a little bit more heat on you because they are trying to get you to step up… I think the idea of education being “a business” removes the joy…and the implicit rewards of learning…Because everything is tied to how well you do… And that creates a very individualistic and competitive environment. And, the students are less likely to help one another and are more focused on what they need to do to help themselves get ahead…it is a tightrope you are walking as a teacher…trying to create a communal discourse because everything is individual and numbers-based. Everything is tied to explicit rewards…So, if a student asks you, “Why can’t I go on the field trip?” You say “Well, let’s look at the data.” Let’s look at your numbers.” Everything is tied to the numbers…you know data, data, data, data… Administrators are somewhat separate from the staff…to run the school like a business you really need to separate yourself…(And) it was just about you needing to get your data up…to get your numbers up…you were not necessarily being evaluated for what you brought to the table or for who you were as a person…it was…like they wanted you to be a little scared all the time…about whether you would have a job …if at any moment, you were not meeting their expectations, you could be replaced… switched out…So, sometimes it is frustrating…I've been reduced to a number.</td>
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<td>Annie: I think there is more competition then there ever has been. You definitely see that teachers feel like they have to teach to a book that the district gives them…a manual…There’s been a lot of pressure on teachers…they’re always talking about rigor…And they want to see evidence of learning…There are a lot of walk-throughs…when administrators…just walk into classrooms…they’re told to ask …the students what they’re learning and why they’re learning it. And, if you hear your child say, “I don’t know!” …you get very upset. It’s very scary …in the pre-K through 2 building, you can’t always get that from children. So there’s a lot of nervousness…What are they going to ask the students? What are the students going to say? What are they going to think of the lesson I’m doing?</td>
<td>Stephanie: We had a morning meeting and…all the teachers and students and administrators would stand in a big circle and someone would say, “Let’s give congratulations to this person because they really improved on that test” or “they got the best scores.” So, there was an emphasis on testing and test scores. They really kept track of all that. But there was not an emphasis on academics.</td>
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<td>Annie: …we do a lot of standing up and clapping for people…it’s always the same people, it seems (laughs)…trying to look like we’re wonderful…praising successes…celebrations of our test scores if they are up, and…being really sad because the test scores went down …The principal will say…80 percent of the 1st graders are reading at grade level…99 percent of the kindergarteners are reading at grade level. Stand up everyone and clap. You’re a kindergarten teacher—stand up! (Clap, clap). This is wonderful! (Clap, clap) Isn’t this wonderful? (Clap, clap) We need to talk about how we can get those 1st grade test scores up. And then the 1st grade teachers feel horrible…(and) it starts from there.</td>
<td>Crystal: I do not think we are giving them the rigor that we should…not going beyond the “grill-and-drill” and test preparation…not…making them the independent readers and thinkers that they need to be…I think we are saying one thing…that we are preparing disadvantaged kids for college, but, in reality, we are not…it is discouraging. …(because it is) a goal I…feel passionate about…(And) teachers whose students are not performing on tests …are targeted…Their support is yanked…and they are told what and how to teach… And…it churns and burns teachers…it burns them out, turns them over and spits them out.</td>
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Appendix E

Table 18. Narratives of Dissonance and Resistance

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<th>Narratives of Dissonance</th>
<th>Narratives of Resistance</th>
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<td>Tim: …the pressure of…a charter school…Sometimes you get depressed (laughs)…when you don’t meet your goals…this year, I started antidepressants…and it really helped me…that pressure can be really crushing and I needed to remove some of (it)...so that I could perform. I think that happens to a lot of teachers, where the pressure gets to be too much and they have to look for something else at that point. I think this is definitely a product of the high-stakes testing. You put a lot of pressure on yourself.</td>
<td>Donna: They’re evil up there (laughs)…it was like…Hitler’s dictatorship…they had percentages…you have to reduce Special Ed(ucation) in your building by ten percent each year…so many teachers have to be on improvement plans…you can’t have too many teachers exceeding standards…you (need a) bell-shaped curve…For the administration, everything has to look good…the façade to the community. “Look at our schools how beautiful they look!”…The schools look wonderful, but they don’t know…the bitterness and the hurt on the inside.</td>
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<td>Stephanie: Yet, instead of trying to help them, the charter school would get rid of them if there was even the slightest problem…they were willing to just throw kids away. So you were not really changing anything…they would counsel them out…call parents for every little thing, you know drive them crazy. Then, they would start bringing them in and counseling them to remove their child. They would tell them things like, “If you do not take your child out, we will expel them and it will be on their record forever.” There were ways for them to get these kids out without ever having to go through a formal process, and most of it was just driving the parents crazy…but it was called “counseling.” The charter schools say that they are not picking the cream of the crop because anyone can come in. That is true. Anyone can go there. But they weed them out…I went into teaching to make a difference and I did not feel like the school was trying to help children. They were throwing kids away so that they could look successful. Annie: We’ve had about 19 teachers retire early, quit, or leave in the last year and a half…A lot of lives have been destroyed…people have been financially…ruined…it’s affected health…many people on medication at this time.</td>
<td>Debbie: Last year, I had a student who…wasn’t…reading...(or) even understanding any of the letters or sounds…when I talked to my administrator…she continued to say, “He just needs time to grow…” Well the Mom kept coming to me and saying, “I don’t think so anymore. My motherly instinct is that we need more help”…So…I gave her, word for word, what my administrator said…But…said it…with a face…and…an odd tone…And I said, “Did you want to talk to your doctor about this? And maybe get a letter from him?”…luckily…she (did)…And…it was…a learning disability …A year would not have let him grow…So…yes, I broke the rules. I went against what I was told…but…without coming out…and saying, “You have to call your pediatrician because our administrator isn’t going to do anything about it.”…I would have lost my job.</td>
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<td>Claire: Everyone kind of responded in different ways…some people took the abuse…held their tongue…There (was) a lot of pressure gain in the building…some people ate to…survive…some people had…physical and mental issues…a number of people…experienced chest pains…if there wasn’t food, there were Kleenex, because people cried daily at work…some people isolated themselves. Walk in the door, go to your classroom, close the door…come out when the kids arrive…close the door to teach…you stay hidden…we called that “flying under the radar”…everybody was in survival mode…get through the day, have another day…one more off the calendar…how long do I have to endure this?</td>
<td>Narratives A and B: Claire: I think there was always a very strong…connection between teachers…and there was…an exchange…of information…and sharing of knowledge. (But) …it was seen as a negative…and discouraged to be talking to colleagues. (So) We started a “Sunshine Club” to try and raise morale in the building…people donated money to buy gifts or do little celebrations on teachers’ birthdays.</td>
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