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"Playing the Game Or "Buying in": Charter School Teachers and Professionalism in an Era of Choice and Accountability

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"PLAYING THE GAME" OR "BUYING IN":

CHARTER SCHOOL TEACHERS AND PROFESSIONALISM IN AN ERA OF

CHOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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For my mom
and in loving memory of my dad

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ABSTRACT

Charter schools were initially created with the intention of empowering teachers to implement school and classroom strategies in accordance with their educational expertise. Such autonomy and respect for teacher expertise indicates a commitment to teacher professionalism. Yet charter schools have also have higher rates of teacher turnover and hire fewer credentialed, experienced teachers. In the context of shifting and contested notions of teacher professionalism, charter schools provide insight into how teachers fare under contemporary educational policy arrangements. This comparative qualitative case study investigates how charter schools have lived up to their theoretical promise for teacher professionalism. The study finds that the autonomy built into the charter school model falls on school- and network-level administrators, who then frame the school-level organizational context in which teachers work, creating diverse conditions for professionalism. As administrators worked to meet external accountability mandates, however, they tended to implement stricter controls over teachers' work. Teachers enacted professionalism with varying degrees of success, as they resisted or navigated administrative strictures in order to implement their own ideas of best practices. This study addresses the impact of market-based reforms on teachers, and the implications for the future of teaching as a profession.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

When Al Shanker proposed the idea of charter schools in 1988, he wrote about creating educational alternatives to a "factory model" that permeated American K-12 education. Then president of the American Federation of Teachers, Shanker suggested that small groups of teachers propose innovative ways to educate children and carry them out through chartered schools (Shanker, 1988). This proposal put teachers at the center of charter school creation, vision, and practice. According to Malloy & Wohlstetter (2003), "charter schools were born out a belief that teachers are professionals who should be actively involved in the operation and management of schools" (p. 220). From these beginnings, it would seem that charter schools could become bastions of professionalism for their teachers.

Yet teachers have long maintained a complicated record of professionalism (Lortie, 2002). According to Ingersoll & Merrill (2012), **"the underlying and most important quality distinguishing professions from other kinds of occupations is the degree of expertise and complexity involved in the work itself"** (p. 187). From this perspective, professionals must maintain a set of complex skills and knowledge that lay people do not possess. Growing out of that specialized knowledge and expertise, professionalized teachers would be given autonomy in their work and prestige in the community. Teachers' expertise similarly plays a role in the way teachers see themselves, building their sense of professional identity. Yet whether or not teachers are seen as possessing a unique skill set is a question that remains contested. Contemporary

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educational trends and policies have tended to "de-skill" teaching (Brint & Teele, 2007, p. 149) by making it increasingly mechanized and scripted (Schneider, 2012), thereby undermining teacher autonomy and agency (Endacott et al., 2015). Meanwhile, universities and teachers unions have continued to advocate for specialized teacher training and professional development (Drury, 2011). Given dynamic and shifting teaching contexts, teachers must build professional identities in confusing and conflicting circumstances.

These circumstances are especially perplexing in charter schools. While charter school teachers report satisfaction with their autonomy, charter schools also maintain lower rates of teacher retention, lower salaries, less experienced teachers, and fewer certified teachers (Ohio Collaborative, 2005; Miron & Applegate, 2007; Renzulli et al., 2011, Fabricant & Fine, 2012). Even in school districts with strong union presence, most charter teachers are nonunionized (Wells, Slayton & Scott, 2002; Delgado, 2012). While charters promote teacher autonomy in decision-making, they hire fewer credentialed, experienced teachers. In essence, charter schools de-emphasize teachers' educational expertise, while simultaneously relying on them to make important educational decisions. Carrying the irony a step further, charter school teachers report being more satisfied with their work than other teachers, but they leave their jobs at faster rates than teachers at traditional schools (Renzulli et al., 2011).

These puzzling findings point to the need to understand the stories behind charter school teachers' professionalism[1]. As charter schools increase in numbers, the future of teachers as professionals hangs in the balance. This is not simply a question of whether teachers are being

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[1] In using the word "professionalism," this study does not intend to focus on teachers' compliance with norms of workplace culture such as "professional dress" or using "professional language" in an email. Instead, the study focuses on teachers' status as professionals: in short, their expertise and the extent to which they maintain control over their work.

de-professionalized (Gleeson & Knights, 2006), but rather a more complex question of what professional teaching looks like in charter schools. In order to do so, this study asks how teachers define, experience, and enact professionalism within the organizational contexts of their charter schools. The study finds that teacher professionalism depends on the way school administrators interpret and respond to external accountability pressures. School administrators build structures, policies, and practices that either support or constrain teacher professionalism, and teachers assert their professionalism by seeking the autonomy to control their practice.

This chapter begins by reviewing the literature on charter schools, setting the context for this study by discussing the history and ideology behind charter schools. Then, this chapter uses existing research to conceptualize teacher professionalism within a contemporary policy context.

Charter Schools

The charter school movement's historical and ideological roots illustrate how charter advocates come from a great variety of perspectives and maintain various priorities. This, of course, is part of the movement's appeal: it is a "big tent" movement in which diverse individuals and groups can work toward the goals they see as important. Allowing for diverse and divergent ideas is inherent in the charter idea. However, charter advocates implicitly participate in the neoliberal constructs that underpin charter schools. Different charter schools and organizations maintain divergent pedagogical and organizational priorities, but still participate in school choice and educational privatization. While different charter schools provide varying organizational contexts for teacher work, all charter school teachers are simultaneously embedded in a larger organizational context steeped in neoliberal policy. This section traces charter schools' historical and ideological roots. It shows their immediate

differences in organizational context, while highlighting the way the charter school movement has come to provide a consistent and powerful overarching organizational context.

History

Over the last two decades, charter schools have become increasingly common in American public school districts. Since 1991, when charter school legislation first passed in Minnesota, 42 states have passed laws permitting charter schools. By the 2015-2016 school year, 6,825 charter schools operated across the country, accounting for 6 percent of U.S. public schools (Mead, Mitchel, & Rotterham, 2015; National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2016). It is likely that the number of charter schools will continue to grow, given the incentives awarded to charter-friendly states through Race to the Top legislation (US Department of Education, 2009). Charter schools have become a central tenet in contemporary conceptions of school reform, gaining support across the political spectrum (Murphy & Shiffman, 2002). As both liberal and conservative school reformers have become increasingly focused on accounting for student outcomes, rather than on directly regulating school policy, charter schools have increased in prominence (Buckley & Schneider, 2007; Brouillette, 2002). Their success at appealing to multiple and diverse constituencies has helped drive charter schools' growth.

Charter schools are publicly funded, but privately operated schools of choice. Students in a given school district may choose to enroll in any charter school in that district without reference to the student's home address. The charter school's managing organization maintains a contract with the charter's authorizer, which may be the state, district, or a university. While charter schools maintain autonomy in various aspects of school operations, they are beholden to state accountability standards (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). States and

school districts cannot control charter schools' specific policies and practices, but they maintain the power to revoke schools' charters if they fail to meet student achievement standards. Charter schools therefore align with school reform efforts of the last thirty years, which increasingly focus on accountability, rather than regulation (Fabricant & Fine, 2012).

Charter schools have grown in strength, number, and policy coherence, placing them in increasing importance among American schools. Some see charter schools as part of a long history of expanding educational opportunity (Nathan, 1996), others see them as an outgrowth of policies aimed at repairing the educational system's deficiencies (Murphy & Shiffman, 2002), and still others see them as opportunities to reduce bureaucracy's role in instruction (Shanker, 1988). It is unsurprising, then, that charter schools are as diverse as the reasons to support them. As a reform tool, charter schools provide a way for dissatisfied individuals to create their own solutions to problems they see at the local level (Wells, Lopez, Scott & Holme, 1999). Powers (2009) describes charter schools as a "conceptually empty reform" that could be filled differently according to context (p. 112). As a policy construct, charter schools create the space for diverse reforms to be implemented or combined in different schools. Charter founders have the room to create unique responses to specific problems. In this way, charter schools can be seen as a decentralized solution to educational problems (Wells et al., 1999; Fuller, 2003).

Ideology

Even as the charter school movement has gained power and coherence, charter school policies have been rooted in multiple ideological frames (Powers, 2009). Rather than creating divisions among charter advocates, this ideological diversity would prove to be a strength for the charter school movement's development and influence. According to Wells (1998), the diverse

(but related) ideologies of charter advocates generally fall into three categories: those aiming for standards-based systemic school reform, those looking for local autonomy, and those seeking neoliberal market reform. Combined, they describe the range of goals and priorities that undergird charter schools and the individuals and organizations that support them.

Standards-based systemic reformers. Charter school advocates who seek systemic reform generally see charter schools as part of a wider movement to improve the existing school system. Such reforms focus on accountability for educational outcomes, rather than on dictating educational practice (Brouillette, 2002; Nathan, 1996; Vergari, 2002). The purpose of charter schools, according to these reformers, is to help all public schools improve through competition. They see charter schools not only as locales for accountability-based reform, but also as exemplars from which conventional schools can learn, and against which those schools must compete for students and funding.

Local autonomy reformers. For some, charter schools can serve as an alternative to a mainstream school, which may fail to address their community's specific needs (Buckley and Schneider, 2007). In recent years, such charter reformers have created schools specifically aimed at low-income families or other non-dominant groups (Vergari, 2002). Having local control over a school means that members of a given community determine the school's organization, pedagogy, and culture. Such reformers support charter schools based on the decentralization that charter policies offer (Nathan, 1996; Vergari, 2002). Rather than having education controlled by a district or central office, they prefer school-based autonomous control over the decisions and policies that affect a school's community.

Neoliberal market-based reformers. Drawing on theory from economist Milton

Friedman (1955), neoliberal reformers seek to bring publicly funded educational services under

the control of private organizations. From this perspective, parents and students become

"consumers" and schools compete with one another to provide educational services that meet

parent demand (Buckley & Schneider, 2007, p. 7). Like systemic reformers, they see increased

market-based competition as a vehicle for improving all schools.

While these three categories provide insight into the different priorities and perspectives

of various charter advocates, charter school supporters do not all fit neatly into one category or

another. For example, a charter school founder may agree with notions of competition and

private enterprise embedded in neoliberal reform, but may build a school based on the specific

needs of a community. That same founder may also be wary of the standardized testing

associated with accountability-based reforms. Alternatively, a group of teachers may start a

charter school to be an exemplar in cutting-edge pedagogy, even though they favor cooperation

over competition between schools. Just as these categories describe various approaches to charter

reform, they also build a more nuanced picture of different charter advocates' myriad

combinations of characteristics.

The wide range of ideologies behind charter school reformers has provided wide-ranging

political support for the creation of a forceful movement (National Alliance for Public Charter

Schools, 2016). Their broad ideological inclusion means that charter schools have space for

community- or platform-specific reforms. Thus, individual charter schools can serve liberal or

conservative ideals. Even though the school choice aspect of charter reforms is associated with

neoliberal economic policies, charter school operators who have more progressive ideals support

charter policies in order to be able to run a school as they see fit. In this way, charter policies bring together advocates from a variety of political persuasions, creating a broad coalition from which to build a movement. At the same time, they may also create different demands on charter school teachers.

Shared Context: Networked Organizations

Even as charter school reformers ascribe to different ideologies and create schools for divergent reasons, the organizations involved in the charter school movement are deeply connected. The organizations supporting charter schools are not simply the schools themselves, but also include large networks of charter schools, management organizations, and philanthropic organizations. As more organizations have become involved in charter reform, the movement has solidified its position and power within the educational landscape. Interconnected charter school organizations represent a new type of structure in American schooling, which stands to influence the organizational contexts in which teachers work.

Part of charter organizations' increasing power derives from the organizations' interdependence and flexible role structure. Diverse charter school organizations cooperate in a way that creates a variety of school structures. That variety has allowed the charter school movement to continue appealing to a wide constituency while increasing charters schools' prevalence and the movement's influence in American education. A variety of actors have served as charter school founders, managers, or funding partners. Meanwhile, organizations and individuals have also bridged those roles, gaining the ability to influence the charter school movement, as well as policy at the national, state, district, or school level. For instance, charter schools themselves might send teachers and students to lobby legislatures, while statewide

networks produce literature to encourage student enrollment in charter schools. Philanthropists may provide funding for professional development while forging connections between different charter schools. Management organizations may dictate teacher practice and school organization, while principals engage in fundraising activities. Each type of charter organization has a particular mission or focus, but maintains the flexibility to influence the charter movement in a variety of ways.

Charter schools have increasingly had access to support from a variety of public and private charter school advocates. For example, new schools can follow guidelines provided by federal and state governments' departments of education (Building Charter School Quality, 2012; Education Commission of the States, 1998; National Consensus on Charter School Quality, 2009). Such government entities provide guidance on how charter schools can achieve success both operationally and academically. Independent organizations also support charter school operations by offering administrative, teaching, and operating advice (Learning Point Associates, 2012). As charter school organizations have become connected in their affiliations and operational management, they also become dependent on outside support organizations.

Not only do charter schools rely on outside organizations for operational and academic support, but they also depend on broader organizations for political support. For example, the Illinois Network of Charter Schools (2013) provides charter schools with political support through lobbying for charter legislation. Even as it supports charter schools politically, it also creates connections between charter schools in Illinois, providing ties that encourage collaboration and mutual support. For instance, it holds a charter school job fair each year where Illinois charter schools can gain access to potential new teachers. Networks of charter schools

also often provide academic or operational support to individual charter schools (Illinois Network of Charter Schools, 2013; Texas Charter Schools Association, 2013).

Sometimes overlapping with charter school networks are Management Organizations (MOs). These for-profit (Education Management Organizations or EMOs) or non-profit (Charter Management Organizations or CMOs) private organizations manage public charter schools. Some may exist in a large regional or national franchise (e.g., National Heritage Academy, 2013; KIPP, 2013; Charter Schools USA, 2013), while others manage only one charter site (e.g., Self Development Charter School, 2013). For-profit Education Management Organizations operate as businesses, seeking to make a profit. Non-profit CMOs, however, also often employ highly paid CEOs (Ravitch, 2012).

Increasingly, charter schools and advocates also rely on support from philanthropic foundations. Often started by wealthy and successful business owners, these organizations steer educational policy through their philanthropic work. Donors' influence has more than supported the work of reformers; it has steered policy and built schools according to specific priorities or ideologies. Scott (2009) refers to these donors as "venture philanthropists" who "aim to increase the number of high-achieving charter schools, especially in urban school districts, and to bring to scale successful charter management models" (p. 107). They support schools that fit the models they see as successful, and advocate for public policies that fit those schools' needs. Through their financial and political support, they have successfully built charter advocates' capacity to create and sustain schools. They have also been instrumental in building social capital across charter organizations, as they often forge useful connections between other charter organizations.

Charter organizations including schools, community organizations, for-profit or non-profit Educational Management Organizations, universities, corporate sponsors, philanthropic foundations, and charter networks collaborate in multiple ways, making the landscape of charter schools quite diverse. Organizations spread their influence and work toward their individual goals, while also working in conjunction with other organizations. As these organizations become increasingly interconnected, they also come to depend upon one another, sharing information, strategy, and personnel. They also come to share the broad organizational context formed by the diverse field of charter organizations. In this way, charter schools exist within this deeply interconnected super-organizational structure.

While charter schools represent a fundamentally decentralized and differentiated policy structure, they also necessarily exist within a highly networked field of organizations and market-based governance structures. This dichotomy creates tension for charter schools and their teachers, as many aim for social justice while simultaneously participating in market-based allocation of educational resources. Charter school teachers find themselves working within the unique organizational context of a specific charter school, but also within charter school networks and the larger milieu of the charter organizational field. That field is decentralized, interdependent, powerful, and has a vested interest in supporting educational policies rooted in neoliberal ideology. These emerging organizational contexts build tension around teachers' professional lives, begging questions about how nested organizational contexts shape notions of teacher professionalism.

Teacher Professionalism in Organizational Context

Both classical and contemporary sociological works provide grounding for understanding the professions and, by extension, teaching's uncertain professional status (Lortie, 1975). Studies have focused on characteristics of professions including professional identities (Sachs, 2001) ethical orientations (Sockett, 1993), professional development (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012), collaboration (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994), autonomy (Gawlik, 2007; Wohlstetter & Griffin, 1997), trust (Fox, 1974; Tschannen-Moran, 2009), specialized knowledge and skill (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012) and commitment (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997; Tawney, 1920). While each of these characteristics of professional teaching is important, they all address professional expertise and authority (Friedson, 2001; Greenwood, 1957; Wilensky, 1964). In other words, professionals are expert teachers who maintain authority over classroom practices and some school-level decisions. Moreover, professionals participate in constructing definitions of quality professional teaching.

Defining Teacher Professionalism

While notions of "good teaching" and what it means to be a professional teacher remain contested and dynamic, persistent themes resonate across those definitions. For instance, while stakeholders may not agree on what educational expertise looks like, or how teacher authority plays out in policy and practice, both remain important across definitions of professionalism. In order for an occupation to be considered professional, the specific knowledge and skills must not only be unique to members of the profession but their knowledge base must be theoretically rooted, supported by a variety of case applications, and scientifically tested (Hoyle & John, 1995). Indicators of expertise in teaching include high level credentials, induction and mentoring

programs for new teachers, quality professional development, and specialization (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012, p. 186). Teachers need expert knowledge in their subject matter, the principles of classroom management, individual learners and their characteristics, and educational purposes and values (Shulman, 1987). In order for professionals to master this body of knowledge and skills, "they need long periods of training, significant parts of which need to go on within higher education" (Furlong et al., 2000) and which result in officially sanctioned credentials (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997). Through this training, professionals are taught to apply their theoretically- and scientifically- rooted knowledge in order to make judgments in the unique circumstances of real-world teaching.

However, teaching has historically been understood as a "quasi-profession" (Darling-Hammond, 1999), or teachers' professional status has been uncertain (Lortie, 1975). Citizens first encounter teachers as children, and understand teaching from a student's perspective. Lortie (1975) argues that these observations can entrench traditional modes of teaching, as teachers rely on their experiences as students and fail to apply expertise to their craft. Further, "Whereas professions typically assume responsibility for defining, transmitting, and enforcing standards of practice, teachers, at least in the United States, historically have had little or no control over most of the mechanisms that determine professional standards" Darling-Hammond, 1999). However, teacher training, professional development, and mentoring build professional expertise into teaching. Darling-Hammond (1999) describes the creation of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as a boon to teachers' professional status. Citizens' perceptions of teaching, however, often remain over-simplified (Engvall, 1997). When administrators, policy-makers, or community members see teachers as unskilled workers carrying out simplistic work, it can

undermine trust between teachers and other stakeholders. Moreover, if teachers are not allowed to teach according to their expert knowledge, they will come to question their efficacy.

Professionalization or Professionalism?

This study uses the terms "teacher professionalization" and "teacher professionalism" with intentional distinction. Professionalization describes a process undergone by an occupation, whereas professionalism describes attributes or behaviors (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997). Describing a process of professionalization implies progress along a continuum between "not professional[2]" and "professional." From this perspective, the story of teacher professionalization can be understood as a struggle for teachers to reach full professional status. For instance, Ingersoll & Merrill (2012) rank various professions according to their prestige and compensation, implying that professionalization is a continuum along which teachers rank somewhere between cashiers and physicians. According to the existing literature's emphasis on authority and expertise, a professionalization continuum might look like this:

Figure 1. Teacher professionalization continuum

Not Professional   Professional

⬅━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━➡

Low authority   High authority
Low expertise   High expertise

According to this model, as teachers gain expertise, they are given the freedom and authority to make decisions over classroom and school practices. The problem with this continuum is that it

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[2] It is important to note here the distinction between "not professional" and "unprofessional." In common usage, unprofessional often refers to those who dress, speak, or act in ways that are inappropriate for workplace culture. "Not professional" in this context is not intended to imply a lack of decorum, but only a lack of authority and expertise.

assumes that expertise and authority increase together, in a one-to-one exchange. When the two are out of balance, the notion of teacher professionalization as a one-dimensional path becomes problematic. For example, when teachers have authority but lack expertise, or when they have expertise but lack authority, their professional status is unclear. To illustrate this, I consider the above continuum at a 45-degree angle, as shown in figure 2:

Figure 2. Teacher professionalization quadrant
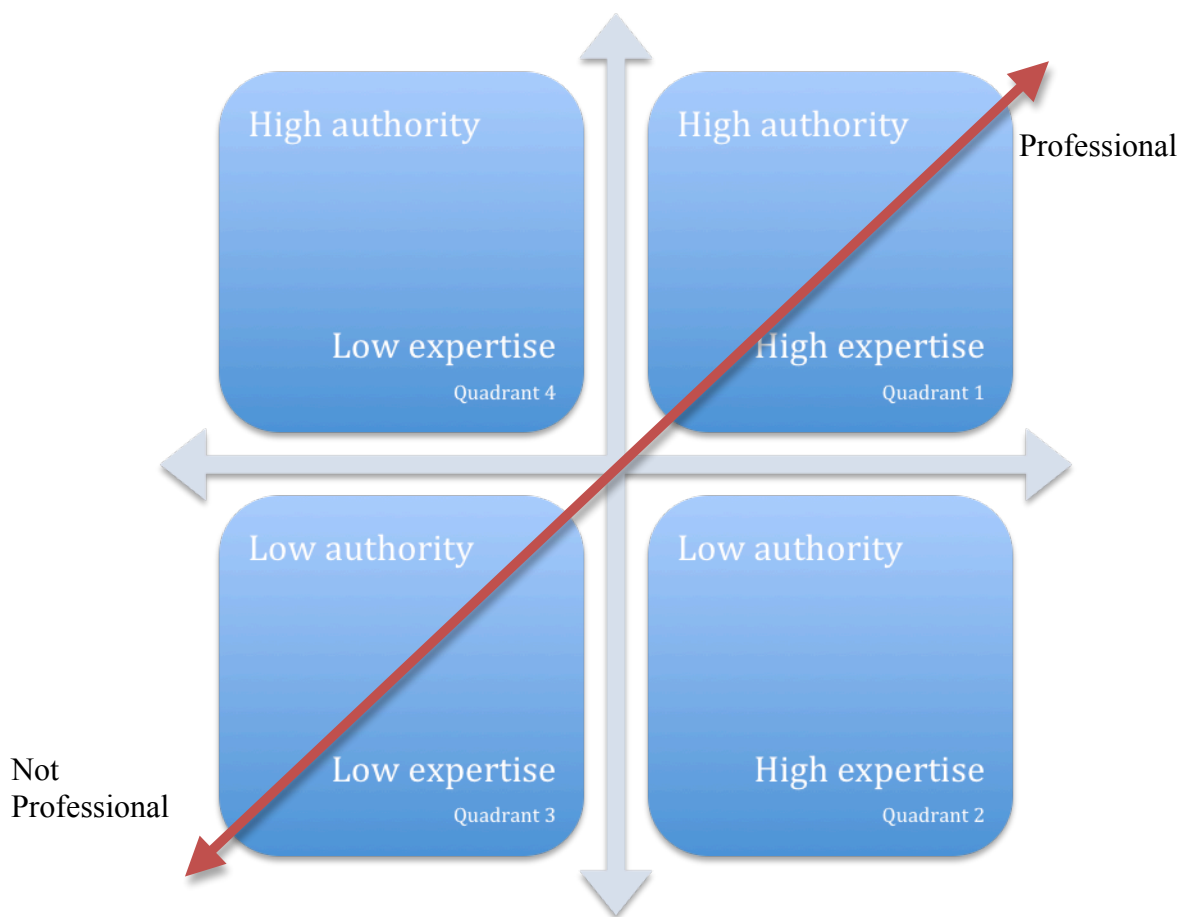
The red line in figure 2 represents the teaching field's degree of professionalization. In quadrant 1, professional teachers are granted authority over classroom and school decisions because of their significant expertise. By this logic, a teaching force without expertise would not be granted

authority—their lack of expertise would preclude their ability to make informed decisions (Quadrant 3).

However, conflict and uncertainty arise when the relationship between teachers' authority and expertise stray from the red line—in other words, when the exchange of expertise and authority are imbalanced. For instance, when teachers maintain high levels of expertise, but are granted low levels of authority (Quadrant 2), their expertise would make them confident about methods for teaching and school improvement, but their lack of authority would prevent them from acting on their expert knowledge. Conversely, teachers with low levels of expertise and high levels of authority (Quadrant 4) would be required to make important decisions without the expert knowledge to make those decisions with confidence.

Standards-based accountability involves high teacher expertise and low teacher authority. Since the onset of No Child Left Behind, schools have been required to hire "highly qualified teachers" (US Department of Education, 2002), yet those teachers have simultaneously needed to tailor their instruction to standardized tests. In this way, standards-based accountability has required teachers to be experts in their content area, but it also constrains teachers' authority over curricular decisions (Wills & Sandholtz, 2009). Charter schools maintain arguably lower standards for teacher expertise, employing teachers with fewer years of experience and credentials. In theory, charters also maintain higher levels of teacher authority. As both standards-based accountability and charter schools proliferate, the status of teaching as a profession remains uncertain.

Multiple forces influence teachers' expertise and authority. University training, district professional development, disciplinary norms, professional organizations, and educational policy

can help build teachers' knowledge and skills—but they also influence the way teachers come to understand what it means to be an expert teacher in their field. Such overlapping and competing organizations also affect teachers' conceptions of their work and its importance. At the same time, federal, state, district, and school policies and practices influence teacher credential requirements and opportunities for teacher authority in schools. This creates a complex interplay of nested or overlapping organizations, all with the potential to influence teachers' professional lives.

It is not surprising, from this perspective, that teachers' professional lives can be understood in diverse or even competing ways. The question of teachers' status along a professionalization continuum reveals a deeper and more important issue: What does it mean to be a professional teacher, and who decides? Instead of focusing on professional status and progression, this study focuses on the way teacher professionalism is defined, experienced, and enacted. In doing so, it seeks to disentangle who controls definitions of teacher professionalism. Rather than discuss professionalization as teachers' progression along a predetermined path, this study asks what the path looks like, who forged it, and whether (and how) different actors alter or reinforce that path.

Who Controls Teacher Professionalism?

Employers can be seen as granting professional authority in exchange for professionals' technical expertise. As Labaree (1992) states, "the claim to professional status rests on a simple bargain: technical competence is exchanged for technical autonomy, practical knowledge for control over practice" (p. 125). Such an exchange involves high levels of trust: managers must trust that professionals' skills and knowledge afford them the competence and discretion to make

effective decisions (Tschannen- Moran, 2009). These trusting relationships are not limited to the confines of institutional management; lay people must also trust professionals' judgment (Evetts, 2006).

Professionals' power is predicated upon their perceived legitimacy, which in turn relies on the public's trust in professionals' competence and objectivity (Fournier, 1999, p. 286). Such trust allows professionals' managers to govern at a distance (Fournier, 1999), relying on norms of professionalism to control professionals' attitudes and practices (Friedson, 1994). Professionalism therefore aligns with new forms of public management, in which managers forego direct control over practice in favor of indirect control over outcomes and performance (Ferrell & Morris, 2003). For teachers, this manifests in control over pedagogy, and evaluation by standard measures of student performance. In theory, this type of management eschews tight bureaucratic controls, yet even schools under indirect control have tended to maintain bureaucratic structures (Laffin, 1998). As new forms of public management (like charter schools) gain prominence, it is important to understand who controls professionals' practice in those organizational contexts.

Professions maintain control over the set of codified knowledge and skills to be passed to new professionals, and they dictate the qualifications for membership in that profession (Firestone & Bader, 1992; Friedson, 1994). When professionals are able to engage in collaboratively building definitions of good practice, they gain a sense of collective responsibility (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). From this perspective, professional control over the field's knowledge and members is empowering for a profession of experts, and facilitates professionals serving the community's needs (Sachs, 2001). However, autonomous professionals

must also regulate their own conduct in order to fit the mold of the good professional (Fournier, 1999; Foucault, 1988). This makes individual professionals subject to the norms, values, and dictates of the professional field.

While schools of education housed in universities have traditionally dictated the set of skills and knowledge teachers must learn[3], teachers generally lack the formal mechanisms for determining who qualifies as a professional teacher. Those standards are externally determined (Herbst, 1989). Parents, community members, and policy makers have a stake in defining quality teaching and ensuring teacher effectiveness. Under contemporary accountability measures, teachers must meet goals set out by the central management of the organization. Teachers are, therefore, not merely subject to the norms of professional teaching laid out by educational experts; they are also subject to the outcomes and performance standards enforced by district, local, state, and federal policies. Charter teachers must also contend with the unique priorities of their school, as well as the varied demands from the charter field. Such circumstances contribute to teachers' uncertain professional status, as "no professional, whether doctor, lawyer or teacher, has traditionally wanted to have the terms of their practice and conduct dictated by anyone else but their peers" (Besley & Peters, 2009, p. 30).

However, teachers maintain a limited voice in shaping definitions of good teaching formally through teacher unions or local school structures. For instance, unions are sometimes able to collaborate with districts to create teacher evaluations (Fitzpatrick, 2013). Many teachers are also able to maintain notions of teacher professionalism on a smaller scale, often at the school or district level through normative means (Coburn, 2004), as teachers place pressure on

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[3] Universities' control over the skills and knowledge passed onto teachers has been tempered by state controls over teacher education programs.

one another to adopt standards of good teaching. More concretely, teachers exert influence in their schools through participation in hiring committees, curriculum creation, or building school culture (Scribner & Bradley-Levine, 2010), even though those contributions may be tempered by a school's structural arrangements (Firestone & Louis, 1999). Organizations like universities or unions help maintain a consistent teaching force by facilitating teacher interaction and passing along agreed-upon knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Even as teachers maintain some control over their profession, the context in which they work depends upon broader educational policies and practices.

Policy Context of Teacher Professionalism: Trust and Accountability

Divergent conceptions of teacher professionalism play out in the context of contemporary educational policy. In public education systems, teachers are entrusted with the social function of helping children learn, grow, and become contributing members of adult society[4]. Citizens contribute tax money to education, and teachers become social trustee professionals who are responsible to the public for their work (Brint, 1996). Yet *how* a society entrusts teachers will impact the way teachers experience professionalism. In essence, the way teachers are entrusted reflects the way policy makers, educational leaders, and citizens understand trust and accountability in education.

In contemporary parlance, teacher accountability has come to be associated with student performance on externally defined standardized performance assessments (Ablemann et al., 2007), manifesting in managerial, corporate-style control (Ball, 1997; Apple, 1999; Gleeson &

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[4] Of course, different groups and individuals demand various things from schools—whether teachers must train students to be productive participants in the economy, active democratic citizens, or fulfilled and thriving individuals remains contested. This lively discussion is not, however, within the scope of this study.

Knights, 2006). However, accountability can also be understood as existing in relationships. One example of the way relational accountability might function involves teamwork: each member of a team contributes in order to reach a goal. The team members trust and rely on one another, but members are not threatened with punishment for failure. These types of accountability are manifested in two different forms of professionalism, managerial and democratic (Sachs, 2001).

When teachers are held accountable as under recent and current policy regimes, their work manifests as "managerial professionalism" (Sachs, 2001). Under such conditions, teachers are positioned as corporate workers who must meet goals as set out by the central management of the organization. Rather than teachers creating their own learning objectives, goals are externally defined and hierarchically enforced. Individual teachers are held accountable for narrowly defined educational outcomes (Barrett, 2009). Under such conditions, teachers come to adopt an entrepreneurial-competitive professional orientation (Day, 2002). In effect, they are positioned against other teachers or other schools, and must work to meet external standards in order to preserve their careers.

Under managerial conditions, professional teaching becomes a challenge. Even if individual teachers possess expertise, the policy context diminishes their ability to make educational decisions. According to Day and Gu (2007), these teachers are "implicitly encouraged to comply uncritically" and, as a result, have found their identities challenged, their time to connect with students diminished, their agency threatened, and their efficacy reduced (p. 425; Day, 2002). Teachers need to mediate policy pressures in a way that fits with their own beliefs and practices (Coburn, 2004), but under managerial policy contexts, teachers have struggled to reconcile their individual professional identities with outcome-driven policies

(Barrett, 2009). As administrators, government policy-makers, and community members train their eyes on teacher performance, teachers learn to perform according to expectations, even if that performance conflicts with teachers' own conceptions of good teaching. Teachers' control over their work is limited to managing others' impressions of them by "deciding which mask to wear, and deciding in which situation to wear it" (Webb, 2009, p. 38).

However, when teachers are trusted as educational experts, they are able to act as "democratic professionals" (Sachs, 2001). When teachers are given more trust, they are able to engage in cooperatively building definitions of quality teaching and learning with other educational professionals. As a result, teachers working together gain a sense of collective responsibility. That responsibility manifests in relationships among teachers, as well as between teachers and students, families, administrators, and the community (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Through these relationships, teachers are able to define educational goals together, rather than relying on externally mandated requirements. Collectively defined educational goals also result in broader notions of what it means to be educated. Rather than relying on standardized measurable outcomes, democratic professionals have the latitude to create and interpret educational goals. In fact, teachers who work in schools with high levels of trust are more likely to have a stronger professional orientation (Tschannen-Moran, 2009).

Just like managerial professionals, however, democratic professionals depend on policy context for the trust they receive. Accountability-based policy contexts can manifest at different levels: federal, state, local, district, or school. Those policies can facilitate or inhibit teacher collaboration across grade level, discipline, and school. These vertical and horizontal overlapping policy contexts mean that teachers rarely operate in pure accountability- or trust-

based environments. Trust-based policies at the school or district level may mediate accountability-based policies at the state or federal level, allowing teachers more authority at the school level than the state level provides. However, the reverse may also be true: state or district level policies that foster trust may be undermined by school level practices rooted in managerial accountability. The contextual layers surrounding teachers inevitably affect the way they come to view themselves professionally.

Implications of trust and accountability. While policy makers and other stakeholders argue over the future of public education, the implications for teachers are vast. While it is tempting to view teacher professionalization as a one-dimensional continuum, such a characterization masks nuance. Under a contentious accountability-based policy context, "whether or not what we are witnessing here is a struggle between a professionalizing project or a deprofessionalizing one, it is certainly a struggle among different stakeholders over the definition of teacher professionalism" (Whitty, 1998, p. 65). Even though performative accountability-based policy regimes threaten aspects of agreed-upon notions of teacher professionalism (Stronach, 2002; Ball, 2003), it is also important to examine *how* such policy conditions change teacher professionalism. As Furlong and colleagues (2000) pose:

> we need to ask some fundamental questions about who does have a legitimate right to be involved in defining teaching professionalism. Are state control and market forces or professional self governance really the only models of accountability available to us—or can we develop new approaches to teacher professionalism, based upon more participatory relationships with diverse communities? (p. 175)

Furthermore, as teachers work within the constraints of accountability-based policies, they "not only contested reforms but also navigated around these governing practices, which were usually far too simple to address the complexities of educational workplaces" (Seddon and Levin, 2013).

Questions of accountability at the policy level beg questions about the future of teaching as a profession.

Differentiated Professionalisms?

Teacher professionalism depends on the specific contexts in which teachers work. Both teachers and schools are embedded in multiple organizational contexts (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993) and are influenced by both formal and informal forces. National reforms, district policies, parental pressures, and subject matter norms operate upon teacher practices and school level policies, often in demanding or even contradictory ways. But teachers and schools are not passive recipients of the multiple demands on their practice (Coburn, 2004). Just as teachers mediate outside pressures to create classrooms in which students can learn, school leaders also mediate outside influences to construct positive school environments in which teachers can work effectively. Schools that foster teacher professionalism offer teachers a certain amount of authority, while also providing them with support through effective professional development. In other words, they trust teachers' expertise, but also encourage teachers to continue to sharpen and update their professional knowledge. Regardless of teachers' and schools' organizational contexts, teachers also actively participate in the construction of their own professionalism within their specific political and administrative confines.

Charter schools are no exception; in fact, their unique organizational context provides schools with the leeway to treat teachers as they see fit. However, that context also has the potential to negatively influence teacher professionalism. Ingersoll and Merrill (2012) have found the lowest levels of teacher professionalization in non-Catholic religious private schools. This, they suggest, may point to a "fundamental clash" between professionalism and school

choice reforms" (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012, p. 195). While Ingersoll and Merrill (2012) warn that school choice policies, like charter schools, may decrease teacher professionalization, another choice-driven initiative, magnet schools, has been found to support professionalism (Evans, 2002). In a study of new charter school teachers, Weiner and Torres (2016) find that charter teachers build professional identities "as highly skilled, dedicated, and deserving of stature," but eventually questioned the work's sustainability and their own efficacy (p. 75). Indeed, the initial vision behind charter schools included teacher empowerment (Shanker, 1988). As charters have evolved, however, they have not necessarily reflected Shanker's (1988) initial vision for teacher-driven schooling. Instead, they have become a movement synonymous with "corporate" school reform models (Fabricant & Fine, 2012). Such corporate analogies conjure images of lock-step worker compliance to CEO-driven policies, rather than professional independence and autonomy. These competing images—teacher as autonomous professional, or as corporate cog—beg questions not simply about whether charter teachers are professionalized or deprofessionalized, but about how teachers define, experience, and enact professionalism in charter schools.

First, this dissertation provides background on charter schools and teacher professionalism. In chapter two, it explains the study's governmentality theoretical framework. Chapter three describes the study's questions, its comparative case study methodology, and its context. The next three chapters illustrate the study's findings: chapter four discusses growth as a professional project, chapter five analyzes professional responsibility and accountability in organizational context, and chapter six describes teacher autonomy in charter schools. Chapter seven discusses the dissertation's implications and conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Charter Teachers' Work in Neoliberal Context:

A Governmentality Perspective

This study seeks to understand not simply whether charter school teachers can be considered professionals, but rather how charter teachers define, experience, and enact professionalism within their school and policy contexts. Charter schools can be described as a quintessentially neoliberal educational policy. As charter schools become increasingly common, a larger proportion of teachers work within these neoliberal policy contexts. It is important to this study of teacher professionalism in charter schools, therefore, to understand how neoliberalism functions, and how it may impact teachers' experiences with professionalism. Governmentality theory provides insight into the ramifications of neoliberal policies, and provides a useful theoretical lens through which to understand teacher professionalism in charter schools. Moreover, it indicates that charter school teachers work within complex and contradictory circumstances as they seek to navigate professional work within a neoliberal policy context.

While researchers have debated the merits of charter schools (Nathan, 1996; Lubienski, 2003; Fabricant & Fine, 2012), described them as part of a neoliberal policy regime (Lipman, 2011), and critiqued neoliberal policies from the perspective of governmentality (Ball, 1993; Apple, 2004; Peters, 2005), few have studied charter school teachers from a governmentality perspective (Ellison, 2012). The vast majority of empirical work on charter school teachers has

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not considered the rich theory brought from a governmentality perspective. Some scholars have used governmentality to understand professionalism (Evetts, 2006; Fournier, 1999), but not within the context of neoliberal school reform. This project uses a governmentality approach in order to destabilize current conceptions and more fully understand charter school teachers' work.

This chapter begins by defining neoliberalism and explicating neoliberal educational policies. It then explains governmentality theory and explores the theoretical implications for teachers working in neoliberal policy contexts.

Neoliberalism

Charter school policies, as market-based reforms, can be characterized as neoliberal reforms. However, neoliberalism has itself become a "rascal concept—promiscuously pervasive, yet inconsistently defined, empirically imprecise and frequently contested" (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2009, p. 184). Beginning with the abstract ideological proposals of Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman, neoliberalism would initially be enacted under Augusto Pinochet, Margaret Thatcher, and Ronald Reagan. Reacting against Keynesian economic policies, neoliberals created state policies that would guarantee a smoothly functioning, preeminent market (England & Ward, 2007; Brenner et al., 2009; Dean, 2010).

Even though many see neoliberalism as an economic mentality, it must also be seen as a mentality of governance (Rose, 1999; Dean, 2010). Hindess (2004) argues that the crux of neoliberalism "lies in the attempt to introduce not only market and quasi-market arrangements but also empowerment, self-government and responsibility into areas of social life which had hitherto been organized in other ways" (p. 35). For instance, introducing individual choice into the realm of public education promotes individual responsibility and self-government by forcing

actors to choose. Implementing neoliberal reforms, such as charter schools, creates a system that governs individuals—and teachers—indirectly.

Rather than government-dictated control of citizens, which Hayek warned against, neoliberalism governs through "the calculative choice of formally free actors" (Collier & Ong, 2005). In this way, Rose (1996) and others (Peters, 2005; Dean, 2010; Suspitsyna, 2010) argue in the tradition of Foucault that power and control exist in mechanisms like choice. Individual decisions are dictated not simply through "free choice," but are mediated by the range of choices available, the way in which information about choices is presented, and prevailing notions of what constitutes a "good" choice. While neoliberal policies provide actors with the freedom to choose, individuals have no choice but to choose, and to regulate their actions in accordance with available and desirable choices.

In education, neoliberal reforms pose problems specifically because they are rooted in economic ideas (Bartlett et al., 2002). Using market ideology to structure public schooling is necessarily based on costs and benefits as understood in economic terms. Neoliberal discourse around schooling not only influences policies like school allocation, but also narrows the range of education's goals. In order to survive in the educational market, individuals, schools, and policies must rely on measurable statistics. Educational goals that are not readily quantified often get left behind. As a result, teachers and schools regulate their methods to align with quantifiable student performance measures. This raises questions about the extent to which teachers can maintain control over their practice, or over definitions of professionalism, in the context of neoliberal educational policies like charter schools.

Charter schools are part of a larger push toward market-based reforms, which have subsumed the education reform discourse (Ball, 1993). Some argue that the increased prominence of neoliberal market-based reforms in the educational realm endanger the "public" nature of education (Ravitch, 2009; Beal & Hendry, 2012), or even facilitate the reproduction of existing advantages and disadvantages along race and class lines (Ball, 1993). Even though many scholars object to educational policy discourse becoming rooted in the language of economic markets, it has persisted over time, leading market-based educational analogies to become "common sense" within the public discourse (Bartlett et al., 2002, p. 7). As it has done so, priorities associated with market-based reforms have also come to influence the way teachers think about their work, as a focus on measurable student outcomes has permeated educational discourse.

Markets and democracy. School choice proponents view markets as a solution to a wide range of educational problems. Fundamentally, they see educational systems under market (rather than democratic) control as enabling citizens' closer and more efficient control over schools. Friedman (1955) argues that direct parental choice gives parents a more immediate way to influence their children's schools. He describes democratic political processes as inefficient and cumbersome avenues for parental influence, arguing that choice policies would transfer educational control from the government to individual families. Chubb and Moe (1990) argue that, under market systems, schools would quickly become responsive to families' needs and desires. Moreover, markets would create a system of "natural selection" (Chubb & Moe, 1990, p. 33) in which competition would lead to stronger schools in general. They promote schools that are responsive to the citizenry, just as advocates of democratically controlled education might.

However, choice advocates see market based systems as more responsive to citizen demands than democratic control.

School choice critics question the idea that "Markets… can be more democratic than democracy itself" (Henig, 1994, p. 5). Henig (1994) and others (Beal & Hendry, 2012) worry that parents' influence through school choice is deeply flawed. Whereas market-based policies involve individuals pursuing their own competing interests, democratic governance of education seeks to serve the collective public interest (Henig, 1994; Beal & Hendry, 2012). Under market-based policies, no consensus or community action is required, as parents choose or "exit" schools to fulfill individual needs (Levin, 1990). As a result, the range of educational issues parents can address becomes limited. As Beal and Hendry argue, "When parents' role in school choice focuses on individual agency and competition, it reinforces notions of equality that obscure structural inequities and contributes to the erosion of public education as a common good" (p. 543). Even though market proponents claim that all families have access to educational choices, competition for educational resources inevitably leads to inequity.

Indeed, market-based educational policies have been shown to disproportionately benefit upper income families while concentrating lower-income students of color in lower-performing schools (Lauen, 2009), essentially augmenting school and social stratification (Ball, 1993). Further undermining aims for social justice, Scott (2009) finds that "philanthropists directly shape public policy for the poor, without the public deliberative process" (p. 128). While donors funnel money intended to improve education for the poor, they simultaneously silence the very people they seek to serve. As Ravitch (2010) states, "There is something fundamentally antidemocratic about relinquishing control of the public education policy agenda to private

foundations run by society's wealthiest people" (p. 200). Under such market conditions, individuals actually retain less control over education because power remains concentrated among wealthy and powerful groups. Even as families are able to choose their children's schools, wealthy foundations increasingly control the range of schools from which families may choose.

Markets and innovation. Market reformers suggest that allocating educational resources by mimicking the free market would result in increased innovation, efficiency, and quality (Chubb & Moe, 1990), but pure economic markets cannot exist in the education sector (Le Grand, 1991). Under a market system, suppliers of goods and services are motivated to maximize profits. For public schools, the suppliers in the educational system, profit is not the ultimate goal. As Le Grand (1990) states, "Precisely what such enterprises will maximize, or can be expected to maximize, is unclear" (p. 126). Since schools of choice would only need to create enough demand for their school to fill a set number of seats, there is no incentive to make the school more attractive once the requisite seats are filled. Because there is an upper limit to the number of students a school can serve, the incentive for schools to seek new ways to attract an ever-increasing student body is limited.

Similarly, limits to the market analogy prevent school operators from building a truly diverse field of charter schools. According to Lubienski (2003), "Without the ability to charge customers more for new options, the incentive to innovate can be de-emphasized for producers" (p. 422). As schools of choice seek to fill their attendance rosters, they must increasingly focus on marketing and public relations, rather than on meaningful improvements in teaching and learning (Lubienski, 2005). In fact, charter schools are not any more innovative than traditional

public schools, and the areas in which charters innovate tend to involve staffing policies and

student grouping (Preston, Goldring, Berends, and Cannata, 2012). Even though schools may

emphasize differences by proclaiming a focus on technology or the arts, classroom practices do

not reflect real innovation (Lubienski, 2005). These findings beg questions about the extent to

which charter school teachers have the authority to try new teaching methods. If charter schools

were created with the intention of allowing more autonomy and independence for educators, it is

important to investigate why charter schools' anticipated teaching innovations have not

materialized (Preston et al., 2012). Under neoliberal policies, have teachers had less authority

than anticipated? Or have they exercised authority, but chosen to maintain entrenched teaching

methods?

Governmentality

From the perspective of governmentality, neoliberalism is a way of problematizing the

welfare state and its features: bureaucracy, rigidity, and dependency. In reaction to the modern

Keynesian welfare state, neoliberalism seeks to alter the conduct of individuals and institutions

so that they become more competitive and efficient. It expands "market rationality to all

spheres," focusing on organizations' and individuals' choices, and establishing "a culture of

enterprise and responsible autonomy" (Dean, 2010, p. 267-268). By manipulating individuals

and groups to conduct themselves in accordance with market rationalities, neoliberalism governs

people's actions, their fears, and their aspirations.

Foucault describes government as the "conduct of conduct," in which individuals use

technologies of domination over one another, while they simultaneously dictate and control their

own conduct. Under neoliberalism, individuals are placed in circumstances that induce self-

governance (Barry, Osborne & Rose, 1996, p. 20). As neoliberalism fundamentally affects education, it has also come to fundamentally affect the way individuals govern themselves. This may have the potential to explain why charter school teachers, who are ostensibly autonomous professionals, may self-govern in ways that align with neoliberal ideals of "good teaching." From that perspective, the actors who control definitions of professional teaching remain murky.

The Entrepreneurial Self

Under neoliberal governmentality, individuals are framed as entrepreneurs of their own lives (Brenner, Peck & Theodore, 2010). From this perspective, individuals must conceive their lives, and that of their families, as "a kind of enterprise" (Rose, 1999, p. 164) in which forms of personal investment and insurance "become the central ethical and political components of a new individualized, customized, and privatized consumer welfare economy" (Peters, 2005, p. 134). It becomes individuals' and families' responsibilities to make strategic investments in order to fully capitalize on their lives economically (Fejes & Nicoll, 2008, p. 55). They must build (and continually update) their human capital through investments in education, mobilize that capital to ensure its proper use, and prudently manage their future risks.

For entrepreneurial selves, self-actualization and self-development become important aspirations (Simons, 2002, p. 620). They engage in lifelong learning, orient themselves toward the future, and insure themselves against risk. Under neoliberalism, the entrepreneurial self is not only an economic construct, it also becomes the model of an ideal citizen (Rose, 1999, p. 164). Notions of the ideal citizen necessarily blend with ideals of the good professional: under neoliberal governmentality, professionals must not only have authority and expertise, they must also continually update their expertise through investments in their own education. From this

perspective, professional educators would also aspire to higher levels in their profession. Indeed, Seddon and Levin (2013) describe educational workplaces as "re-imagined as temporary stopping points in processes of transition that were organized through learning pathways and self-motivated learning careers" (p. 8). This type of self-discipline aligns with professionalizing projects in which teachers amass credentials and attend professional development sessions to improve their practice and grow their human capital.

Through these actions, entrepreneurial selves insure themselves against future risks. As Ewald (1991) notes, "To calculate a risk is to master time, to discipline the future" (p. 217). Unlike managing risk collectively within a social welfare system, the neoliberal context requires individuals to manage their own risk (Barry, Osborne & Rose, 1996). Responsibility falls upon entrepreneurial selves to make choices that will insure themselves against risk (Peters, 2005). Scholars call this prudentialism, which recasts citizens as "rational, knowledgeable and calculative" agents who maintain control over themselves and their futures (Barry, Osborne & Rose, 1996, p. 203).

As individuals take responsibility for improving their human capital and insuring themselves against future risk, they also take on a certain mistrust of traditional expert knowledge. Under the welfare system, experts on education, healthcare, or housing often resided within bureaucracies, which were criticized for being "impersonal, demeaning to recipients, crushing choice and imposing arbitrary values" (Rose, 1999, p. 87). Under neoliberalism, however, citizens place declining value on expert knowledge. Entrepreneurial selves, as individuals who are self-governing and responsible, rely on themselves for consuming market-

structured services like education. These citizen-consumers will not trust their futures to expert opinions, but rely on themselves to manage risk.

In education, this means that both parents and policy-makers place little trust in teachers' educational expertise (Peters, 2005; Apple, 2004). In school choice configurations, this involves parents acting as experts by finding a school that they judge will best serve their children. The information that allows parents to make these determinations is often calculated ratings of student achievement, attendance, or graduation rates. As information about schools has been rendered calculable, parents are able to use those numbers to assess their children's chances of success or risks of failure at a given school. Yet these calculated ratings cannot provide parents with a full picture. According to Rose (1999), "the apparent transformation of the subjective into the objective, the esoteric into the factual masks somewhat the weak knowledge base" of such calculated accounts (p. 153). When accountants and managers produce calculated ratings, they fail to account for that which cannot be calculated, including many factors deemed important by educational experts.

The governmentality perspective provides a unique opportunity to explore the ways in which the teaching profession has changed with the onset of neoliberalism—particularly given the way that teachers' expertise has been increasingly discounted by educational consumers. Educational experts have also come under the scrutiny of calculated measures of their worth (like value-added teacher evaluations), which further erode the trust in teacher expertise. According to Suspitsyna (2010), teachers must submit to checks and audits, which challenge "the grounds of the legitimacy of knowledge and operates on mistrust" (p. 571). Even though teachers and academics produce the profession's knowledge, their authority is ceded to the expertise of

statisticians, whose calculated ratings parents use when determining where to send their children to school.

Neoliberal school reform policies therefore create contradictory circumstances in which teachers work. On the one hand, teachers are encouraged to be entrepreneurs of their own careers, to build their human capital, and continually improve. However, entrepreneurial teachers may quickly move on to new careers, seeing teaching as a temporary experience that leads to better opportunities. It is also important to remember that neoliberal policy contexts encourage *all* actors to be entrepreneurs of their own lives—including students, parents, administrators, and community members. As these other stakeholders seek to take control over their own (or their children's) educations, careers, and future prospects, teachers may be seen as tools to help along the way. As a result, teachers are often under increased pressure to produce results.

When individuals become responsibilized subjects of their own futures, they come to trust their own judgment, and rely less on expert opinion. As these entrepreneurial selves protect themselves against risk, they gather their own information to become pseudo experts, and scrutinize conventional expertise. Part of taking personal responsibility, and protecting themselves against future risk, involves relying on their own judgment, rather than ceding their choices to others. As individuals increasingly rely on themselves, they come to mistrust others, even those who may have the background and training to make expert decisions. Through neoliberalism, relationships between teachers, students, parents, and administrators come to lack trust, as parents and students trust their own judgment over teachers' or administrators' opinions. Instead, individuals gain information about others through data—teachers know students through test scores, parents know schools through achievement data, and administrators know teachers

through value-added metrics. Of course, all of these data boil down to scores on standardized tests. Individuals make decisions based on impersonal measurable data and corresponding accountability measures, even when less measurable information is available.

As teachers are placed in these conflicting circumstances, they are essentially expected to be agents of entrepreneurialism in their own lives and careers, while also being positioned as lacking expertise, trustworthiness, and—by extension—authority over their work. In other words, they are both subjects of their own lives, and objects for calculated use by others. Governmentality theory points to such phenomena under neoliberal policy regimes, and charter schools serve as a perfect incubator to explore how teachers experience professionalism within a neoliberal policy context.

Research Questions

Charter schools, and neoliberal policies more generally, provide conflicting circumstances in which teachers define, experience, and enact professionalism. As noted in chapter one, professionalism cannot simply be understood as an exchange of expertise for autonomy. Similarly, understanding professionalism under neoliberalism's complex circumstances necessitates a theoretical framework that doesn't simply look at surface level structures, but exposes the inner workings that govern individuals' actions within larger policy structures. For this reason, this study's research questions have been informed by neoliberal governmentality, as well as a desire to understand how organizational structures; school-, network-, or district-level policies; and teachers' personal experiences contribute to teachers' understandings of professionalism.

The existing literature on charter schools provides insight to understand charter schools as a policy construct and as diverse but connected school models. It also evokes shifting conceptualizations of teacher professionalism in changing policy contexts. It does not, however, address how teacher professionalism works within the context of charter schools. Given that charter schools have increased in number and influence, conceptualizing teacher professionalism in charter schools is important for understanding the current state and future of the profession. To fill this gap in the literature, this study poses the following question and sub-questions:

- How is teacher professionalism defined, experienced, and enacted by teachers and school leaders in charter schools?

    - How do teachers view themselves as professionals? What—such as the teaching profession, their employing schools, individually held beliefs or widely held understandings of teachers—informs those perceptions?

    - To what extent do charter school teachers view themselves as maintaining expertise and authority over their work? To what extent do teachers feel they maintain control over classroom- and school-level policies and practices? What factors influence those perceptions?

    - How do teachers working in different charter school organizational contexts interpret their experiences with professionalism? How do teachers with different training and teaching experiences interpret those experiences?

    - What is the role of policy (state, district, network, or school) in teachers' experiences with trust, accountability, expertise, and authority?

- How do charter schools' formal and informal organizational structures and management practices shape teacher professionalism?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Comparative Case Study Methods

In order to answer this study's research questions, it was necessary to engage in a qualitative case study. Recognizing the evolving nature of social life, this study did not seek to make generalized understandings about teachers across space and time. Rather, it attempted to understand phenomena occurring at a particular place and moment. Following Stake (1995), it sought to describe "in depth how things were at a particular place at a particular time" (p. 38). An instrumental case study design provided the opportunity to gain unique insight into the complex topic of teacher professionalism in charter schools.

By looking closely at theoretically divergent cases, and comparing findings from each case, it was possible to gain insight into the issue of teacher professionalism in charter schools, while also acknowledging charter schools' diversity. In order to understand the issue of teacher professionalism in charter schools, the study looks at two charter schools located within Chicago's policy context and robust charter school landscape. While focusing on each case school as a whole, the study honed in on six theoretically divergent teachers embedded within each charter school in the study. This section describes the study's context, case selection, data collection, data analysis, and design limitations.

Context

In recent years, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has undertaken a new approach in

school district reform, implementing strategies often found in business. According to Meneffee-Libey (2010), CPS has used "a blending of diverse public and private provision for students, and differentiation of entrepreneurial schools into a diverse portfolio to be managed by district leaders" (p. 57). Under the portfolio management model, such "entrepreneurial schools" become the most important unit of analysis in education, and the vehicle through which CPS exercises control. Theoretically, this management strategy enables districts to build a stronger portfolio of schools by closing unsuccessful schools and opening new potentially successful schools. Although these neoliberal policy changes have had complex ramifications for families and students, they also inevitably influence the way teachers experience their work.

Within Chicago's portfolio management context, charter schools have persisted, and grown in number, even as many Chicago neighborhood schools have closed. In fact, shortly after Chicago's vote to close 50 under-enrolled schools, they posted a "request for proposals" inviting charter schools to apply to open new schools in over-crowded parts of the city (Lutton, 2013). The district also closed three charter schools that year (Smith, 2016). The growing number of charter schools, set against a backdrop of closed neighborhood schools, has fueled controversy over charter schools' role in Chicago Public Schools. CPS authorized three new charters and seven charter campus expansions in the 2013-2014 school year, three new charters and three charter campus expansions in the 2014-2015 school year, and one new charter and one charter campus expansion in the 2015-2016 school year (Smith, 2016). Journalists have charged that charter schools are "untouchable" (Joravsky, 2014) and lead to the demise of neighborhood schools (Bogira, 2014). Scholars and community activists have similarly critiqued charter expansion in Chicago (Lipman, 2011). However, others decry the "war on charter schools",

claiming that those opposed to charter schools aim to curtail competition (Chicago Tribune,

2014). In 2015, the Chicago Board of Education voted to close three Chicago charter schools due

to underperformance, but those schools appealed to the Illinois State Charter Commission to

allow the schools to remain open (Fitzpatrick, 2015). The Commission granted that request,

blocking the Chicago Board of Education from closing the schools. Skeptics point out that two of

the charter schools in question received significant funds from the Walton Family Foundation—

the same foundation that provided start-up funds for the Illinois State Charter Commission

(Mihalopoulos & Fitzpatrick, 2016). The debate and controversy rage on, as both Democratic

Chicago mayor, Rahm Emanuel, and Republican Illinois governor, Bruce Rauner, support

charter expansion (Coen, Heinzmann & Chase, 2012; Will, 2014).

Resisting these politicians' efforts, the Chicago Teachers' Union (CTU) actively rejects

charter school proliferation (Horn, 2013). Not only has the CTU resisted charter schools, but its

Fall 2012 strike stimulated controversy over Chicago teachers themselves, pitting Mayor

Emanuel against CTU president Karen Lewis (Davey & Yaccino, 2012). Interestingly, amid the

controversy, a growing number of Chicago charter school faculties have voted to unionize

(Chicago ACTS, 2014; Perez, 2017). The Chicago Association of Charter Teachers and Staff

(ACTS) is a distinct organization, separate from the CTU, but both are connected to the same

national teachers union, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT)[1] (Chicago ACTS, 2014;

Chicago Teachers Union, 2014). The AFT claims to support charter schools that maintain

standards of democratic education, in which all students have equal access (AFT ACTS, 2014).

At the same time, some Chicagoans support charter schools out of resentment for the

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[1] Interestingly, when Al Shanker proposed the idea for charter schools, he was the president of this organization.

CTU following the 2012 strike. While CPS teachers were on strike, some charter schools and advocates emphasized that charters were still in session (Delgado, 2012). This highlights one sticking point for many charter advocates: most charter schools are non-unionized and therefore are not bound by teacher tenure or collective bargaining agreements. Non-unionized charter schools concentrate power among administrators, management organizations, or (in some cases) parents. Without the power to collectively advocate, teachers may lose the power and authority to make school-level decisions.

As of January 2016, the school year when this research was conducted, Chicago had 47 charters with 126 school campuses in operation, serving just over 15% of Chicago's public education students (Smith, 2016). Under Illinois law, Chicago charter operators are exempt from almost all state school regulations. They maintain flexibility in determining curriculum, professional development, hiring policies, and instructional time (Illinois State Board of Education, 2014). This flexibility falls in line with charter laws in other states, and with the idea of giving charter schools fewer regulations in the hope that innovative practices will result. For instance, in the 2012-2013 school year, 39 of 56 Illinois charter schools took advantage of flexibility with regard to teacher certification, 46 allowed teaching methods that were new or different from the district's methods, and 45 set their own employee compensation rates (Illinois State Board of Education, 2014, p. 31). It is unclear from this information how such flexibility would impact teachers' work lives or professionalism, other than that it might create uncertainty for current and prospective teachers.

Chicago's significant charter school presence and its controversial role in city and education politics make Chicago a prime context in which to conduct research on teacher

professionalism in charter schools. In addition, the recent controversy over the CTU strike has positioned both public and charter teachers to interact with—and respond to—educational policy in new ways. Chicago's portfolio management model and its mass school closings further provide a rich backdrop in which to consider the dynamics of teacher professionalism in context.

Case Selection

In order to obtain maximum variation across the two case schools, and better understand the impact of school organization, the study used the distinction between teacher-founded schools and franchised schools. This distinction was important based on both teachers' roles and the school's connectedness to other charter organizations. The initial enthusiasm for teacher professionalism in charter schools called for teacher-led charters that would give professional teachers the opportunity to try new ideas (Shanker, 1988). In contrast, those schools replicated from other models inherently lack the teacher innovation embedded in the original charter idea. Moreover, teacher- created schools tend to be "local autonomy reformers" (Wells, 1998), whose purposes for creating charter schools include having authority over educational decisions. Teacher-created schools are also likely to have a different type of connection to the wider charter organizational field than will franchised charter schools, which are born out of deep connections within the movement. Because both schools inherently participate in Chicago's charter school landscape, the distinction in their level of connectedness in the field cannot be seen in stark contrast: both schools had some connection to the movement, but the distinction lies in their degree of connection and participation, as well as their founding principles. This case selection created maximum variation, to the extent practically possible, between the schools.

Based on these qualifications, I chose Nexus Charter Schools: Lakeside Campus[2] and

Wellspring Academy as sample schools for this study. Both schools were started by teachers

who were dissatisfied with the kind of education their students were receiving at traditional

public schools. They were each created with a strong central mission to include nonacademic

learning—social-emotional learning and wellness at Wellspring, and character education at

Nexus. Both schools were more than ten years old, but whereas Wellspring had remained a small

school rooted in its community, Nexus had expanded to several campuses across Chicago.

Organizationally, this means that Nexus maintains a significant network-level administrative

staff in addition to the administrators at each of its schools. Wellspring did not have network-

level administrators, but did have a board of directors made up of local business people.

According to Illinois Report Card Data, 82% of Nexus: Lakeside students received free or

reduced price lunch, one percent were English Learners, and the school had a level 2 rating from

CPS[3]. Level two is the second lowest rating on CPS's five-point scale. At Wellspring, 85% of

students received free or reduced price lunch, 32% were English Learners, and the school had a

level 2+ rating from CPS. Level 2+ is the middle rating on CPS's five point scale. The most

significant difference between the schools, for this study's purposes, was the difference in

teacher retention rates. The Nexus Network had a three year teacher retention rate of 24.7%,

while Wellspring's three year teacher retention rate was 75%.

The study looked at each school as a bounded case, explored the experiences of teacher

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[2] All school and participant names are pseudonyms.

[3] CPS rates all schools on a scale, which includes (from highest to lowest) level 1+, level 1, level 2+, level 2, and level 3. School ratings are based on student achievement and growth; student attendance and graduation rates; school culture and climate; closing of achievement gaps, and student preparation for post-graduate success.

professionalism from multiple perspectives within each case, and focused more intensely on six teachers at each school in order to describe the issue of professionalism with greater depth. Selection for these six "focus teachers" was based on the theoretical construct of expertise in teacher professionalism. Focus teachers with maximum theoretical variation were selected based on 1) type of teacher training and 2) years experience teaching as described in figure 1.

Table 1. Teacher participant sampling four-square.

	Alternative certification	**Traditional certification**
Fewer than 3 years experience	**Alternative certification** *Fewer than 5 years experience*	**Traditional certification** *Fewer than 5 years experience*
More than 5 years experience	**Alternative certification** *5 or more years experience*	**Traditional certification** *5 or more years experience*

Teachers who have gone through alternative certification programs would, theoretically, have less professional expertise than teachers who have gone through a more academic and time consuming traditional certification program. Similarly, teachers with varying years of experience would have different resources to draw on when making educational decisions. Those who have been teaching longer simply have more experiences to synthesize and inform professional choices. By focusing on these biographical characteristics, as well as the organizational characteristics of the schools, the study seeks to look across units of analysis to better understand professionalism as it exists and interacts across individual and organizational levels.

I distributed a short survey to teachers at each school in order to ascertain teachers' experience and training, as well as their willingness to participate in the study. I had originally intended to select two teachers from each category in Table 1, but teachers' qualifications at each school varied in a way that made this impossible. Instead, I selected six teachers at each school based on whether teacher participants fit each category, as noted in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of teacher participants in each analytic category.

	Traditional certification; 5 or more years experience	Traditional certification; fewer than 5 years experience	Alternative certification; 5 or more years experience	Alternative certification; fewer than 5 years experience
Nexus	5 teachers	6 teachers	0 teachers	6 teachers
Wellspring	13 teachers	4 teachers	4 teachers	1 teacher

Because there were no teacher participants with an alternative certification and more than five years experience at Nexus, I could not interview any teachers in this category. Similarly, the one teacher at Wellspring who had an alternative certification with fewer than five years experience was not interested in participating in interviews. It is notable that this Wellspring teacher had four years experience, while the alternatively certified Nexus teachers each had two years or fewer years of experience. Instead of interviewing eight teachers at each school, as originally planned, I interviewed two teachers from each category in which teacher participants existed. This resulted in sampling only two alternatively certified teachers from each school—at Wellspring these teachers had five or more years experience, and at Nexus they had fewer than five years experience.

This resulted in sampling only two alternatively certified teachers from each school—at Wellspring these teachers had five or more years experience, and at Nexus they had fewer than five years experience.

Among teachers in each category, I randomly selected two willing teachers to participate in interviews for this study. Table 3 describes the self-reported qualifications of focus teachers who participated in interviews at each school.

Table 3. Focus teacher qualifications and characteristics.

Pseudonym	School	Position	Years teaching	Certification Type	Holds Master's Degree
Annie	Wellspring	7-8 Science	3	Traditional	No
Jonathan	Wellspring	5-6 Math	4	Traditional	Yes
Jacob	Wellspring	7-8 Math	5	Alternative	Yes
Kathryn	Wellspring	Special Education	9	Alternative	Yes
Janice	Wellspring	Grade 2	5	Traditional	Yes
Douglas	Wellspring	Kindergarten	11	Traditional	Yes
Monica	Nexus	11-12 Science	4	Traditional	Yes
Teri	Nexus	9-10 Science	4	Traditional	Yes
Joshua	Nexus	9-10 English	1	Alternative	No
Russell	Nexus	9-10 History	2	Alternative	No
Nicole	Nexus	6-8 Special Education	7	Traditional	Yes
Olivia	Nexus	6-8 Special Education	11	Traditional	No

Wellspring and Nexus had teachers with different types of experience available to participate in this study, particularly with regard to their alternatively trained teachers. Nexus employed significantly more alternatively trained teachers with one or two years of experience.

Both of the alternatively certified teachers I interviewed at Nexus were trained through Teach for America, which provided six weeks of training before the teachers' first year. However, the Wellspring teachers who reported going through an alternative certification program both possessed master's degrees in education, and they had obtained their certifications through non-traditional university programs. Their programs included one to two years of academic coursework, and received significant support through mentored or student teaching experiences. The differences in teachers' certifications and backgrounds at Nexus and Wellspring provided insight into each school's hiring and retention policies, which will be explored in greater depth in subsequent chapters.

Data Collection

The study made use of a variety of data sources that portray teachers individually and their schools organizationally. In order to get at the issue of teacher professionalism from a variety of angles within a given charter school, the study triangulates data at both the individual teacher and school organization levels. Data sources included school-level policy documentation, professional development observations, faculty meeting observations, departmental/team meeting observations, a teacher survey, extended shadowing observations with focus teachers, focus teacher evaluations, administrator interviews, and a series of interviews with focus teachers.

Teacher interview questions were adapted from Talbert and McLaughlin's (1994) items on teacher professionalism as it relates to technical culture, service ethic, and professional commitment; Steinberg, Allensworth, and Johnson's (2011) items on teacher influence, principal instructional leadership, and teacher-principal trust; as well as Tschannen-Moran's (2009)

operationalization of teacher professionalism, professional orientation of administrators, and school trust (Appendices D, E, and G).

School-level documentation included (but was not limited to) official school documents such as teacher handbooks, hiring policies, and mission statements. In most cases, these documents could be collected online, but school administrators and focus teachers were asked to provide supplementary documentation not available online.

Professional development sessions varied from school to school. Using participant observations and a semi-structured observation protocol (Appendix A), I took field notes on the sessions themselves, as well as teachers' reactions to the sessions. Data on professional development sessions included how often they occured, who led them, how teachers participated, and what type of information was disseminated or gleaned.

I similarly observed faculty meetings using a semi-structured observation protocol (Appendix B). Through these observations, I examined how teachers and school leaders interacted together, whose voices were heard, and how meetings were structured. Additionally, I collected data on the number and kind of meetings that took place within the school, who led those meetings, and how teachers participate.

A teacher survey (Appendix C) served as a mechanism for selecting focus teachers. I distributed surveys to teachers following a professional development session, after introducing myself and explaining the research. The survey included items determining the teacher's willingness to participate as a focus teacher, the teacher's years of experience, and the teacher's certification background. Focus teachers were selected using data from the survey.

Those focus teachers participated in two separate 30-60 minute interviews. The first interview used a semi-structured protocol (Appendix D) and focused on how that teacher experienced teacher professionalism in the context of the school's organizational culture and faculty interactions. It also asked the teacher to reflect on how the school's formal and informal structures have shaped the way the teacher experienced professionalism.

Before participating in a second interview, the focus teachers were asked to participate in a full day shadowing exercise. On teacher appointed (and administration approved) days throughout the school year, I arrived at the school when the teacher normally would, and followed that teacher through all of her tasks, obligations, and meetings throughout that day. Using a semi-structured observation protocol (See Appendix E), I observed how the teachers made professional decisions, how their time was allocated, and how they participated in school-level operations. In order to preserve teachers' anonymity, I shadowed many teachers at each school, including several who were not focus teachers. This allowed a broader understanding of teacher experience, while simultaneously preventing teachers' colleagues and administrators from knowing the identity of interview participants. At the end of the shadowing day, teachers participated in a short interview debriefing their day. This interview used a more open-ended protocol (Appendix F) and involved the teacher and interviewer co-constructing meaning from the day's observation. It determined the day's typicality, but also asked the teacher to reflect on how her daily work life positions her professionally. In practice, these interviews were supplemented by informal conversations with shadowed teachers throughout the school day, during their lunch hours or preparation time.

The focus teachers participated in a second 30-60 minute interview. This interview focused on the individual teacher's and the school's definitions and experiences with professionalism. The purpose of this interview was to identify the focus teacher's definition of professionalism. It will additionally explore focus teachers' perceptions of other teachers' and administrators' definitions of professionalism.

School administrators also participated in one 30-60 minute interview. This interview used a semi-structured protocol (Appendix G), and asked the administrator to reflect on her perception of the school's teachers, her management style, structures and routines in place to foster teachers' professionalism, and any internal or external factors that influence teachers' work lives. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and supplemented with interviewer notes. Due to Wellspring's administrative upheaval during my data collection, it was impossible to conduct this interview with Wellspring's principal as planned. I was, however, able to answer many of these questions through informal conversations with the principal before his departure, as well as several informal conversations with, and observations of, Wellspring's teacher coaches.

The various types of data collected allowed for triangulation in a variety of ways. First, the study utilizes different forms of data: existing documentation, semi-structured and open-ended interviews, survey data, participant observations, and shadowing. Second, the study relied on different people within the school for creating this data: it looked at teachers collectively through the professional development and meeting observations, explored teachers individually through teacher interviews and shadowing, and examined the school's leadership through document analysis, faculty meetings, and administrator interviews. Each of these sources

provided important perspective on teacher professionalism as it was experienced in the context of that specific charter school. By looking at the issue from multiple angles and levels of analysis, I garnered a more complete picture of how charter teachers defined, experienced, and enacted professionalism.

Data Analysis

I analyzed all documents, field notes, and interview transcripts using NVivo coding software. Using open coding, I looked for emergent themes by aggregating instances, as well as directly interpreting the data (Stake 1995). I also analyzed the data for significant concepts from the literature, including teacher authority, teacher expertise, trust, management structures, professional growth, and control over definitions of professionalism. Given the study's theoretical framework, and its role in justifying this work, I also relied on governmentality perspectives on neoliberal policies while engaging in qualitative analysis.

I used Yin's (2009) pattern matching, looking for patterns in the data that fit a governmentality reading on charter teachers. Conversely, I also explored rival explanations (Yin, 2009), searching for evidence that supported other theoretical constructs. As interpretations and findings emerged from the data, I did not rely on theoretical propositions to guide my entire analysis. Rather, it formed one aspect of the analysis because, as noted above, a governmentality perspective lent important tools for problematizing teacher professionalism in charter schools. This process facilitated testing the governmentality reading of this particular neoliberal policy context, but it also lent increased validity to the study. It created triangulation by theory, as I sought alternative explanations for the phenomena observed. At various points in the study, I engaged in member checks to ensure my on-going analysis made sense to the study's

participants. The focus teachers were assets toward this end, as part of their interviews involved discussion of shadowing, meetings, and professional development sessions.

Limitations

This comparative case study design allowed for depth of analysis within a particular context, which is useful in a highly differentiated charter landscape. It also facilitated comparison across theoretically divergent charter schools. However, the case study design also had inherent weaknesses. Unlike research with a representative sample, this study made no attempt to generalize to a larger population. It did not seek to accurately represent the diversity of experiences among all charter teachers. Instead, it sought to make "analytical generalizations" (Yin, 2009) that relate to the study's theoretical framework. Moreover, readers and other researchers are encouraged to use this study to generalize to their own experience, making connections across context. Also, while the comparative case study design allows for maximum variation in case selection, it limits the depth in which I can study each school.

Limitations for this study also arose from practical concerns with sampling. As noted above, the teachers sampled at each school did not directly fit the criteria I intended to follow because of the predominance of teachers with different levels of experience at each school. However, this difference does provide insight into the schools' different practices and priorities with regard to their teaching staffs. With regard to the schools themselves, Wellspring and Nexus fit the parameters for the study design in their similar demographics, achievement levels, and geographic locations, alongside different connections to other charter organizations. However, Wellspring is a Kindergarten through eighth grade school, while Nexus is a sixth grade through twelfth grade school. The elementary and high school levels at Wellspring and Nexus meant that

the two schools were not perfect schools for comparison, but the middle school grade level overlap allowed for more general comparison. While details like curriculum and test preparation differed across grade level, teachers described and defined their professional teaching experience in ways that aligned, and allowed for comparison, across grade level.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

"Can you be a professional teacher? Is that a thing?":

School structures frame professionalism as teacher or student growth

Teachers at both Wellspring and Nexus defined professional teaching in terms of growth—in academic achievement and nonacademic skills for their students, as well as growth in their own expertise and teaching practice. As Nexus teacher Monica described, "whether it's having kids meet an objective, or me improving my wait time" growth is imperative to professional teaching. Teachers tended to see their own growth as a continual process through which they would learn to serve students more effectively. As Wellspring teacher Jonathan noted, "the idea of self correction and continuous improvement, I think, is a really important part of our profession." At the same time, teachers looked to student achievement data to measure students' growth. Differences in teachers' approaches to professional growth reflected school-level policy differences. In particular, schools' hiring practices, structures and routines around student growth, and policies related to teachers' growth influenced the way teachers envisioned their professionalism in practice and their potential for future growth.

School level differences in these policies and practices were associated with distinctions among teachers' definitions of professionalism, even though the two schools proclaimed similar visions for student and teacher growth. Wellspring proclaimed a school mission dedicated to a caring community, student academic growth, teacher improvement, and social-emotional and

physical wellness. Teachers saw this mission as part of their professional identities, and focused on student and teacher growth that reflected those values. Nexus proclaimed values associated with student achievement, teacher growth, and character education. However, their approach to teacher growth and narrow definition of student achievement created an environment in which teachers questioned their professionalism.

Teachers at both schools agreed that their professional responsibilities included helping students reach academic and nonacademic goals. At Wellspring, teachers and administrators prioritized nonacademic goals like social-emotional development and wellness through school-wide structures and routines. Conversely, Nexus administrators saw nonacademic goals like student-teacher relationships as vehicles for improving students' academic achievement. Teachers also pursued their own professional growth differently based on their schools' policies regarding teachers, professional improvement, and hiring. At Wellspring, routines around teacher coaching and professional development, alongside administrators' practices of hiring experienced teachers, often with master's degrees, served to maintain a dedicated cadre of teachers who worked at the school for many years. Nexus's hiring practices led to what teachers called a "revolving door"[1] of inexperienced teachers, and their professional development efforts catered to new teachers. Each school's policies and practices regarding student growth, teacher growth, and teacher retention framed the way teachers defined professionalism—and contributed to whether teachers saw themselves as professionals.

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[1] Ingersoll (2001) also refers to a "revolving door" when describing teacher attrition, and notes that qualified teachers leave schools at high rates because of job dissatisfaction or to pursue another job. He finds that school organizational characteristics and conditions contribute to this phenomenon.

This chapter describes the ways in which teachers defined professionalism through growth. First it describes Wellspring's approach to student growth as it relates to teachers' definitions of professionalism. Wellspring teachers modeled behavior that would encourage students' social-emotional development and wellness. In order to do so, Wellspring teachers ascribed importance to their own personal and professional growth. Next, the chapter describes how Nexus teachers talked about students' academic growth as an indicator of their professionalism. In order to grow students' achievement data, Nexus teachers sought their own professional growth. However, they described conflicting experiences with the type of improvement their school's policies encouraged. Such experiences led some teachers to question their own professional status. The chapter ends with implications for the future of teaching as a profession in the context of increasingly common, yet differentiated charter schools.

Wellspring student growth: Being "the absolute model"

Wellspring teachers and administrators worked to improve students' achievement, and they also intentionally sought student growth in social-emotional skills and wellness. They saw both as equally necessary parts of teachers' professional practice. Teachers and administrators demonstrated a commitment to students' nonacademic growth through daily routines like morning exercise and daily physical education; through structured responses to student conflict via peace circles; and through modeling healthy relationships, work-life balance, and wellness orientations. Douglas, a kindergarten teacher, explained, "being a professional means I'm the absolute model of what I want in [my students]." This mindset led Douglas and his colleagues to model not only hard work and academic achievement for students, but also to model everyday behaviors and attitudes that they hoped their students would emulate. This type of modeling

would not only produce better students, but would also help students become "better people" (Jonathan, math teacher). Part of becoming better people included seeking continual improvement in academics, wellness, and personal relationships. Teachers sought not only to teach students about these values, but also to embody their values in order to show students how to be "better people." Teachers saw students' personal and academic growth as motivations for their own personal and professional growth.

Student growth: Modeling mentalities at Wellspring. Wellspring teachers worked hard and embodied their own values for professional teaching in order to help students grow. As they did so, teachers also sought to instill their values among their students, with the assumption that those values would help students become successful. As Annie, a science teacher, described, professional teachers needed to "give it everything you have, and make sure that your impact is a positive one," while professional teachers also needed to pass that mindset on to their students. Jacob, a math teacher, described a similar perspective, "part of being a teacher is instilling the right mentality of working hard and trying to be consistent and persevere, I think those are really important habits of mind to take away from teaching and that teachers should be striving to get that type of thing imparted to students." With these statements, Annie and Jacob describe their twin priorities of professional teaching: teachers hold themselves to a high standard (by working hard, maintaining healthy relationships, reaching their goals, and living out their values) in order to teach students to hold themselves to high standards. Each Wellspring teacher sought to pass their own values onto students through modeling and explicitly teaching values, which played out as dispositions related to hard work, altruism, or perseverance. Individual teachers' values contained nuanced differences: Annie valued altruism, Jacob and Kathryn valued perseverance

and achievement, Janice valued community, Jonathan valued individual growth, and Douglas valued personal fulfillment. Yet the teachers' values overlapped enough that they each saw those values reflected in Wellspring's mission, and each of them recognized the importance of modeling hard work that would lead to academic growth for their students.

Prioritizing students' nonacademic needs, like the disposition to work hard, occasionally meant that teachers would sacrifice learning time in order to address non-academic needs. Teachers and administrators agreed that, when students' non-academic needs were not met, students would struggle to learn academic material. According to Jacob, meeting students' non-academic needs was imperative for convincing students "to feel like what you're saying is worth listening to." Similarly, Jonathan's student-teacher relationships helped him understand how and why academic material proved troublesome for students, and also allowed him to support students' non-academic growth. Annie similarly explained that, when working with troubled students, "my job right now is not to teach you content. My job right now is to teach you life skills." Annie believed that the ability to recognize those moments, and adjust her teaching accordingly, was an important aspect of professionalism. In this way, teachers saw academic and non-academic growth as interrelated goals. They sought to help students grow into emotionally and physically healthy people who would also be able to thrive academically.

Wellspring teachers modeled caring relationships and explicitly taught students how to build positive relationships with one another. Douglas described his emphasis on validating students' feelings, perspectives, and backgrounds. Similarly, Janice, a second grade teacher, described, "Making sure that [students] feel heard, that they feel welcome, they have a place." By modeling caring relationships with students, teachers taught students how to maintain caring

relationships with others (Noddings, 2013). Douglas further described, "I don't say be respectful to your friends. I show them how to be respectful. I don't say use kind words. I have kind words." Douglas also modeled self-respect by showing students how he took care of his body and mind, doing yoga with his students, and teaching exercise classes for the community after school. By showing students how he cared for his body and mind, Douglas modeled the healthy adult living that he hoped his students would learn to adopt. As he did so, Douglas embraced Wellspring's value for wellness and community, and emphasized how individual relationships and responsibility contribute to caring communities. Rather than simply talking to students about adopting these practices, Douglas embodied them through his daily living, constantly showing students how to live out his values. Through modeling, teachers expected to see students grow in their ability to care for one another and for themselves. As teachers worked to not only teach, but also embody the values they hoped their students would learn, teachers associated their own value-based behaviors and attitudes (like building relationships, maintaining their health, and seeking personal improvement) with professionalism. Being a professional teacher, therefore, was not simply associated with technical expertise and authority, but also included personal dispositions and behaviors associated with teachers' ideas about living well.

Student growth: School-wide support for nonacademic growth at Wellspring. Not only did teachers work to model and support nonacademic growth at Wellspring, but administrators and other members of staff also worked to ensure students' nonacademic development. For instance, Sandy and Diane, fourth grade co-teachers, led a peace circle with their students. Diane expressed frustration that students had misbehaved while she was home taking care of her sick toddler (explicitly modeling direct communication and conflict

resolution), and worked with students to resolve the previous day's conflict. The principal and an instructional coach supported Sandy and Diane's work by participating in the peace circle. The adults guided the students toward a resolution about the incident in order to improve both students' responsible behavior and their relationships with their classmates. In this way, teachers and administrators helped to build a caring community for students, and used that community to help children learn to care for one another and themselves.

This type of practice was what brought Annie to Wellspring. At her job interview, she told administrators about the social-emotional support she gave students at her last job. She reported the administrator responding, "'well you wouldn't have to do all of that by yourself here.'" For Annie, it was a revelation to work in a school where other adults would help support students' non-academic growth. Jonathan, Douglas, Jacob, and Kathryn also described that they had valued nonacademic support for students before coming to Wellspring. Teachers' interview stories, along with their consistent reports of alignment with Wellspring's values, indicated a two-way hiring process that maintained Wellspring's stated values—teachers sought to work at Wellspring because of its enacted mission, and Wellspring administrators sought teachers who would live out its mission in their teaching practice. Additionally, teachers' yearly evaluations asked teachers to tally their social-emotional support practices, community-building activities, and wellness support. By including nonacademic supports in teachers' evaluations, Wellspring encouraged teachers to engage in supporting students' social-emotional and physical wellness.

For Wellspring teachers, professionalism meant modeling healthy relationships and habits in order to promote student achievement and students' well-rounded development into healthy adolescents. Moreover, modeling wellness in this way included modeling a growth-

orientation and personal responsibility that teachers hoped students would exhibit in their academic and personal lives. As Wellspring teachers worked to model healthy living, social-emotional wellness, and hard work, they also engaged in personal and work-oriented growth that teachers considered necessary for professionalism. Teachers took responsibility for their own behaviors—modeling positive relationships, healthy living, and hard work—in order to instill those behaviors in their students. Wellspring teachers focused on controlling their own practices in order to serve as models of healthy and productive adults.

Wellspring teacher growth: "Overachievers" improving in service of students

Wellspring teachers understood professionalism as operating in service of helping students grow in both academic and non-academic areas. Toward this end, teachers were motivated to work hard at both their everyday teaching and at growing professionally. Wellspring teachers saw working hard as an integral part of professional teaching. As Douglas stated, "being a professional for me means that every day I'm going to go over and above to give the best, to do the best at what I do." Similarly, Jacob explained, "everybody that comes on is generally someone that's willing to work longer hours or try out new things and take the time it takes to understand how to teach that content area or that grade level or that specific student better." Annie referred to herself and her colleagues as "overachievers." Even though teachers intentionally protected their wellbeing in order to avoid "burning out," they still acknowledged that their work needed to go beyond basic expectations. Teachers were motivated to work hard and improve their craft because they sought to model a growth-oriented mindset and a committed disposition for their students.

Wellspring teacher growth serves students and takes multiple forms. Teachers were also motivated to grow professionally, in ways that would align with their commitment to education and to their personal strengths and values. For Kathryn, professional growth meant obtaining her National Board Certification and taking on new leadership roles at the school, in addition to her teaching. Over her nine years teaching, Kathryn constantly sought "something to strive for." Douglas, an award-winning teacher with eleven years of experience, wouldn't rule out the possibility of becoming an instructional coach or earning a doctorate. For the foreseeable future, however, Douglas found enough challenge and space for professional advancement and leadership within the teaching role.

Meanwhile, Jonathan, Jacob, Janice, and Annie emphasized that professional growth, for them, did not include taking on more administrative duties or promotions. Wellspring teachers found space for innovation and improvement within the teaching role, and saw that type of growth as imperative for professionalism. In this way, Wellspring teachers did not find that they needed to be promoted beyond the role of teacher in order to consider themselves professionals—they were satisfied with the challenge for growth within a professional teaching role. Jacob described how great teachers are not born, but are cultivated through experience. He recognized that he was not a perfect teacher when he began, "but I think I am improving, and I think the reason for that is just growth over time, having experience, trying out new things, struggling through the challenges that you have and still sticking with it." Wellspring teachers also sought out resources for their own improvement. As Annie described, "constantly seeking out either classes or experiences that are going to directly impact me being a better teacher for my kids." In this way, teachers sought improvement in ways that mirrored their own professional

goals. While the traditional rungs for professional advancement in education involve teachers taking on administrative roles, teachers at Wellspring saw room for professional advancement within the teaching role. This reflected Wellspring teachers' professional goals of working to serve students better, without regard for traditional measures of advancement.

School support for teacher growth at Wellspring. Wellspring emphasized teacher growth in its policies and mission, which helped teachers feel like the school valued and encouraged their professionalism. Teachers engaged in internal and external professional development, met weekly with instructional coaches, and were encouraged to pursue advanced degrees. Teachers agreed that Wellspring succeeded in helping teachers improve their craft. When Annie joined Wellspring's staff, she reported thinking, "finally, I can be at a school that's actually going to really make me a better teacher." Jonathan similarly stated, "I don't think there's any other place in the city where I will grow and learn as much as I will here at Wellspring, and that's because I think they do take care of us as a staff, and I do think they push us in the right direction to constantly grow." Wellspring's emphasis on growth—and Jonathan's experience with improving his practice at Wellspring—led Jonathan to remain committed to staying at Wellspring. His commitment to growing professionally matched Wellspring's priorities, and led to a symbiotic relationship in which teacher growth promoted school growth, and vice versa.

As teachers sought to advance professionally, they worked toward teaching practice that would better serve their students. As Jacob explained, "my commitment is to the school and students and also myself." Teachers' growth and commitment to improving their craft played out in ways that suited teachers individually, and also served the students' and school's needs. Janice

took advantage of a science professional development to enrich what she saw as her strength, while she also focused on re-learning mathematical concepts so that she could teach the Common Core effectively. Douglas spoke at conferences and shared his innovative practices with colleagues. Jacob observed at other successful charter schools and, with Jonathan, pursued a new math curriculum. With the support of her instructional coach, Annie revamped the Chemistry curriculum to focus on inquiry. Kathryn used her two master's degrees and her National Board Certification to take on leadership roles in literacy and assessment at Wellspring. Wellspring administrators communicated their value for each of these forms of teacher growth by including them in teachers' yearly evaluations. In this way, Wellspring's teacher growth model assumed teacher individuality, and made room for teachers to lead and grow in ways that aligned with their personal values and professional goals. Teachers' growth mindsets mirrored Wellspring's priorities, as they both sought improvement for the sake of students' learning and development. These priorities led teachers to feel that the school encouraged their professionalism, as they worked toward continual growth in their practice.

As evidenced by teachers' leadership and growth efforts, Wellspring teachers were undeniably ambitious. Yet that ambition did not simply serve teachers individually. Their aspirations rested on school and student growth, on collaborating more effectively with their colleagues, on building better relationships with their students, or on maintaining closer contact with parents. In this way, teacher aspirations aligned with students' needs and the school's emphasis on community, professional growth, and student achievement. Because teacher aspirations aligned with school level priorities, teachers' intrinsic motivation to improve was supported by school resources. School level policies and practices served to support teacher

growth in ways that allowed space for variation in teachers' goals, while also supporting the school mission. As teachers embraced the Wellspring model by building a caring community, supporting students' non-academic needs and wellness, and by aspiring and working to be their best teacher-selves, Wellspring teachers came to serve as the "absolute model" for their students of what a productive and caring adult should be. In this way, being a professional meant not only possessing expertise and autonomy; being a professional also meant being a model of an entrepreneurial, growth-oriented citizen.

Nexus student growth: An indicator of professionalism

Nexus teachers also defined professionalism as teacher and student growth, but the way they described student and teacher growth differed from Wellspring teachers' descriptions. For Nexus teachers, students' academic improvement was intimately tied to teachers' professionalism. Nexus teachers and administrators saw students' academic data as an indicator for teachers' aptitude and as a guide for their practical improvement. As Monica, a science teacher, described, professional teachers "use data to guide their decision-making, they try to continue to grow in their teaching, and they self-reflect to see what they need to improve and seek feedback and help for those areas." In this way, when teachers talked about student growth as an indicator of professionalism, they also talked about their own responsibility for bringing those outcomes about. Nicole, a special education teacher, described "trying to get yourself out of mindsets with your students where it's kind of like they always do this, or they're always like that…trying to be reflective in that and also in your language of how am I seeing the situation and what am I doing?" Nicole and her colleagues talked about their students as malleable— students' test scores and behaviors could be influenced by professional teachers who took

responsibility for students' learning. In fact, teachers defined their professional aptitude by their ability to create academic growth in their students.

Student growth and teacher responsibility at Nexus. Teachers resoundingly agreed that, in order to be effective in their jobs and take responsibility for student learning, they needed to believe that all students could succeed, and that teachers had the power to impact students' learning. This required a certain "mental gymnastic," according to Russell, a social studies teacher, because teachers needed to understand that "you can never completely change your students, but you need to somehow… know that and still come in with the attitude that you are responsible for everything they do." For Russell, this meant that teachers needed

> a kind of utopian sense of possibility about your ability to affect your students. Even though you probably can't be a good teacher if you believe that you can control everything that they do because that would mean that you are dismissive of all the bigger problems in the places they live. So you need to somehow have both at the same time.

Russell's description indicated the contradictions at the heart of teachers' mindsets about students. Nexus students faced challenges that reflected a lack of privilege. Despite those challenges, Nexus teachers thought they needed to believe that they could affect their students' ability to succeed in college. This paradoxical mindset also reflected the sense that teachers ultimately took responsibility for students' learning, even as teachers recognized that many factors impacting student achievement were outside their control. Being a professional meant taking responsibility for student growth, regardless of extenuating factors.

Student improvement as teacher success at Nexus. As teachers took responsibility for student growth, teachers viewed themselves as ultimately responsible for students' results on standardized assessments. When students' achievement data grew, teachers saw themselves as achieving professionally. If students' data stagnated, teachers knew that they needed to grow as

professionals. As Olivia described, "If I've reflected on the data, and the data has shown me some not so favorable things with my academics, then it makes me step back and think, what was I doing wrong in teaching?" Reflecting on students' achievement data, therefore, led teachers to pursue a particular kind of professionalism, with the ultimate goal of producing growth in their students' achievement. Even though teachers understood that they could not literally be entirely responsible for students' academic growth, or lack thereof, they positioned themselves as wholly responsible, and staked their professional status on whether or not they could produce students' growth.

The relationship between teachers' professionalism and student growth also held contradictions in the way teachers conceptualized student growth. For instance, Monica, a science teacher, had learned to conceptualize student learning in her master's degree program, and struggled to reconcile a complex view of learning with the focus on standardized assessments at Nexus. She stated, "for true learning to occur, it requires so much work. And that's what's frustrating… the kids aren't going to be deeply learning." Monica and other teachers associated their professionalism with student growth, but they expressed a desire to measure that growth using students' projects, papers, or classwork, instead of standardized tests. At the same time, Nexus institutionalized routine reflection on student data, and teachers came to associate their students' success on standardized tests with their own professionalism. As Joshua described, "it's not so much about teachers saying, hey, I really want to get better at teaching such-and-such, it's more about, 'Oh crap, I've got these scores. The kids didn't get the standard. I need to change what I'm doing, or reteach." In this way, their mindsets were also shaped by administration-driven structures that focused on teacher responsibility for student growth as

measured by standardized assessments. In this way, teachers felt that their practice was constrained, even as their understanding of their own professionalism became increasingly associated with students' success on standardized tests.

Nexus teacher growth: Professional growth, or growth without professionalism?

In an effort to improve student growth and achievement, the Nexus administration encouraged teacher growth through professional development. While Nexus teachers saw these activities as sources of professional growth, they also constrained the way teachers grew, and supported hiring practices that assumed high teacher turnover. In fact, teachers inferred that Nexus's professional development and coaching policies aligned with its presumption of teacher turnover—Nexus's institutionalized teacher growth mechanisms were geared toward inexpert and inexperienced teachers. In effect, teachers came to question the school's commitment to teacher professionalism, and some inexperienced teachers even rejected their own professional status. Nexus's more experienced teachers sought meaningful professional growth, and maintained that their expertise, their students' achievement, and their commitment to improvement afforded them professional status. This rift among teachers and administrators led to a schizophrenic view of professionalism in which teachers worked toward professional growth, even as they resisted the growth mechanisms that administrators implemented. Meanwhile, teachers simultaneously resisted and came to adopt administrator-driven mindsets about teachers' professional status.

Nexus teacher growth: Is professional development necessarily professional? Nexus administrators implemented network-wide professional development efforts in order to meet their goal of teacher growth in service of student achievement, but those sessions often focused

on basic skills, devaluing teacher expertise while stifling teacher voice. In Friday afternoon professional development (PD) sessions, coaches explicitly modeled and taught techniques and practices for teachers to implement in the classroom. Teachers agreed that PD was essential for growth, but they also bemoaned the time spent emphasizing basic skills during their weekly PD sessions. According to Joshua, an English teacher, Friday PDs, "don't really mean anything." He described a PD session in late September, in which teachers were taught how to give students demerits: "We did this the first few weeks in new teacher training. Why am I wasting time on a Friday afternoon learning how to give a demerit?" Joshua was a first year Teach for America (TFA) teacher, which meant that he had received only six weeks of teacher training. It is notable that this novice teacher found Nexus's PD session to be so remedial that it was a waste of his time. Monica also described her frustration: "by Friday afternoon, I'm like fuck this. Why am I here?… one time we got in a line and we practiced how to tell a kid that they had to give you their phone… it's like beating a dead horse." Nicole similarly described the basic skills covered during Nexus PDs: "practicing entering the classroom, or practicing a certain procedure you might use in the classroom, or a technique. So yes, but they're all from *Teach Like a Champion*." Several teachers described the basic skills in Nexus PD sessions as originating from *Teach Like a Champion* (Lemov, 2011), a book of teaching and management strategies specifically aimed at urban teachers.

While the content of PD sessions focused on practicing basic techniques, the format of these sessions explicitly treated teachers like students. This was done in the name of modeling best practice, but it disciplined teachers to a regimented model of instruction and management,

while ignoring teachers' expertise and experience. To illustrate the format for these sessions, I

include a description of the beginning of one such session from my field notes:

> *The dean of culture, Nancy, stands at the front of the room… teachers work silently writing answers to the question on their packets. Some teachers… [start] talking quietly to one another. Nancy says, "Please hold your thoughts until we are able to share. Raise your hand if you need more minutes." No one raises a hand and Nancy tells the teachers that they will do a turn-and-talk…"Our procedure for turn-and-talk is short hair goes first, longer hair goes second… I'll give you two minutes and 14 seconds to complete this activity." She organizes the teachers into pairs.*

This structured format modeled a regimented form of classroom management and eliminated the

opportunity for teachers to share their own expertise. Teachers' choices and expression were

limited to the topic, pace, and format that Nancy dictated. This modeled a form of control that

teachers could emulate in their own classrooms. For Christopher, the principal, this was a way to

create a calmer school environment, in which "There's a clear vision for what classroom culture

should look like." Administrators saw the emphasis on consistent and structured management

techniques as setting teachers up for success, even as it narrowly defined how that success could

be achieved.

　　While Nexus's commitment to PD aligned with its focus on teacher growth, it

constrained the way teachers experienced that growth. Teachers' lack of control over PD limited

school-wide conceptions of best practice to those identified by Nexus administrators. Teachers'

student-like roles in PD minimized their control over how they grew, and silenced teachers'

voices and perspectives. By treating teachers like students, and by focusing PD on basic skills,

Nexus administrators betrayed their view of teachers as lacking expertise. Even though

administrators emphasized growth, they assumed that teachers needed to gain basic skills, and

PD missed the opportunity to support professional expertise. Their PD program sought to mold

inexpert teachers to adopt highly structured and tightly controlled practices, according to narrow definitions of good teaching. PD supported Nexus's high teacher turnover by focusing on basic skills, and led to disagreement over whether teachers could be considered professionals.

Nexus teachers: Growth without professionalism? While teachers agreed that growth was a necessary part of *good* teaching, not all teachers agreed that they were necessarily aspects of *professional* teaching. In fact, the two TFA teachers I interviewed at Nexus, Joshua and Russell, equivocated on the issue of whether or not they were professional teachers. Not only did they reject the idea that they personally were professionals, but they also vacillated over whether teachers should be granted professional status. This aligns with previous scholarship on the professionalization of teaching (Lortie, 2002), indicating that the status of teaching as a profession remains contested, even among practitioners. Joshua and Russell situated their uncertainty over teaching's professional status within the specific context of their charter school's policies, as well as their experiences with TFA. Even as Nexus's TFA teachers questioned teacher professionalism, traditionally trained teachers staunchly defended their own professional status. Nexus's more experienced and university trained teachers viewed their school's revolving-door hiring practices, and reliance on TFA teachers, as a threat to their own professionalism. In this way, Nexus's policies and practices shaped the way teachers viewed themselves professionally, and also led teachers to resist those frames.

"Confidently rejecting professionalism": TFA teachers' perspectives. For both Joshua and Russell, experiences with TFA impacted the way they saw themselves as teachers. According to Russell, "I mean it would be kind of obnoxious to say… as a TFA person in my second year, [that I am a professional]. I mean I haven't been trained properly. I'm kind of

learning on the fly." Russell came to our interviews with a very concrete sociological definition

of professionalism as employees' self-regulation, which is consistent with traditional conceptions

of professionalism that I outline in chapter one. Joshua expressed a less well-defined idea of

professional teaching. He talked through, and changed, his opinions throughout the course of our

conversations, working through questions to which he had no answer,

> Talking through it is like, can you be a professional teacher? Is that a thing? Like what—
> is a prof—maybe a professional teacher would be someone who always produces results?
> But then is that a teacher? …Because anyone can be a teacher. And so what makes a
> person a professional teacher?

Joshua's perspective was heavily influenced by the school's focus on "results," and he gave even

more weight to student achievement data than other Nexus teachers. Yet Joshua also came down

on both sides of the professionalism question. He professed that "anyone can be a teacher," but

also talked at length about the skills and dispositions that could lead to "genuine learning." He

distinguished this type of learning from the immediate rote learning associated with standardized

tests, but he associated the latter with professionalism.

Joshua recognized student outcomes on standard assessments as the "official" version of

good teaching, which were codified by the administration, TFA, and books like *Teach Like a*

Champion. Even as he recognized these sources as authorities on teacher practice, he struggled to

reconcile those ideas with his desire to help children become good, thoughtful people. Upon

reflection, he rejected the idea that discreet skills—like those taught during Nexus PD sessions—

could constitute good teaching. If being a professional meant focusing only on rote student

outcomes and basic teaching strategies to achieve those outcomes, he did not want to be a

professional. Because Joshua had little experience in the classroom, and he attended only the

brief teacher training provided by TFA, he had little time to develop his own thinking around

professional teaching. In our conversations, he toyed with new ideas about caring for and empowering students, while he struggled to reconcile the "official" version of professional teaching with his own convictions. He questioned his administration's focus on basic skills, but lacked the background knowledge to associate the complex work of good teaching with professional knowledge and authority. Instead, he saw the "official" version of professional teaching as a top-down construct from the Nexus administration, TFA, and *Teach Like a Champion*.

Russell also struggled to reconcile his beliefs with Nexus's attitude toward professionalism because, as he stated, "I think the model of the charter school—it's confidently rejecting teacher professionalism." While he appreciated the idea of teachers having professional autonomy, he believed the Nexus model precluded teacher professionalism: "From what I understand, the head of the network believes that you can't expect teachers to stay around. And that's just a fact of urban education." Russell was not the only teacher who told me about the network's attitude toward attrition. Several teachers described a network level administrator saying that teacher retention was "not part of the Nexus model." Russell described how Nexus's beliefs about teacher attrition aligned with their teacher policies:

> And so I think what they aspire to do, is create structures into which you can insert employees and make them successful… Professionalism expects that the employees can regulate themselves, whereas I feel like the system here is built on the assumption that, unfortunately, you cannot find employees who will regulate themselves to come to this environment, so you create systems which will regulate them for them.

Russell saw Nexus's rejection of professionalism as a response to its perception of the teacher labor market in urban education. In particular, he interpreted Nexus's policies as assuming that urban teachers would not have the knowledge or skills to regulate their own practice. In

response, Russell argued, Nexus built structures, mandates, and oversight to regulate, monitor, and control teachers' practice.

Russell found that Nexus rejected professionalism in three ways. First, it hired inexperienced and inexpert teachers who could be easily replaced. Second, it implemented structures like the discipline policy and methods like *Teach Like a Champion* techniques, both of which inexperienced teachers could easily adopt. These structures and techniques allowed teachers to be replaceable, and prevented teachers from having authority over how to conduct their classrooms. Finally, Russell saw teacher oversight as a regulatory method that deterred teacher professionalism. As he stated, "The supervision is not only to reign in laziness or the famed lazy teacher, but also they want to align people's priorities with their own." In this way, Russell argued that Nexus's supervision not only affected teachers' behaviors, but also their mindsets. Monitoring and regulation of teacher practice, alongside accountability for student outcomes, led to narrow conceptions of good teaching. As a result, teachers' capacity for innovation, experimentation, and authority over work-related decisions was diminished.

Joshua and Russell recounted different experiences and opinions about professional teaching at Nexus. However, Joshua's experience can be seen as an example of Russell's analysis. Joshua slipped into Nexus's system fairly seamlessly, implementing strategies and practices through Nexus's predetermined structures. Joshua also struggled to define good teaching outside the confines of student outcomes, even though his personal beliefs conflicted with that narrow definition. In this way, Nexus's structures and policies shaped the way Joshua saw himself as a teacher, and led him to question whether professional teaching was "a thing." Joshua's experience exemplified the way an inexperienced teacher's practice and outlook could

be shaped by school policy. In this way, Nexus's policies and practices undermined teacher

professionalism by positioning its teachers as inexpert and replaceable practitioners whose

ultimate goal should be student achievement as measured by standardized tests. Russell's ideas,

and Joshua's experience, align with research by Torres (2014a) on teacher autonomy in charter

schools: "rigidly defined systems, practices, or policies can serve to reduce ambiguity and

uncertainty by showing young, novice teachers what to do and how to do it" (p. 18). However,

Torres (2014a) argues, such systems may alienate more experienced teachers who want more

autonomy and control over their own work.

"They see us as disposable commodities": Traditionally trained teachers struggle to be

seen as professional. Nexus's traditionally trained teachers provided a different perspective on

experiences with professionalism, but supported similar conclusions about how Nexus's policies

and practices undermined professionalism. While Nexus's attrition rates were high, a small

number of experienced teachers remained at the school. Policies and practices that rested on an

assumption of teacher turnover frustrated and perplexed Nexus's experienced teachers, as well as

its traditionally trained teachers who envisioned a long career in education. While traditionally

trained teachers saw themselves as professionals, Nexus's hiring policies led teachers to feel

under-valued by their administrators.

As Nexus hired a steady stream of TFA teachers who usually stayed at Nexus for two

years, more experienced teachers responded skeptically:

> So many of the TFA teachers are just really excellent content experts… but [they] are
> doing this for the time [they] are required to do it, to move on to something else. And
> that's not fair. It's not fair to our kids, and it's not fair to somebody like me who went to
> school to be a teacher… I feel like [they're] making a mockery of my profession. (Olivia,
> special education teacher)

By hiring short-term replaceable teachers, Nexus created conditions in which teachers did not feel valued for their expertise. As Nicole said, "I feel like they see us as disposable commodities." In this way, Nexus's hiring practices placed an assumed cap on teacher growth and professionalism, and disregarded the career teachers who wanted to engage in continual professional growth.

By implicitly communicating that teachers were replaceable, Nexus also communicated that it did not value teachers who persisted in the profession. In fact, teachers describe that the workload at Nexus was unsustainable, and led many teachers to leave the school. As Nicole described,

> When I first came and they said, 'Oh, teachers usually don't stay for more than five years.' I was like, 'Pfff! That's 'cause they're not committed!' And after I'm in it, I'm like, 'that's 'cause you can't stay. They want your soul…' It's very intense and it's relentless and sometimes it feels very un-gratifying.

Teachers associated the unsustainability of their work as directly connected to Nexus's problems with teacher retention. Nicole, Teri, Monica, and Olivia—all traditionally trained teachers—believed that Nexus administrators did nothing to make teaching more sustainable because administrators did not seek to curb teacher turnover. By hiring TFA teachers who usually stay at a school for only two years, and by expecting teachers to give of their time and energy at an unsustainable level, Nexus administrators assumed—and in fact relied upon—a constant flow of new teachers. By maintaining these expectations, Nexus administrators inhibited professionalism among its most experienced and educated teachers.

Nexus structured teacher attrition into the school by hiring TFA teachers, by creating structures and mandates that encouraged uniformity and discouraged teacher authority, and by maintaining a workload that teachers found unsustainable. In this way, Nexus teachers found

their school rejecting teacher professionalism in favor of seeing teachers as "disposable commodities" that could fit within the existing system, and could be replaced when their usefulness was exhausted. While some teachers resisted the way Nexus administrators engaged in "confidently rejecting professionalism," all of the teachers in my sample still ascribed to administrators' focus on defining teachers' success by student achievement on standardized tests. In this way, administrator-driven definitions of teacher success infiltrated teachers' ideas about professional practice. In practice, teachers defined professional teaching by student growth on standardized assessments, even though they sought more complex visions of professionalism. In this way, Nexus administration's policies and practices shaped the way teachers thought about professionalism, and also caused some teachers to question the ability of teachers to be professionals. Teachers' training and personal experiences gave them broad and complex notions of professional teaching, but working within Nexus's structures and policies led teachers to focus on narrow visions for professionalism in practice.

Implications and conclusions

For teachers at both Wellspring and Nexus, students' growth was intimately tied to their own growth as teachers. At Wellspring, a desire to see personal and academic growth in their students motivated teachers to continually improve their own professional practice and personal habits in order to serve as models for their students. Nexus teachers, however, viewed their students' academic achievement as an indicator of teacher success, and relied on student data to evaluate whether they were doing their work effectively. This distinction was not without overlap—Wellspring teachers fretted over student data and worked to improve their students' scores, and Nexus teachers worked to build caring relationships with their students that would

support both academic and nonacademic needs. Yet the contrast in how teachers interpreted

growth reveals the extent to which school level policies can contribute to distinctions in teacher

definitions of professionalism.

Wellspring's mission-driven focus on social-emotional learning and wellness led teachers

to support those ideals when working with their students, and to see them as imperative to

professional teaching. Beyond the written mission, Wellspring's routines and structures

organized teachers' everyday practice in a way that encouraged a focus on nonacademic growth.

Wellspring administrators also hired experienced teachers who valued social-emotional learning

and wellness, and included these aspects of teaching in yearly teacher evaluations. The mission

and vision were infused across the Wellspring organization, and came to influence the way

teachers practiced, the way they conducted themselves outside the classroom, and the way they

saw themselves as professionals. Wellspring teachers entered their work at the school with a

preexisting value for social-emotional learning and wellness, but as they participated in

Wellspring's structures and routines, and worked alongside colleagues with similar mindsets, the

focus on nonacademic growth became a perpetuating part of the school culture.

At Nexus, the school's stated mission to focus on college attainment through character

education and academic achievement fell flat as school level policies and practices focused

exclusively on student growth and achievement as measured by standardized tests. In this way,

the school's enacted policies were more important than its stated mission, as the focus on student

outcomes subsumed other priorities. While teachers placed intrinsic value on their relationships

with students, they came to define their professional status by their students' academic growth.

Nexus administrators' policies enforced this mindset through structured student data reflection,

"revolving door" hiring practices, and professional development focused on basic skills. Through these practices, Nexus administrators communicated their focus on student outcomes, and their disregard for teacher expertise. When teachers understood their only avenue for growth through improving students' academic outcomes, and watched colleagues leave teaching at high rates, they saw few opportunities for professionalism within the teacher role.

As charter school administrators use their autonomy to implement different policies and practices around student learning, teacher hiring, and teacher growth, they encourage particular attitudes toward teachers' work and professionalism. Across both schools, teachers maintained similar definitions of professionalism as student and teacher growth. However, the details of their definitions revealed vastly different work environments and accompanying attitudes toward professionalism. Nexus and Wellspring administrators determined teacher hiring, professional development, and teacher evaluation policies and practices. This school-level autonomy meant that charter schools with similar missions and demographics could employ teachers with vastly different conceptions of professional work, or even different conceptions the status of teachers as professionals.

As charter schools proliferate, the disparity between teachers among these schools has the potential to be stark. Such differences call into question the power of teachers to maintain codified definitions of professional work. Perhaps the most significant threat to a unified definition of teacher professionalism is the practice of hiring short-term teachers with limited training and experience. TFA teachers may reasonably question their own status as professionals. But the policies and hiring practices that keep inexperienced teachers flowing into and out of urban schools also contribute to a decrease in experienced teachers' belief in their professional

worth. As those teachers consider leaving teaching for higher status or more lucrative positions, they also contribute to the "revolving door," and the proliferation of teachers who cannot reasonably consider themselves professionals. As such phenomena take place at Nexus, expert teachers are supported in striving for professional improvement at Wellspring. This disparity across charter schools encourages a fragmented teaching force, in which professionalism may be defined similarly on the surface, but belies deep variation across school context.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

Accountability in charter school organizational contexts:

Administrators interpret external pressures and frame teachers' work

Teachers work within multiple organizational contexts—classrooms are nested inside

school, district, and policy contexts. For charter teachers, the milieu of organizational contexts in

which they work also includes charter networks, a board of directors, and city-, state-, or nation-

wide charter advocacy and support organizations. Each of these organizations contributes to the

context in which teachers work, and comes to influence how teachers experience

professionalism. In particular, the way administrators in different organizational contexts

interpret and implement accountability policies comes to frame teacher professionalism. Even

when different schools operate within identical state and district policy contexts, the way their

teachers experience professionalism may differ based on school- or network-level differences in

accountability policy interpretation and implementation.

Such was the case for teachers at Wellspring and Nexus. Teachers at both Wellspring and

Nexus defined professional teaching as taking responsibility for students' educational growth. As

shown in chapter four, even though teachers at Wellspring and Nexus both took responsibility

for student achievement and growth, they did so in different ways and under different

organizational constraints. The way each school responded to district and state level

accountability mandates impacted the kind of pressure teachers felt to perform. Nexus teachers

felt enormous pressure to comply with dictated practice in addition to producing strong test scores. Wellspring teachers were under less pressure from their administration, yet their school culture enforced shared responsibility for students' wellbeing and academic growth.

Within their school contexts, Wellspring and Nexus teachers experienced different types of accountability, which explained the different ways in which they experienced professionalism. Wellspring teachers worked within a collaborative community accountability, while Nexus teachers worked under tightly controlled managerial accountability conditions. These experiences align with previous research on types of accountability and professionalism. As noted in chapter one, Sachs (2001) delineates managerial from democratic professionalism, a distinction that rests heavily on the way teachers are held accountable. Suspitsina (2010) argues that contemporary neoliberal policy constructs codify consumer and managerial accountability over professional accountability. Professional accountability relies on professional associations to hold practitioners to agreed-upon standards, but consumer-managerial accountability uses consumer choice and competition to hold teachers accountable to externally defined standards (Sinclair, 1995; Ball, Vincent, & Radnor, 1997; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Besley & Peters, 2006). The charter school landscape provides a unique context for studying accountability policies and their effects on professionalism because of the way administrators enact accountability at the school level, and they way accountability functions among the range of charter schools across the city. I therefore build on previous scholars' work to describe Wellspring's school level accountability as community accountability, Nexus's school level accountability as managerial accountability, and Chicago's charter school landscape's accountability as market accountability.

Even though Wellspring and Nexus teachers experienced different types of pressure to produce students' growth, the way they each took responsibility for students aligned with the accountability in their overlapping organizational contexts. Wellspring's community accountability practices produced significant teacher authority over classroom and school systems, while Nexus's managerial accountability practices limited teachers' authority. However, both schools participated in Chicago's educational market, whose conditions encouraged increased managerial accountability at the school level. This chapter begins by situating these phenomena in a neoliberal governmentality theoretical framework. Then, it describes the way Wellspring teachers experienced community accountability at the school level, how Nexus teachers experienced managerial accountability at the school level, and how accountability pressures at the market level encouraged increasingly managerial accountability practices at each school.

Neoliberal governmentality, responsibilization, and accountability

As teachers took responsibility for student work under varying accountability mechanisms, they came to govern themselves in accordance with neoliberal ideals. As noted in chapter two, neoliberal governmentality involves individuals' self-governance, yet the way individuals govern themselves—their actions, fears, and aspirations—are manipulated by market rationalities. In this context, individuals are framed as entrepreneurs of their own lives (Brenner, Peck & Theodore, 2010; Rose, 1999), and it becomes individuals' responsibilities to invest in themselves, and prudently manage against risk (Fejes & Nicoll, 2008; Peters, 2005). In reaction to the welfare state model, neoliberalism transfers responsibility for citizens' educations from the state to the individual. Under school choice policies, for instance, families take responsibility for

choosing the best school for their children, rather than relying on the state to ensure that all children receive a quality education.

When teachers work within this context, they act first as entrepreneurial citizens who invest in themselves and take responsibility for managing their own futures. At the same time, they also serve as objects of others' entrepreneurialism—tools toward students' acquisition of human capital. If schools are commodities framed for student consumption, teachers are cogs in those commodities. They add to or subtract value from a school, and make that school seem more or less attractive to prospective customers (students and their families). In such a context, teachers not only take responsibility for their own futures, but they also carry a burden of responsibility for their students' futures. Indeed, these two types of teacher responsibilization are intertwined, as teachers' career success is increasingly predicated upon students' academic growth and achievement. School-level administrators and policy makers also place responsibility for student success on teachers' shoulders, holding teachers accountable for student achievement and growth.

In this way, teachers come to feel responsible for students' achievement through mentalities imposed by market forces, even as mechanisms are put in place to hold them accountable for student achievement. Even though teachers at Wellspring and Nexus experienced different types of accountability at the school level, both groups defined their professional practice in a way that aligned with neoliberal governmentality. Teachers saw themselves as ultimately responsible for students' growth, and positioned themselves as both subjects of their own futures as well as utilitarian objects for their students' futures. In this way, teachers governed their own practice in order to serve their students and improve their professional

expertise. Such self-governance sits comfortably alongside community accountability, in which a group of professionals encourage and enforce agreed-upon standards for practice. However, professional self-governance bristles against managerial accountability policies in which administrators overtly police teacher practice.

Accountability and teacher professionalism

Wellspring and Nexus teachers agreed that professional teaching entailed taking responsibility for student growth. These similar definitions varied along school lines in ways that indicated the influence of school culture, administrator priorities, and organizational structures. Similarly, the ways in which teachers took responsibility for their students' educations differed according to each school's culture and organizational arrangements—and especially its administrators' approaches to accountability. At the school level, administrators built structures and routines to enforce managerial accountability or encourage community accountability. While Nexus administrators relied on managerial accountability to enforce teaching norms, Wellspring administrators built a culture of community accountability in which teachers and coaches simultaneously supported and held one another accountable. School level accountability practices created vastly different professional experiences for teachers. However, teachers at both schools came to experience the effects of market accountability, in which market forces come to dictate the way schools hold teachers accountable. In this section, I describe how community, managerial, and market accountability practices impacted teachers' experiences with professionalism.

Community accountability at Wellspring. Wellspring's mission permeated the way teachers saw themselves as professionals, the way the administration treated them as

professionals, and the way teachers held one another accountable for their professional practice. As one Wellspring teacher described, the school mission is "part of me." A strong school mission, teachers who "bought into" that mission, school structures that supported teacher work while encouraging autonomy, and community-based accountability created an environment in which teachers' sense of professionalism could flourish. When teachers bought into the mission of the school, and the school supported their professionalism, teachers behaved as entrepreneurial professionals, taking responsibility for student growth, while working to improve both their individual practice and their school's holistic effectiveness. Even as Wellspring faced challenges from external accountability measures and administrative change, teachers took responsibility for maintaining the school's core mission and values.

Community accountability as supporting teachers' best work. Teachers at Wellspring talked about holding one another accountable in a way that did not involve punishment or high stakes test scores. As Annie described, "I am being held accountable for having really high quality instruction all the time. But I don't feel like it's a punitive [accountability]… it's a very supportive accountability." Teachers talked about holding one another to a high standard in their practice, collectively taking responsibility for students' learning and the school's success. As they took collective responsibility, they recognized that they were also responsible to one another for creating engaging lessons, being responsive to students, and working to become better teachers. This community accountability extended to instructional coaches and administrators, as faculty recognized that the success of their school and their students depended on all of them working collaboratively toward the same goals. As they did so, they held each other accountable

by sharing practices, supporting one another's growth, and, if necessary, confronting teachers who were not meeting expectations.

Teachers described feeling accountable to members of the school community, but expressed that their experiences with accountability differed from common associations with high stakes accountability. For Wellspring teachers, accountability involved living up to high expectations with the understanding that other members of the community would be doing the same. As Jacob described, "everybody pulls their weight… to get things done for each other and to get things done for kids." In this way, colleagues held one another accountable, and served as the motivation for teachers to exceed expectations. As Annie described, "This is a place that's going to force me to really keep myself in check, and it's going to also support me in keeping myself in check." In this way, accountability at Wellspring involved teachers' self-regulation according to commonly held values about good teaching. Teachers disciplined themselves to shared notions of good teaching because of the responsibility they felt to their school community. Their sense of personal and shared responsibility for students' wellbeing and their school's success contributed to their commitment to meet shared goals by holding one another to high standards in their teaching, their work ethic, and the habits they modeled for their students.

This type of accountability acted as both an encouragement for producing their best work, as well as a check on inadequate practice. Teachers encouraged one another to continually improve their practice. Jacob explained, "I'm around pretty awesome individuals, so I can work hard, and then you see what they do, and you see people improving their practice, and sharing the information they've learned or sharing projects and that inspires you to try something new." Annie similarly described how her colleagues held her accountable by setting a high standard for

her to meet. As she stated, "If they can do it, I can do it." Annie found her colleagues inspiring, and believed that a team of professional teachers must have a high level of commitment, collaboration, honesty, and accountability. Douglas also described teachers' mutual accountability as rooted in trust and collaboration, but also in honesty when teachers failed to meet their responsibilities. He saw it as part teachers' responsibility to their colleagues to speak openly about their failures or missed opportunities. Janice explained that talking about mistakes was common at Wellspring. When someone experienced a setback, she said, "the whole school knows about it so we can learn." Teachers felt comfortable sharing their successes and failures with one another because they trusted that their colleagues shared their aims of growth, high quality teaching, and student success.

Community accountability, trust, and mutual responsibility. Teachers' trusting relationships with their instructional coaches also figured strongly in their experiences with community accountability. For example, when Annie was in her first year at Wellspring and struggled with a particular class, her instructional coach supported her while holding her accountable:

> it was never like, 'you're a bad teacher,' or like, 'what you're doing is wrong,' it was like, 'OK. That didn't work. You agree, I agree. Let's figure this out.' And it's just a different sense of valuing where you're at in your process and then helping you keep getting better.

In this way, accountability was not a top-down process, but a collaborative one in which coaches, teachers, and colleagues identified areas for improvement and worked together to find solutions. Jonathan agreed, noting that "This year I've received a lot of support, and I've had a lot of accountability… I'm moving ahead." He agreed with his colleagues that teacher growth depended on the teacher-coach relationship.

For some teachers, the teacher-coach relationship was less effective at producing growth. Douglas, for instance, sought more feedback and support from coaches. Even though he was an award-winning teacher, Douglas yearned for more support to continue his growth. Kathryn also described a previous coach as more inspiring and helpful than her current coach. It is notable that the two teachers who expressed dissatisfaction with their coaches were the most experienced teachers I interviewed, with 9 and 11 years of teaching experience respectively. Even though Douglas and Kathryn found less opportunity for growth through their current coaching relationships, they remained personally committed to their own professional growth.

Teacher accountability depended on personal responsibility for continual growth, alongside supportive collegial and coaching relationships. At the same time, Wellspring's coaches also described taking personal responsibility for their improvement as coaches. They responded to teacher feedback on their coaching, took concrete steps to improve, and tailored PD to teacher feedback. Teachers and coaches existed in what Jonathan called a "symbiotic relationship" in which they all held one another accountable for improvement in their work. They did so in an effort to meet their collective goals of helping students grow and improving the school community as a whole.

Wellspring teachers also described being accountable to students and their parents. As Jonathan explained, "we hear from our parents" about school-related concerns. During one grade level meeting, middle school teachers collaboratively decided how to respond to specific parent concerns, and spent time crafting a joint email response to parents. In this way, parents impacted teachers' practice, as well as grade- or school-level policies. Yet teachers also viewed parents as part of an accountability that was rooted in mutual responsibility and community. Douglas

explained how, at the beginning of the school year, he met with parents and held up a student's

chair. The chair's legs, he said, represented the teacher, the school, the family, and the student.

He explained that each of those four parts needed to work equally hard in order for students to

succeed. They all needed to be working toward the same goal, and were equally responsible for

student success. "If we're not doing the same amount of work," he told parents, "it's going to be

lopsided and the chair is going to fall over." In this way, teachers were accountable to parents

and students for their work, but they also shared responsibility for student success.

Douglas's chair analogy illustrated the way mutual responsibility was embedded in

Wellspring's school culture. That emphasis on mutual responsibility shaped the type of

accountability teachers felt. Teachers worked hard to ensure that they held up their end of the

bargain, they relied on their coaches and colleagues for support toward continual improvement,

and they relied on parents and students to work equally hard toward student growth and to

provide feedback that would shape teachers' work. Teachers held one another accountable

through community relationships, acknowledging each person's role in the school's success. In

this way, teachers not only felt an individual motivation to work hard and exceed expectations

for their own professional practice, they also felt responsible to the school's community to help

meet their shared goals. As a result of this community accountability, teachers came to self-

govern their behavior and practice according to agreed-upon notions of best practice, as well as

ideal versions of entrepreneurial citizenship.

Managerial accountability at Nexus. In keeping with more commonly understood

notions of accountability, Nexus maintained high stakes accountability measures tied to student

test scores. They also incorporated strict controls over teacher practice in an effort to achieve

those test scores. In this way, they aligned with notions of managerial accountability, which focuses on monitoring inputs and outcomes (Alford, 1995; Sinclair, 1995). Nexus teachers experienced heavy monitoring of their practice and outcomes, accompanied by concrete consequences for their performance. Teachers whose data fell short of expectations experienced increased monitoring, improvement plans, and the possibility of termination. When teachers' data and practice exceeded expectations, they were able to avoid some of the heavy monitoring and paperwork that other teachers experienced. Both Nexus administrators and teachers claimed to believe that professional teachers took responsibility for students' growth, their academic achievement, and building caring relationships with students. However, administrators' accountability practices ended up constraining the way teachers took responsibility for their students. Nexus administrators controlled teacher practice directly, and ended up limiting teachers' traditional expressions of professionalism. In this way, teachers were positioned as heavily monitored, accountable workers, even as they worked to reclaim their professionalism.

Managerial coaching. The Nexus administration relied on coaches to monitor and hold teachers accountable, even as it also used teacher coaches to spur teacher growth. Nexus's principal, Christopher, saw coaching as an invaluable part of encouraging teacher growth at Nexus, but he acknowledged that the coaches also "do the teacher evaluations. So the coaches aren't real, true coaches in that sense. So it's more like [the teacher's] boss." He worried that, because of this, teachers would not have a true advocate who could also push them in their practice. Christopher's concerns proved warranted, as teachers viewed their coaches primarily as evaluators. Coaches ended up walking a fine line between support and evaluation, while teachers viewed coaches' attention as evaluative or even punitive. In this way, the growth-oriented

intention behind coaching was undermined by policies aimed at strict oversight and accountability.

Teachers described coaching sessions as a burden to be free from. For instance, Nicole appreciated that her coaching meetings had been reduced over her years at Nexus, "they leave me alone a lot more, and that makes me happier." She saw this as a perk of being a more experienced teacher. Russell, a second year TFA teacher, similarly experienced fewer coaching sessions over the course of his first year teaching, as coaches focused their time and energy on teachers who struggled with classroom management. Instead of describing less support, teachers with fewer coaching sessions felt less oversight and pressure, along with increased autonomy. Moreover, teachers interpreted the frequency of their coaching sessions as an indicator of the administration's trust in their teaching ability.

Teachers who had fewer coaching sessions felt less pressure associated with accountability. From teachers' perspectives, coaching sessions were a mechanism for teacher oversight. As Nicole explained, "You're being evaluated all the time." Russell agreed that coaches' primary role was to monitor and evaluate teachers' work. At the same time that they evaluated teachers, Nicole said, coaches also always provided teachers with "something new to do, or to fix." This contributed to the "overwhelming" number of tasks required of teachers. Teachers often referred to these tasks as "checked boxes" in the sense that they were both items on their to-do lists, and boxes their coaches checked off on evaluation rubrics. Coaches served as the arbiters of teacher accountability, and also provided teachers with a long list of tasks to complete.

Teachers would be "audited" (Apple, 2005) for completing regular tasks—posting weekly lesson plans and materials by Monday morning, posting a certain number of grades each week, analyzing data from Friday assessments—while also being held accountable for employing new strategies from PD sessions, and for implementing any techniques or changes their coaches had suggested. Monica described spending "hours on the weekend" preparing to post materials for the three courses she taught each day. Posting completed lesson plans, PowerPoint slides, homework sets, and handouts for the week was useful for classes teachers co-taught so that teachers could share their plans. Otherwise, teachers saw posting materials as a mechanism for monitoring their work. Monica described an email she received from her coach:

> 'I don't see that you have an exit slip for Thursday.' Like, are you kidding me? I know. I didn't have time to make 15 exit slips already. I have no curriculum in any of my classes and you're getting on my butt about not having a document on here?... I don't need you to tell me to do this.

In this way, teachers sometimes viewed coaches as micromanaging their work in a way that would not meaningfully impact instruction. Instead, it only served to monitor whether they completed the list of required tasks.

Teachers saw their coaches' level of involvement as a proxy for the administration's view of their competence. Meanwhile, teachers also worked to live up to their own standards of good teaching, even as they struggled to comply with the myriad tasks the administration mandated. As teachers navigated structures controlling their practice, they came to see coaches engaging in evaluation more often than support. Optimistically, all of the teachers in my sample maintained that they sought feedback and support, that coaches could be helpful, and that they wanted to grow in their practice. For instance, Nicole talked extensively about coaching relationships and said that they could be useful when they required teachers to reflect on data results. At the same

time, she described, "If you're feeling like you're being watched, then I think it just makes you perform even less capably." Even as teachers maintained this optimism, they felt bogged down by micromanagement and ubiquitous evaluation from their coaches. In effect, coaching at Nexus controlled and limited teachers' practice more than it supported teacher growth. Managerial accountability served to control and constrain the type of responsibility teachers were able to take for their work.

Managerial student-teacher relationships. At Nexus, teachers and administrators described positive student-teacher relationships as an essential teacher responsibility, but administrators focused on student-teacher relationships as instrumental for classroom management and student achievement. One of the routines Nexus implemented to encourage positive student-teacher relationships included a requirement that teachers write an encouraging letter to their most challenging student. By writing to a student who had frustrated them, teachers took responsibility for building positive relationships with students, even under difficult circumstances. By requiring this practice, Nexus not only encouraged positive relationships, but also molded teachers' mindsets. As teachers worked to view challenging students in a positive way, they took responsibility for fostering relationships with students who may not have reciprocated teachers' care. These letters were an instance in which Nexus built structures that supported a particular kind of student-teacher relationship—one for which teachers were ultimately responsible—through required teacher tasks.

Nexus also sought to hire teachers who would take responsibility for relationships with students. For instance, Christopher stated, "kids make mistakes, so I look for people who are willing to give kids multiple chances, believing kids, wanting to see them succeed, and realizing

that mistakes are just bumps in the road to success." Administrators sought teachers who would help students succeed by both forgiving missteps and also maintaining rigid expectations. Teachers were encouraged to simultaneously give students second chances and also ensure that students adhered to the meticulous discipline code. In this way, administrators sent mixed messages about discipline enforcement. They encouraged teachers to build forgiving relationships with students, while discouraging the strict-but-consistent teacher-student relationship that some teachers prized. In the process, they encouraged teachers to loosely implement the student discipline code, even as they held teachers to strict accountability standards.

Nexus fostered this practice through its teacher evaluation process. Nicole described a previous year teaching at Nexus, when her coach rated her poorly on her student-teacher relationships in a mid-year evaluation. Nicole was mortified at such a judgment on her work, and that feeling intensified when her coach proposed putting her on an improvement plan with increased coaching and oversight. Through this process, Nicole discovered that the reason for her low score was the high number of detentions she had issued to students. Nicole had been following the discipline code consistently, issuing detentions for chewing gum, being out of uniform, being unprepared for class, or having a cell phone. She was surprised when this led to a low score on student-teacher relationships in her teacher evaluation.

Nicole's situation illustrated how Nexus operationalized difficult-to-measure characteristics like student-teacher relationships through observable indicators for teacher evaluations. Those indicators failed to capture the disposition that teachers agreed was imperative for quality teaching: an emphasis on caring and supportive relationships with their

students. Nicole insisted that the number of detentions she gave were not an accurate measure of her relationships with students. In fact, she felt that they were not even an accurate measure of her classroom management because the bulk of the detentions she issued were for minor offenses. Nicole actually found that her strict and consistent enforcement of minor infractions helped her maintain a smoothly running classroom. Based on her negative evaluation, she felt encouraged to enforce the discipline code more loosely, rather than take concrete steps to know her students better.

Nicole's experience illustrated a common occurrence at Nexus. The evaluation measured an observable indicator that the administration associated with an important teacher trait: a high number of detentions served as a proxy for poor student-teacher relationships. The number of detentions issued was a readily available statistic, but it failed to adequately account for Nicole's relationships with her students, or even her effectiveness as a classroom manager. In the interest of accountability, Nexus built a system of imperfect measures that failed to adequately capture attributes of teachers' practice. By operationalizing relationships for evaluation, Nexus held teachers accountable for mere shadows of the healthy relationships teachers sought. In doing so, Nexus challenged teachers' understanding of relationship-building as intrinsically important.

Nexus set teacher growth and student-teacher relationships as priorities, believing that these priorities would help improve student achievement on standardized tests. Many of the mindsets and dispositions that Nexus teachers associated with professionalism aligned with administrators' ideas about professional teaching. However, the administration seemed to prize those attributes in the service of measurable gains in student achievement, while teachers valued them as intrinsically important. The administration defined success in student-teacher

relationships and teacher growth through measurable outcomes, either through student outcomes or observable teacher practice. At the same time, Nexus's structures and routines provided both supports and constraints for teachers trying to live up to accountability standards, as well as their own conceptions of professional practice. Nexus's managerial accountability tactics attempted to regulate teacher practice in order to create the student achievement they desired. Their tight control over teacher practice relied on measurable indicators of teacher performance, which served as inadequate proxies for teachers' professional practice. Ironically, Nexus's managerial accountability not only constrained teachers' practice, but also undermined the administration's stated goals. Even as Nexus administrators engaged in managerial accountability, and Wellspring faculty engaged in community accountability both schools operated within a larger organizational framework that instilled accountability at the market level.

Market accountability and Chicago charter schools. Across the city of Chicago, schools of choice like Wellspring and Nexus operated within a theoretical market, in which schools competed against one another to attract students and worked to renew their charters. In keeping with market-based theories of education (Friedman, 1955; Chubb & Moe, 1990), the market itself served as an accountability lever for school level growth and achievement data (Ball, Vincent & Radnor, 1997). Nexus's network level administrators and Wellspring's board of directors—schools' upper level management—took these market considerations to heart, and acted in accordance with a belief that teachers were ultimately responsible for students' and, by extension, the school's success. These upper level managers used their power to influence teachers' and school administrators' practices, and, ultimately the way they experienced professionalism.

Market accountability augmented Nexus's managerial accountability. At Nexus,

teachers described the school's priorities as dictated by the network level administration, and by

the image of the school in the community. As Nicole described,

> We like to flash around our numbers about things. Look at us! [We] try to make sure that
> we are doing, or appear to be doing, better than the neighborhood schools… and then that
> influences things like procuring donors and things like that. And then also just getting
> people to come to your school.

As the pressure to produce numbers—to appear to be doing well—weighed on administrators'

minds at the network and school levels, administrators passed the pressure onto teachers.

Pressure from market level accountability mechanisms led Nexus administrators to tightly

control teachers' practice and audit student outcomes in order to maintain the data that would

promote the school's image at the market level.

Much of this pressure to maintain a strong image at the market level originated with

Nexus's network-level administrators, who served as managers for schools across the network,

managing budgets, curricula, assessments, personnel, or public relations. Nexus's principal,

Christopher, described how many policies and initiatives—such as evaluation rubrics, standards,

or PD initiatives—originated as network level ideas. He worked to manage a school of skilled

teachers, while ensuring that the school complied with network accountability mandates. From a

teacher's perspective, as Nicole noted, those accountability mandates were rooted in the desire to

maintain a strong image among donors, the community, and the charter authorizer. In this way,

the market accountability levers influenced network administrators to implement managerial

accountability in schools across the network. In this way, different types of accountability

worked in concert across organizational levels, as administrators sought to control teacher

practice in order to boost student outcomes and bolster the school's reputation.

Market accountability undermined Wellspring's community accountability. At Wellspring, market accountability played a larger role when the school's accountability data—specifically standardized test scores and school climate survey data—dropped unexpectedly in 2015. Wellspring's board of directors—which had previously served in finance, governance, and development roles—responded by becoming more involved in teachers' work and in the school's administrative structure. The board president described concern about the school's charter and a desire to make sure the scores reflected the school being among the best in the city. As Jacob, a math teacher, explained, the scores were "shockingly bad. And so now we are all, that's part of our reflection and our coaching, planning, and PD… So there are changes being made according to that, that are still not clear, but the fact that changes will come has been made clear." Over the course of the semester, the board increased its presence gradually, first creating an academic advisory council, then by hiring a new administrator to allow for increased administrative attention to academic instruction.

The changes culminated when the principal left the school in the middle of the semester. While teachers could not confirm whether the principal had been fired or had left of his own accord, they suspected the board's influence in his departure. Teachers interpreted each of these steps as a response to inadequate test scores. In effect the board's actions were accountability levers in themselves—they took control away from teachers and school level administrators. Teachers had mixed reactions to the board's new intrusion in their school's policies and practices. While they accepted that the board should hold them accountable to a high standard, they resented their loss of control and voice over the way their school would operate.

Part of this resentment was rooted in teachers' previous experience having a significant voice in school level policy. Teachers described a high level of control over their classroom practices, their grade level policies, and their ability to influence school level decisions. Particularly before the board's actions, teachers had a significant voice in how their school was run, and they felt protected from the pressures associated with managerial accountability. Jonathan, a math teacher, described teachers' accountability experiences before the scores dropped, "we're typically shielded from that. We do have accountability… [but] the office down here handles it, and not us." Douglas similarly explained, "We're definitely held accountable to the board, I mean, I don't personally think about it that often." Because their administration largely shielded teachers from external accountability pressures, Wellspring had been able to maintain community-based accountability with significant teacher input. However, when Wellspring's survey and achievement data fell, teachers struggled to come to terms with the top-down imposition of accountability and administrative changes.

Early in the 2015-2016 school year, the board president addressed Wellspring's faculty, and explained that the math scores would need to improve. The board president talked about optimizing student achievement, told the teachers that the board and the administration would support them, and emphasized that it was ultimately up to teachers to improve students' scores. As the board president finished speaking, Luz, a second grade teacher in her seventh year at Wellspring, raised her hand to suggest that standardized tests were insufficient to measure the school's impact on students. She suggested more holistic measures that would align with the school's mission. More teachers raised their hands to question how exactly teachers would be held accountable, how the board members had analyzed student data, and what kind of feedback

teachers could expect. Their questions were pointed but respectful, and were rooted in knowledge of the school's mission, their teaching practice, and their students. Teachers not only felt comfortable questioning school level policy, but they also expected their voices to be heard. When the board made unilateral decisions in the name of accountability, teachers reacted with skepticism and resistance, particularly as they felt their professional judgment was discounted.

Specifically, teachers were skeptical of the board's ability to improve teacher practice or student learning. As Jonathan described, "they view themselves as trying to provide that level of accountability, but I don't think that they're approaching it in a way that is collaborative, and that is a problem, because they're outside of their wheel house."

In this way, Jonathan saw the board as engaging in a type of accountability that was inconsistent with his previous experiences with community accountability at Wellspring—and by extension served to undermine teachers' professional treatment. Jonathan felt that the board was overstepping their role without consulting teachers, who had the expertise and experience to contribute to school improvement. By making decisions without teacher input, the board ignored teacher expertise. Jonathan's reaction to the board's intrusion reflected Wellspring teachers' indignation at being treated unprofessionally—having their expert opinions dismissed without consideration.

Most Wellspring teachers I interviewed agreed with Jonathan. However, Kathryn gave the board the benefit of the doubt, but understood why her fellow teachers were skeptical of the board's ability to effect change. She stated:

> [The board hasn't] done a great job of being visible in the school and really making it known all the things that they're doing, so I think it was perceived as 'These people that don't know anything. They're never here. They don't know me. I've been here for however many years. I've never met them.'

Kathryn understood teachers' skepticism of the board as a lack of personal knowledge and trust. Other teachers did express mistrust for the board based on a lack of personal knowledge, and ignorance about one another's role in the organization. As Janice said, "I don't know what the board does… They don't know what I'm doing."

However, Douglas, Jonathan, Janice and Annie also mistrusted the board because teachers had not been consulted about important school decisions, and those decisions were communicated to teachers in a way that created uncertainty and made teachers feel vulnerable in the face of change. As Douglas expressed, "We didn't know that this was happening, or why this is happening… no one's telling us what this looks like. So, it naturally creates anxiety for the future." While the board attempted to hold the school accountable for falling scores, they did so by imposing changes in a way that alienated teachers who had grown accustomed to having a voice in their school's policies. Moreover, the lack of trust undermined the community accountability that Wellspring teachers valued, and that they associated with their professionalism. As teachers experienced uncertainty and mistrust, they struggled to reconcile their perceptions of their own professional teaching, their role in school-level decisions, and their school's commitment to its mission and values.

For Wellspring teachers who rooted their practice in the school's mission, the board's changes felt unmooring. Moreover, as teachers acted in accordance with their definitions of professionalism, they came to expect to be treated as professionals by having a voice in school-level concerns and academic policies. When the board made unilateral decisions about school policy, and did so without educational expertise or teacher input, teachers felt that their professionalism was under attack. Teachers acknowledged that the board implemented changes

in the name of accountability, and that they had good intentions. Wellspring teachers did not resent accountability as a concept, but they did resent the lack of respect that the board seemed to show for their professional expertise. Teachers advocated for their own professionalism by resisting the board's changes and proposing teacher-driven solutions to the school's problems.

While teachers' voice and influence were paramount under Wellspring's community-based accountability practices, market level pressures led the board to act in a way that minimized teachers' input. The community-based accountability that teachers appreciated—and that kept many teachers at Wellspring—was rooted in trusting relationships, a commitment to the school's mission, and high expectations for rigorous teaching practice. Market accountability reflected a commitment to high expectations, but simultaneously undermined the trusting relationships and shared mission that distinguished Wellspring's community-based accountability. Wellspring's entrepreneurial, mission-driven teachers expected the opportunity to use their expertise in order to collaboratively create solutions to their school's problems. When the board made unilateral decisions, they undermined teachers' trust.

Even though Wellspring and Nexus teachers experienced different accountability systems within their schools, both schools participated in market accountability. While Wellspring's community accountability conflicted with encroaching market accountability, leading its teachers to resist the board's actions, Nexus's managerial accountability served as a fitting corollary to market accountability. Nexus's network level administrators implemented managerial controls across their network of charter schools as a response to market accountability pressures, and those top-down accountability measures combined to control and constrain teacher practice in order to produce calculable measures of student success. In this way, Nexus's network level

administrators helped to position teachers as solely responsible for student achievement. Wellspring's school administrators largely shielded teachers from market accountability pressures, encouraging teachers to collaboratively engage in community accountability. However, Wellspring's board of directors responded to market accountability pressures by undermining the trusting relationships necessary for community accountability. Wellspring's board of directors began implementing greater controls over teacher and school level practice, indicating a shift toward a more managerial style of accountability. In this way, market accountability pressure induced Wellspring to adopt more managerial methods, which served to undermine teachers' experiences with professionalism.

Implications and conclusions

Charter schools were predicated on the idea that they would gain autonomy in exchange for accountability. The schools themselves would be held accountable for meeting the terms of their charter, and for attracting families to attend their school. However, the question of how teachers within those schools would be managed remained up to the schools themselves. Wellspring and Nexus administrators maintained different approaches to teacher accountability and, by extension teacher professionalism. Collaborative decision-making associated with community accountability granted teachers control over their curricula, and allowed teachers to build definitions of best practice together. This allowed Wellspring teachers to feel professional control over their work, and to feel respected as experts in their craft. Nexus teachers, however, expressed frustration with the strict control that administrators placed over their teaching practice. Managerial accountability created an environment in which teachers lacked control over their practice, and worked in a context in which their expertise was not valued.

Both Wellspring and Nexus teachers believed that professional teachers took responsibility for student growth. Wellspring's community accountability encouraged teachers and administrators to collaboratively determine the content and means by which teachers would take that responsibility. Conversely, Nexus's managerial accountability dictated that teachers would be responsible for student achievement, as well as measurable teacher performance indicators as determined by school and network administrators. In this way, community accountability at Wellspring encouraged a participatory responsibilization, in which teachers helped to determine the collective goals for which they and their colleagues would be responsible. Nexus's managerial accountability created an environment in which teachers were responsible for externally defined goals, which served to disempower those teachers and undermine their professionalism.

Even though each school determined how to hold their teachers accountable, both participated in the landscape of charter schools within the city of Chicago. As they did so, they participated in market accountability, working to uphold the terms of their charters and to attract families to their schools. In doing so, they worked to improve their student test scores and bolster their school's perception in the community. Even though Wellspring administrators attempted to shield its teachers from market accountability forces, the school's board intentionally broke that shield in an attempt to improve the school's standing. In this way, market accountability came to impact Wellspring teachers, and undermine their professional control and voice.

In this way, the organizational structure of the market came to impact teachers within charter schools of varying organizational arrangements. At both schools, upper level managers—Nexus's network level administrators and Wellspring's board—served as conduits between the

school and the market, focusing on meeting accountability standards, maintaining the school's charter, and attracting new students. These upper level managers operated with market accountability in mind, maintaining goals oriented to the school's scores, ratings, and public perception. In contrast, teachers' professional goals of taking responsibility for student growth encompassed holistic student learning, rich positive relationships, and broad content area knowledge. These more complex types of teacher-defined goals would be subsumed under market accountability in favor of readily calculable measures of students' academic achievement and growth.

Schools serve as the unit of analysis within the charter model—the schools maintain autonomy in exchange for accountability. Administrators possess autonomy to determine how teachers will be held accountable, how their school will be organized, and how teachers will be treated as professionals. However, the experiences of teachers at Nexus and Wellspring show that market level accountability serves to encourage managerial accountability at the school level. As such, charter school organizational structures are likely to take on the characteristics of managerial accountability, which tend to undermine teacher voice, autonomy, and expertise, even when administrators and teachers prefer community accountability practices.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS

"Playing the game" and "buying in":

How school level policy frames the way teachers claim autonomy

As Wellspring and Nexus teachers worked within different organizational contexts, and came to define and experience professionalism accordingly, they also worked to enact their professionalism differently according to the school-level policies and practices within which they worked. Much of their work toward enacting professionalism occurred in the relationship between their own definitions of professionalism and their experiences with professionalism in their school context. Teachers worked to enact professionalism by aligning their practice with their own definitions of professional teaching, but they did so in the context of school accountability policies. As they did so, further nuance to teachers' conceptions of professionalism came to light. Not only did teachers define professionalism by student and teacher growth, but they also valued the autonomy necessary to implement student and teacher growth as they saw fit. Teachers at both schools worked to claim their autonomous practice, but used different methods to claim it according to the opportunities and constraints they experienced in their school. When teachers worked under tight managerial constraints, they covertly worked to claim space for autonomous practice. When school administrators encouraged and facilitated teachers' autonomy, teachers used that autonomy in ways that were overt and expansive. In both cases, teachers claimed autonomy in order to enact or advocate for

their definition of professionalism. In constrained circumstances, teachers were able to claim autonomy as individual self-governance of classroom practices. On the other hand, teachers who had support for cooperation and autonomy enacted a collaborative self-governance that focused on their definitions of professional teaching.

Wellspring teachers often felt that their experiences with professionalism and their definitions of professionalism aligned. They agreed with the school's mission, and worked toward their students', and their own, growth in conjunction with that mission. When the board's decisions came into conflict with teachers' interpretation of that mission, Wellspring teachers worked to enact professionalism by advocating for policies and practices that aligned with the school's mission. At Nexus, teachers and administrators claimed similar definitions of teacher professionalism, but the administration's managerial policies and focus on student test scores ended up undermining teachers' professional practice. In effect, teachers' experiences with professionalism and their definitions of professionalism did not align. Nexus teachers responded by carving out space to enact their own professionalism by navigating, resisting, or strategically complying with school policies in order to claim space for autonomous professional practice.

This chapter begins by conceptualizing teacher autonomy and framing the findings in the context of governmentality. Next, it describes the way Wellspring teachers enacted professionalism by "buying in" to the school's mission in the context of their community accountability, and as teachers felt their professionalism come under attack from the school's board. Then, it describes the way Nexus teachers "played the game" in order to secure varying degrees of autonomy within the constraints of managerial accountability. The chapter closes with implications and conclusions.

Teacher autonomy

Classic studies in the sociology of teaching provide grounding to conceptualize teacher autonomy. In his seminal study conducted in the mid-seventies, Lortie (2002) argues that teaching is characterized by three orientations: presentism, a focus on short-term goals; conservatism, a resistance to change; and individualism, a reliance on teachers to evaluate their own individual goals and effectiveness. These characteristics combine to create a workforce that is inward looking, resistant to change, and interested in maintaining individual autonomy (Hargreaves, 2010). In this context, autonomy meant that teachers could simply close their classroom doors, and teach as they saw fit. As they did so, they contributed to "loosely coupled" schools in which administrators' ideas about teaching were not practiced with fidelity in teachers' classrooms (Weick, 1976). Because teachers were also focused on short-term goals and were resistant to change, teachers often relied on traditional practices, failed to innovate, and did not seek professional improvement.

An individual, closed-off approach to autonomy contributed to teaching's uncertain professional status. As Ingersoll and Merrill (2012) argue, professionals have authority over their work through autonomous practice and authority over hiring and evaluation. As noted in chapter one, this professional authority rests on professional expertise. When Lortie described teaching in 1975, teachers exercised a closed autonomy rooted in personal experience, rather than a depth of knowledge or breadth of information from a variety of sources. In this way, the autonomy Lortie described cannot be understood as a boon to professionalism; rather, it served as a mechanism that prevented teachers from seeking broadly applicable definitions of best practice and learning from one another's experiences.

In the decades since Lortie's work was published, scholars have suggested that increased time for teacher collaboration could have the potential to disrupt teachers' resistance to innovation, and even increase opportunities for teachers to exercise professional authority (Hargreaves, 2010). In fact, Little (1990) proposed a continuum of collegial relations, ranging from "storytelling and scanning," which position teachers as fairly independent from one another, to "joint work," which requires teacher interdependence. As teachers engage in more interdependent work, she argues, they engage in "collective autonomy," in which "a staff's beliefs and practices become more publicly known and publicly considered" (p. 521). Little (1990) distinguishes collective autonomy from "private autonomy," which does not require consensus or public deliberation. In order for autonomy to contribute to teachers' professionalism, it necessarily involves collaborative work to facilitate collectively defined best practices and teacher authority over classroom and school-wide practices.

Governmentality and autonomy

As teachers use and claim autonomy in order to enact professionalism, they do so in ways that align with how they are governed. Foucault describes government as the "conduct of conduct," in which individuals use technologies of domination over one another, while they simultaneously dictate and control their own conduct. Under neoliberalism, individuals are placed in circumstances that induce self-governance (Barry, Osborne & Rose, 1996, p. 20). For teachers, this would seem to include autonomy in the form of control over classroom practice. However, from the perspective of governmentality, neoliberalism seeks to alter the conduct of individuals and institutions so that they become more competitive and efficient. It encourages people to embrace a "market rationality" in all aspects of their lives (Dean, 2010). By

manipulating individuals and groups to conduct themselves in accordance with market rationalities, neoliberalism governs people's actions, their fears, and their aspirations. Teacher autonomy can thus be seen within the context of self-governance, as autonomous teachers try to align their work to prevailing notions of the best, most efficient practice.

Similarly, teacher professionalism can also be seen, within the framework of neoliberal governmentality, as a means for professional teachers to seemingly gain control over their work—even as they govern their work in the image of prevailing notions of best practice. Such conceptions of best practice can be passed to teachers through their training programs, through professional development, or reflection on experience. Rationalities of the market infuse teachers' ideas about best practices. For instance, teachers work to help students gain access to college, which gives students an advantage in future employment. Toward that goal, they work to boost test scores in order to give their students access to scholarships and higher-level coursework. In order to achieve these aims, teachers "tinker" toward best practices (Hargreaves, 1998) that will induce student academic growth. Even as teachers work to continually improve their practice, they also enforce best practice in their own work and among their colleagues. The way teachers engage in self-governance is influenced by the logic of the market. At the same time, granting teachers autonomous practice opens the door for them to exert influence over classroom and school practices. This creates a complicated scenario in which teachers simultaneously influence definitions of good teaching, and have their mindsets influenced by prevailing notions of good teaching. As they work to shape definitions of good teaching, and advocate for the right to practice according to those definitions, teachers enact professionalism.

Whether teachers engage in individual autonomous practice, or collective autonomy within a supportive school context, neoliberal governmentality suggests that they will seek to align the ideas and aspirations with prevailing notions of best practice that are rooted in neoliberal mentalities. Yet questions remain about how teachers might seek alignment with best practices under individual or collective autonomy conditions. Do teachers have a greater potential to influence definitions of professional teaching—and perhaps question the market mentalities that underlie prevailing ideas about teaching—under collective autonomy conditions than they might under limited individual autonomy? Wellspring teachers' experiences with collective autonomy and Nexus teachers' experiences with limited, covert, individual autonomy provide insight into how school policy contexts impact the way teachers enact autonomy, but also the way they respond to different forms of governance.

Wellspring: Enacting professionalism by balancing buy-in and autonomy.

Wellspring teachers spoke often about the school's mission, the way their own beliefs aligned with the school's priorities, and how the school supported them in teaching as they saw fit. In this way, Wellspring represented a seeming contradiction—teachers bought into the school's mission and sought school-wide alignment according to that mission, while they also prized teacher autonomy and independence. Yet teachers' commitment to the school and its mission actually facilitated Wellspring's delicate balance between teacher autonomy and curriculum alignment. Wellspring's community accountability facilitated their balanced autonomy and alignment. Rather than relying on top-down requirements or accountability measures to ensure that teachers aligned their work with administration-driven expectations, the teachers themselves enacted professionalism by ensuring their own—and their colleagues'—

alignment with agreed-upon notions of best practice that supported the school's mission and vision. Teachers were accustomed to disciplining themselves to the school's collaboratively established ideals. However, teachers began questioning the power of Wellspring's autonomy-alignment equation under pressure from the board of directors' increased scrutiny.

Conceptualizing Wellspring's autonomy-alignment equilibrium. When Wellspring teachers bought into the school's mission, they embraced the school's values like social-emotional learning, wellness, and personal growth. The school and its teachers valued personal growth, and teachers lived out this value by working to consistently improve their teaching. In order to engage in growing professionally, teachers identified their own goals, and worked to reach those goals with the support of coaches and administrators. This process necessarily included teacher autonomy. As they worked toward constant improvement, teachers reflected on their practice in the context of their knowledge about teaching, and they researched new practices to adopt. Teachers worked to find the practices that worked best in their classrooms, and administrators supported that work by structuring supportive coaching sessions into teachers' schedules.

As teachers found the practices that worked best for them, they also shared those ideas with colleagues, collaborated in order to discover new ideas, and worked together to reflect on their practices' efficacy. As they did so, teacher collaboration served to bridge teacher autonomy with teacher alignment. Teachers worked together to align their practices, worked individually to improve their own teaching, and continually reframed the boundaries around aligned teacher practice. The professed value for teacher autonomy, as well as Wellspring's culture of collaboration, created a sense that school-wide alignment was a grass-roots process in which

teachers' perspectives were paramount. Through an iterative process of innovation, experimentation, collaboration, and deliberation (always with the school mission in mind), Wellspring faculty continually worked to refine the definition of best practice and professional teaching. Figure 3 below illustrates Wellspring's autonomy-alignment equilibrium, how it rested on the school's mission, and how it was facilitated by collaboration among faculty.

Figure 3. Wellspring's autonomy-alignment equilibrium.
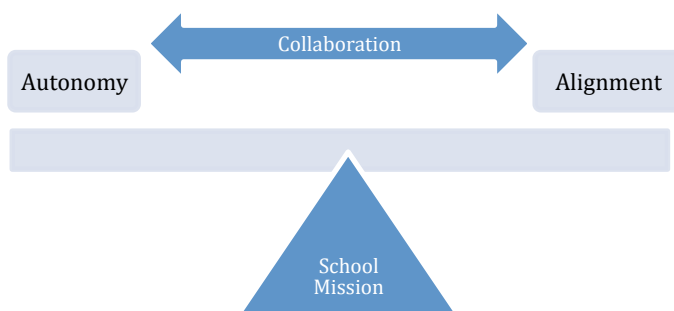
Autonomy in service of aligned best practice. Wellspring's push and pull between autonomy and alignment resulted in a flexible equilibrium in which teachers worked toward alignment and best practice, valued independence, and fretted over the state of the school's collective teaching. Maintaining this elastic equilibrium meant that teachers taught their colleagues about new best practices, experimented with innovative practices in their own classrooms, and advocated for increased alignment across the school. As they did so, they

enacted professionalism by exercising autonomy in alignment with both their colleagues'

priorities and the school's mission.

For instance, Douglas used his expertise to share new ideas and practices with his

colleagues through both informal conversation and through presentations at professional

development sessions. Luz explained how Douglas had helped her become more comfortable

using technology to communicate with students' parents. I observed Luz taking photos of

students while they worked on writing projects. She told me that, in addition to regular email

correspondence and a class website, she used her phone to send photos of students to their

parents in real time during the school day. When Luz's coach, Evan, learned about Luz's new

practices, he began encouraging other teachers across the school to take up the practice as well.

In this way, Douglas's autonomous practice with technology led to school-wide alignment in the

way teachers connected with students' parents. Notably, Evan never mandated that teachers

adopt new communications through technology. Instead, he worked with teachers to identify

how they might use some of their colleagues' ideas to improve their own practice.

Wellspring's administration supported teachers' autonomy, particularly when teachers

proposed trying new practices that aligned with the school's priorities. Annie exercised her

autonomy by building a new curriculum for her Chemistry class with the support of her coach.

She called it "an experiment in itself" and marveled at the tangible support she received to

achieve her goal of an inquiry-driven curriculum. Similarly, Jonathan and Jacob worked together

to find a new middle school math curriculum. After significant research, they chose a program

that aligned with the skills and concepts they needed to teach and "just [felt] like a better fit for

us" (Jacob). They presented their choice to the administration, and the development office

applied for a grant to fund the new curriculum materials. Jonathan and Jacob appreciated the autonomy to choose a new curriculum, and described how the new curriculum allowed them to align the math content for fifth through eighth grades. In both of these instances, teachers used their autonomy to align their practice with Wellspring's own stated academic aims—student-driven learning, inquiry, active learning, and curricular alignment across grade level. The school's administrators celebrated these teachers' innovations, and the administration's concrete support, whether in the form of grant-writing or supportive coaching, helped encourage other teachers to emulate that innovative practice.

Wellspring administrators also built collaborative time into teachers' schedules, so that teachers could learn from one another's successes and collectively solve problems. At several PD sessions, the coaches would finish the formal instructional part of the session, and teachers would split into content or grade level teams to work on planning, assessments, or sharing practices. For instance, teachers spent most of their professional development time one Friday afternoon working with their grade level teams to support English learners across the curriculum. Teachers shared practices they had found to be successful, and worked to create assessments that would be fair to English learners. In this instance, teachers' collaborative work served to align their practices, even as teachers exercised autonomy by sharing the practices they had found useful. Teachers used their own expertise and experience to share successful practices, and implicitly worked to align teacher practices.

Teachers enthusiastically used their autonomy to align their own work with their colleagues' practice because they believed in the larger collective mission of the school. Teachers saw their work as closely aligned with the Wellspring model, such that they hesitated to

differentiate their own priorities from their school's priorities. As Jonathan noted, "the school's philosophy of movement and nutrition is part of me." Similarly, with regard to Wellspring's emphasis on wellness and social-emotional learning, Douglas said, "All the stuff that Wellspring does, I was already doing." When visitors observed Douglas's classroom, "the question they always ask me is, 'Is this a Wellspring thing? Or is this a you thing?' And I say, 'Oh, it's both!'" Douglas saw his approach to teaching as simultaneously highly individual, and also deeply embedded in the school's mission. He credited the school's emphasis on autonomy for making that possible. In this way, teachers viewed "buying into" the school's mission as compatible with their own autonomous practice.

Teachers willingly aligned their own practice to collectively constructed school-wide norms of best practice. Because teachers bought into the school's mission and vision, and had the opportunity to innovate within that model, teachers gladly worked to ensure that they, and their colleagues, aligned their practice with the school's larger vision. Wellspring teachers also had the opportunity to build and alter school-wide teacher practices within the larger framework of Wellspring's mission. Thus, Wellspring teachers did not simply work within the structures of Wellspring's mission, but also worked to continually adjust, question, and rethink how their practice could support that mission. This led teachers to feel a sense of ownership and empowerment over the school's success, over the content and methods for teaching, and over teachers' collective sense of best practices.

Alignment as a threat to autonomy. Even as these teachers expressed appreciation for their autonomy, and used their autonomy to collaborate toward consistent practices among teachers, some teachers still worried about whether the administration should take a larger role in

ensuring curricular alignment. Douglas and Kathryn both talked about certain "non-negotiables" that teachers should incorporate into their practice. As Douglas described, "I think that getting everyone on the same foundation so that everyone can build their own houses—or their own classrooms—but it needs to have that strong foundation." While Douglas talked about "non-negotiable" use of language and content objectives, Kathryn talked about "non-negotiable" use of differentiation and the workshop model. Both teachers discussed these ideas with their colleagues and coaches to advocate for school-wide alignment, even as other teachers prioritized different practices. In this way, teacher advocacy contributed to the flexibility in Wellspring's autonomy-alignment equilibrium. Some ideas teachers advocated gained traction among their colleagues and administrators, while others did not. Teachers sought and found new ideas for practice, or held fast to practices that worked well for them previously, and shifted Wellspring's equilibrium as they implemented and shared their ideas and practices. In this way, teachers collaborated to enforce agreed-upon notions of best practice among their colleagues and administrators.

Some teachers described a change in their attitude toward autonomy as a result of the board's increasing concerns over student test scores. As Janice described,

> the great thing about working here—it's a good and a bad—is we get to choose our own teaching curriculum, we're really autonomous, we can teach to the child, not to the test. But we're noticing now, that the autonomy that we have needs to be tightened a little more because we're hearing a message that our data isn't where we want it to be.

Concerns over stagnant test scores, in particular, led some teachers to ask how much autonomy was appropriate. Kathryn noted, "I think Wellspring's taken [teacher autonomy] a little too far in some ways, to mean you can teach whatever you want, and I think we're seeing the repercussions of that." Kathryn, who had been teaching at Wellspring for several years, disliked

some of the curricular changes her colleagues had made in recent years, and worried that those practices had caused Wellspring's recent struggle with test scores.

Other teachers expressed skepticism about the board's focus on test scores, and, as noted in chapter five, voiced their concerns. Annie, Jonathan, and Douglas described an emotional staff meeting in which Douglas and others expressed their concerns over the board's intervention in school level practices. Teachers worried that their jobs might be in jeopardy over students' test scores, and advocated for prioritizing the school's mission over a single year's test scores. They not only sought to preserve the school's focus on social-emotional learning and wellness, but they also sought to protect teachers' autonomous practice. In this way, teachers advocated from a perspective of authority—they were used to having autonomy and control over their work based on their educational expertise.

For instance, Jonathan questioned the board's justification for making unilateral decisions:

> I know the board has their heart set on seeing Wellspring do well. I don't think they're approaching it in a correct manner because first of all, they're making decisions without teacher input… I wouldn't necessarily go to one of the board member's companies and be like, 'I know how to run a marketing department. Here are my ideas. Go.' And have those, my decisions about marketing, actually be implemented. That would be stupid.

Jonathan questioned the board's expertise, and by extension their authority to make decisions about educational practice. His, and his colleagues', professional experience had included distinct authority to make decisions, and teachers understood that authority to rest on their expertise as professionals. Teachers had therefore come to expect a certain amount of control over their practice and a voice in school-level alignment. They had grown accustomed to exercising their professionalism by collaborating to maintain and enforce agreed-upon standards

for their practice. When the board threatened that autonomy, Wellspring's autonomy-alignment equilibrium was disrupted by external demands on teacher practice, but teachers continued to advocate for their own visions of school-wide success, in line with the school's stated mission and vision.

Wellspring teachers experienced a shift in their professional power over the course of my data collection. They initially had the power to enact professionalism by using their autonomy to tip the balance on aligned practice—they advocated, collaborated, and experimented in order to make adjustments to the school's standards for best practice. In doing so, they simultaneously impacted school-level norms for best practice, while also disciplining themselves and their colleagues to those norms. However, the board's new demands on their practice led teachers to worry about whether their control was being threatened. Teachers agreed that their goals should include raising students' test scores, but the more restrictive, top-down measures the board implemented raised questions about the kind of control teachers would have over their practice. Even though the board threatened teachers' existing sense of professionalism by implementing top-down directives, Wellspring's norms of teacher voice and agency led teachers to openly advocate for their priorities, and justify their advocacy by focusing on Wellspring's mission.

Nexus: "Playing the game" to navigate and resist school policy

Nexus teachers found themselves working within structures that de-valued professional teaching, but they also found spaces for resistance and autonomy. Teachers found their work monitored and regulated into a specific version of best practice. Coaches monitored teachers' lesson plans to ensure that they included specific requirements, including "do nows," exit slips, college-readiness standards, Nexus's own set of standards, coaches' suggested changes to

practice, and new strategies from PD. Administrators monitored teacher practice through unexpected short observations, as well as prearranged school-wide evaluations including short classroom observations with extensive rubrics in hand. Observers noted, among other things, whether teachers posted daily objectives, the state of students' uniforms, student behavior and engagement, teachers' management strategies, whether student work was posted on the walls, and the type of questions teachers and students asked. Teachers' work was also evaluated based on student outcomes. In this way, teachers worked under a combination of micro-managed conditions, which, in theory, would tightly control both the inputs and outputs of their work. Teachers found ways to navigate these strictures with varying levels of success: some found space to exercise limited autonomy by meeting surface-level expectations, a few negotiated requirements with administrators, and many remained frustrated with mandates and oversight.

Claiming autonomy through strategic compliance. In order to find spaces for autonomy, teachers often complied with the mandates they thought were most important to their administration. For Monica, "I really do the college readiness standards stuff because that's what they care about. So it's kind of like, I know how to play the game. I know if I do that, and I have good data, then they're not going to care about me fixing all these little things in my lesson plans. It's like a survival tactic." While strategic compliance was a survival tactic for Monica, Russell was able to "play the game" in a way that afforded him more autonomy. He said, "I make gestures to fulfill certain criteria, which then [I] don't really fulfill." For him, that meant including standards in his lesson plans, which he enacted as he saw fit. Certain Nexus requirements, like submitting lesson plans, allowed teachers to de-couple their actual practice from the administration's oversight. By appearing to align with the school's priorities through

written lesson plans, teachers could adjust their practice to fit their own priorities. Even though teachers at Nexus were heavily monitored, some were still able to extract a pale version of the loosely coupled systems common among previous generations of educators (Weick, 1976).

Other teachers created their own autonomy by strategically choosing which mandates to follow, and which to ignore. Teri described her experience with Nexus oversight: "[It's] like, rigid, rigid structure. And it was a lot… I just kind of learned to tell myself, look, it's just not all going to get done. And I have to be OK with that." Monica similarly learned to accept her inability to meet all of the administration's expectations. She expressed her frustration, "I'm never meeting my expectations, and I can't meet the expectations of the administration either because there's so many things they want me to do. So I feel like I'm being set up for failure." When asked how she responded to that feeling, Monica said, "I just let it go. And just do what I can to get through." In order to survive at Nexus, teachers including Teri, Monica, Olivia, and Nicole found that they had to "let go" of completing everything that was asked of them. Some teachers received lower scores on evaluations because of tasks they did not complete. Others tactically chose which tasks they could ignore while remaining in the administration's good graces.

Teachers occasionally discussed which tasks they could ignore in order to gain reassurance that there would not be repercussions. Four teachers, Nicole, Monica, Charlotte, and Amy, ate lunch together in Amy's classroom (the other teachers' rooms were occupied with other classes) and discussed a mandated quarterly project for the character education course they all taught. Amy asked whether the other teachers had submitted their projects yet. Charlotte asked, "Is anyone going to look and see if we've done it?" The other teachers agreed that no one

was going to check whether they'd posted the project. Amy responded, "OK, I'm not going to do it then—maybe next semester. I feel like that's what you need to do to stay sane." She turned to me and explained that, in order to "stay sane," teachers needed to ignore those requirements that the administration would not check. The teachers went on to discuss that they did not find the project useful, and that it seemed like "busy work" for both themselves and the students. One teacher suggested that they might brainstorm a way to make the projects more meaningful for the students. This instance illustrated not only teachers' strategic compliance choices, but also the way teachers created space for autonomous decision-making and meaningful collaboration within a tightly managed structure.

Teachers also did this individually by choosing how to prioritize their many tasks. For instance, Teri chose to focus on her data first, because she understood that as the network's number one concern. Then, she prioritized time spent on her lesson plans, focusing on the course she was teaching for the first time, and quickly filling out plans for the courses she'd previously taught. As she stated, "I think you just need to get in line with whatever the administration thinks, and then whatever you think after that… what that means is that you've got assessments that you have to do. And after that, you've got stuff that you want to do, which is the content." As a science teacher, she knew the network wanted her to prioritize skills tested on the ACT. Then, she could address her priority: science content.

For Olivia—in her eleventh year teaching, and her seventh in the Nexus network— meeting with coaches served as an opportunity to negotiate. She described telling her coach:

> You have set the expectation that students need to do A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. They are not going to be able to do A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. You're telling me that I still have to require them to do it. I've asked you, 'How do you suggest that happen?' Your suggestion is not one that I think I can do… I understand if I don't meet that expectation,

a consequence has to happen. And I receive it. Because… I don't know how to humanly make this happen.

Olivia felt comfortable explaining to her coach what she could reasonably accomplish with her students. In some cases, she knew that she might receive a lower score on her evaluation, but she accepted that lower rating because she thought it was impossible for her to do otherwise. She had come to peace with not meeting her coach's expectations, and found herself walking a fine line between following administrator mandates and doing what she thought was best for her students.

As these instances illustrate, teachers strategically chose when to comply with Nexus mandates. They understood the school structures well enough to know which aspects of their performance would be directly monitored, and which were most prized by the administration. By strategically complying with Nexus's mandates, teachers created space for the kind of teaching they valued—including integrating standards into more holistic practice, collaborating on character education projects, and focusing on disciplinary content outside of the standards.

Gaining trust through performance. Christopher, the principal, described the way in which some teachers would come to experience increased autonomy at Nexus. When I asked him how he would communicate respect for an ideal teacher, he responded, "First I'd want to give them autonomy to make decisions that they see as best instructionally." He went on to describe a math teacher, Andrew, whose students had the highest math scores in the network. Andrew had not been regularly posting his lesson plans, and his coach was concerned. Christopher advised Andrew's coach, "don't ride him on the plans." Andrew had proven himself as an expert teacher through his students' high test scores. Christopher stated, "The professional respect for him there, is giving him the autonomy to run his class as he sees fit, and if he's producing results, why micromanage process?" Teachers who produced high student test scores, or performed well

during observations, would be granted more autonomy. In other words, professional freedom from oversight was contingent upon performance.

Russell recounted a similar instance early in the school year when Christopher, the principal, came into his classroom for a brief unexpected observation. Russell described how he was teaching an "ambitious" lesson in which students engaged in a logic exercise to build arguments. Christopher was impressed with the lesson and the students' work. Russell indicated that it was lucky Christopher happened to come in during that period, and witness that group of students, because they were his only class that could "handle" that particularly rigorous lesson. That brief instance of monitoring resulted in increased autonomy for Russell, as the administration came to trust the quality of his teaching. This was the last time Russell saw Christopher in his classroom.

Teachers could earn professional respect and autonomy to varying degrees, based on their performance: Russell earned some autonomy by teaching a rigorous lesson during an observation, and Andrew earned significant autonomy by consistently producing high student test scores. Christopher did not tell Andrew he was no longer required to submit lesson plans; Andrew stopped submitting lesson plans and the administration chose to ignore it. Christopher saw himself as granting Andrew autonomy for producing results, but Andrew secured his own autonomy by ignoring the mandate to post lesson plans. Teacher autonomy was contingent on observed performance or measurable results, and successful teachers found autonomy when they strategically chose when and how to follow Nexus mandates.

Claiming professionalism by advocating for change. Teachers used their knowledge of the administration's main concerns to not only prioritize their work, but also to negotiate for

more control over their practice. Nicole recalled the beginning of the year, when teachers were required to meet together during their prep periods several times per week. Teachers talked together about how overwhelmed they felt, and worried about whether more teachers would quit throughout the school year due to overwork. Nicole's grade level team came together and discussed how they might advocate for themselves effectively. They agreed, "Christopher loves data. We need to make a chart or something. We're going to show him how many minutes we have to ourselves, and what we're doing [with that time]." Nicole's grade level chair, Emma, brought the chart to Christopher, who responded by granting teachers more control over their planning time.

While teachers still felt that they had an overwhelming workload, they were happy to know that they had voiced their concerns, and that the administration responded by granting their request. In some ways, this can be seen as teachers openly advocating for their own professionalism, and convincing the administration that they needed more control over how they spent their time. On the other hand, some teachers interpreted this instance as the administration realizing that teachers did not have enough time to comply with all of the school's and network's mandates. From this perspective, the instance was simply a negotiation for more time to complete required tasks. Regardless of their perspective, teachers saw this instance as a success, and as evidence that the administration would respond to teachers' concerns.

In this way, teachers found various ways to assert their own professionalism, even within the context of school-level policy that constrained their practice. Teachers worked to earn more autonomy in their practice, implemented strategic non-compliance with school policies, or openly advocated for change. While teachers implemented these strategies to varying degrees,

teachers who successfully used all or some of these strategies expressed more satisfaction with their level of autonomy. At the same time, the administration's attempts to control teacher practice, and its de facto emphasis on student test scores, shaped teachers' conceptions of professionalism. Even though Nexus maintained power over much of teacher practice, and even shaped teacher conceptions of best practice, teachers worked to reclaim spaces of autonomous practice.

Teachers were able to carve out space for professional practice by navigating and resisting rigid management structures. The administration implicitly granted varying degrees of autonomy to teachers who produced "good data," who fulfilled requirements in their written plans and grading, and who performed in ways that aligned with rubric requirements during classroom observations. By differentially rewarding teachers with professional treatment, administrators worked to align teacher practice to "the official" version of best practice. Autonomy served as both a reward and a disciplinary mechanism intended to ensure that teachers adhered to the administration's definitions of good teaching. In this way, teachers were not only micromanaged through direct oversight and held accountable for student outcomes, but they were also persuaded to follow Nexus's narrow vision of best practice.

By offering professional treatment as a reward for compliance, Nexus administrators encouraged teachers to understand professional teaching as encompassing Nexus's priorities— professional teachers took responsibility for student growth, as measured by standardized tests. When teachers found that this mindset could not change students' realities, could not change the time they had to complete tasks, and would not mesh with their previously held beliefs and ideas about good teaching, teachers experienced a disconnect that made them question themselves as

good teachers, and made them question their ability to persist in the profession. Those teachers who were able to carve out space for autonomous practice walked a fine line by complying with rigid requirements, while exerting their expertise in negotiated or subversive spaces.

Implications and conclusions

Both Wellspring and Nexus teachers enacted professionalism by claiming autonomy—in their authority over teaching practice and their control over definitions of professional teaching. Wellspring teachers claimed autonomy by aligning their ideas and practices to both the school's mission and prevailing ideas about best practice. When their board of directors threatened their professionalism by making unilateral decisions without teacher input, teachers resisted the board's measures by appealing to alignment with the school's mission. At Nexus, however, teachers struggled to gain autonomy within the context of the school's managerial accountability practices. In order to gain some control over their work, teachers strategically complied with mandates, negotiated with administrators to change policies, and claimed autonomy in exchange for strong performance. Nexus teachers worked to claim disconnected, and often covert, forms of autonomy, and their autonomous work remained relatively fragmented and disconnected from their colleagues. In contrast, Wellspring teachers' autonomy was overt, purposeful, and collaborative. As teachers at both schools worked to claim autonomy, and enact professionalism, they also worked to claim self-governance.

Implications of "buying in" at Wellspring. At Wellspring, community accountability facilitated teachers' ability to self-govern and collaboratively construct teachers' norms for best practice within the school. Their collaborative practices align with Little's (1990) conception of collective autonomy. She argues, "By involving teachers more closely with one another, schools

are presumably in a better position to make use of teachers' practical knowledge and to accord proper status to teachers as knowledgeable professionals" (p. 525). Teachers at Wellspring used their autonomy to discipline themselves and their colleagues to understandings of best practice learned in their master's programs and professional development sessions, and they also aligned their practice and their priorities to the school's mission and vision. At the same time, teachers engaged in co-constructing definitions of best practice, as they questioned, revised, and worked to improve their practice. In this way, Wellspring's teacher autonomy explains the way autonomous teachers come to align their own priorities and practices with those determined by the school's administration. This is not simply a covert form of domination in which teachers come to align with administrative-driven priorities. Rather, teachers and administrators engaged in continual collaboration toward improved teaching, which led to changes in teachers' practice and adjustments to definitions of best practice. Teachers worked to align their mindsets and practices to prevailing notions of good teaching, even as they helped to adjust and shift those notions according to their own ideas of professionalism.

Indeed, Wellspring teachers had become so committed to the ideas embedded in the school culture that they used those ideas to resist top-down decisions from the board of directors. Teachers' faith in the school mission gave them a vehicle through which to resist the board's decisions. By using the school's own priorities to resist the board's decisions, teachers placed themselves in a position of power because board members could not reasonably reject the school's mission. Because Wellspring's school mission was not simply a top-down statement of what the school should do, but rather permeated the school's culture and teachers' individual professional identities, the mission helped to strengthen and preserve teachers' autonomy and

authority over school level practices. The symbiotic relationship between teachers who valued continual self-improvement, health and wellness, and social-emotional learning, and a school administration that sought and supported those traits, served to build a self-sustaining culture around the school's mission. This culture also provided teachers with the autonomy to change their own practice, and influence their colleagues' mindsets and practices, within the framework of the school's mission.

Implications of "playing the game" at Nexus. However, Nexus teachers found their practice constrained, such that they needed to struggle to obtain limited autonomy. Teachers often claimed autonomy in covert ways, making it less likely that teachers could openly discuss their autonomous teaching practices with colleagues in ways that helped propel their professionalism. Wellspring teachers occasionally shared mechanisms for resisting top-down mandates, but had little opportunity to collaboratively build definitions of best practice or professionalism. Unlike Wellspring teachers, Nexus teachers needed to carve out space for their own autonomy by advocating for changes to policies and practices, strategically complying with mandates, and gaining administrators' trust through performance. As they did so, Nexus teachers struggled to gain control over their own practice, effectively advocating for the right to self-govern. In this way, Nexus teachers sought to participate in neoliberal professional self-governance, but the managerial practices of Nexus administrators conflicted with those aims. This case provides insight into the way actors within a neoliberal policy structure struggle when they are also controlled through managerial oversight. Nexus administrators' use of mandated practice (controlling the inputs of teaching) and accountable outcomes (student achievement as measured by standardized tests) created a stifling managerial environment. Yet teachers also

sought to self-govern their work according to prevailing norms of best practice. Nexus teachers'
priorities therefore often misaligned with the mandates school administrators enforced.

In this way, Nexus's managerial accountability was complicated by teachers' desires to
hold themselves to their own standards. As Nexus administrators sought to tightly control teacher
practice, teachers sometimes found ways to enact their own priorities. The tight controls that
Nexus placed over teachers' practice failed to entirely shape the way teachers thought about their
work. Even though teachers defined professionalism through teacher and student growth, they
maintained a more nuanced view of what growth looked like—and how to measure it—than the
administration's more concrete focus on standardized tests. Moreover, they found ways to enact
those slightly different priorities, even in the context of managerial practices that tightly
controlled their work.

Implications for school-level differences in teacher autonomy. Whereas Wellspring's
mission was an intrinsic part of individual teachers, Nexus's priorities served as a lens through
which teachers viewed their work. Nexus teachers understood their own, and their students',
growth through scores on standardized tests. They worked to produce lesson plans and
assessments that would meet the administration's requirements. However, teachers did not fully
adopt administrator-driven priorities as part of their own personal views on professional
teaching. Nexus teachers, while aiming to work successfully within the structures Nexus
administrators provided, did not embrace Nexus's priorities in the same way that Wellspring
teachers embodied their school's mission. Teachers, therefore, used their varied autonomy to
either act in accordance with a mission they embraced, or in opposition to mandates they
resented.

The reasons for this difference could be complex—Wellspring teachers were more likely to seek a position at a school with a mission like Wellspring's, Wellspring's mission may fall in line with most teachers' priorities generally, and Wellspring was likely to hire teachers who already believed in their mission. In this way, teachers and administrators at Wellspring may have been predisposed to align their beliefs according to the school's mission, while also valuing autonomy. However, the circumstances and culture created by Wellspring's community accountability also led to conditions in which teachers were likely to work collaboratively toward school-wide best practices. Wellspring administrators built a mission that teachers wanted to buy into, but also enacted that mission in such a way that teachers used their autonomy to move the school closer to realizing collectively defined aims. As teachers chose to remain at Wellspring, collective aims persisted in the school's culture.

Meanwhile, Nexus's cyclical hiring practices would fail to produce the kind of self-sustaining school culture in which teachers self-enforce the mission. Nexus administrators therefore imposed managerial oversight, aiming to control teachers' practices in line with the school's priorities. Even as they did so, teachers continued to carve out space for autonomous practice that may not have fit within the confines of Nexus administrators' aims. In this way, it seems that—even though Wellspring teachers had more control over classroom and school practices—Nexus administrators were ultimately less successful in maintaining the school culture they envisioned. By embedding teacher autonomy (and self-governance) into the school's mission and practice, Wellspring administrators created space for teachers to both act autonomously and co-construct a relatively unified school vision for best practice.

As teachers enact professionalism, they may do so in opposition to administrator-driven policies, or in support of improving those policies. At both schools, teachers enacted professionalism in ways that aligned with their own ideas about professionalism, but they either worked to resist or support the school's mission according to how much autonomy they were explicitly granted. When Wellspring teachers were encouraged to experiment, improve, and innovate in their teaching, they did so in accordance with the school mission. However, when Nexus teachers were expected to align practice to rigid standards, they found space to actively resist those expectations and enact professional practice in line with their own ideas for good teaching.

This is not simply the difference between schools operating under circumstances that fit different theoretical perspectives: one school operating under managerial constraints, with teachers decoupling their practice from administrator expectations, while the other operates under neoliberal self-governance. Rather, both managerialism and self-governance help explain the contexts in which teachers at both schools worked, and the ways they responded to impositions on their practice. Teachers at both schools had a desire for self-governance, and sought to align their practice to their own definitions of professionalism. At the same time, teachers resisted top-down impositions on their practice. While Wellspring teachers sought to align their practice with collaboratively established ideas, Nexus teachers relied on informal collaboration with colleagues and their various backgrounds and teacher training. In this way, Nexus's tightly controlled model may produce tacitly differentiated teacher practice, while Wellspring's policies exposed teachers' differences in practice and encouraged deliberation over

best practices. The end result may be collaboratively agreed-upon priorities at Wellspring,

alongside unaddressed disagreement in best practice at Nexus.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Professional teaching in a neoliberal context

When Al Shanker envisioned charter schools in the late eighties, he described schools in which teachers would have the autonomy to experiment, innovate, and improve their practice in order to create better schooling experiences for students. Nearly thirty years later, the autonomy built into the charter school model falls not on teachers, but on school and network level administrators, who in turn determine the extent to which teachers experience autonomous practice. Administrators have the power to support or constrain teacher autonomy, and they do so within the context of pressure for schools to produce results—to compete with other schools, to receive strong ratings on district accountability metrics, and to meet the requirements of their charter. In other words, school administrators grant differing levels of autonomy to teachers within the context of market-based accountability pressure. As school level administrators experience this pressure, teachers' autonomy to enact professionalism as they see fit rests on administrators' decisions about how to respond to external pressure. The way in which school administrators respond to accountability pressure frames the way teachers define, experience, and enact professionalism.

This chapter describes implications for this study's findings about teacher professionalism. First it explores implications related to the future of teaching as a profession,

then it discusses implications related to charter school policy, and finally it presents implications related to governmentality theory. Each section also makes suggestions for future research.

Implications for teacher professionalism

This study holds implications for the future of teaching as a profession, particularly as charter schools become increasingly common. The proliferation of charter schools occurs alongside the decentralization of teacher policy—charter schools generally avoid traditional sliding pay scales based on years experience and credentials, abandon teacher tenure, and hire fewer credentialed teachers than traditional public schools (Hoxby, 2002; The Ohio Collaborative, 2005; Fabricant & Fine, 2012). Such teacher policies are traditionally determined through negotiations between district administrators and teachers' unions. Charter schools break with these policies, at times making teacher policy decisions without input from teachers or their unions (Malloy & Wohlstetter, 2003). Charter school administrators or networks have the autonomy to determine policies around teacher hiring, retention, evaluation, and accountability. Whether or not teachers have a voice in such policies is determined at the school or network level, and contributes to the degree to which teachers experience professionalism.

Teachers, who under traditional district-run schools could expect similar teacher policies across schools, end up experiencing different policies according to the school where they work. As shown by the differences between Nexus and Wellspring, policy differences also lead to different experiences of professionalism. Even though charter school teachers define professionalism by teacher and student growth, teachers also rely on support to enact their professionalism as they see fit. Without the opportunities to enact professionalism, their ability to work in accordance with their ideas of professionalism is constrained. Moreover, different school

policies either facilitate or constrain teachers' ability to determine school-wide policies and practices. The professional status of teaching has long been considered uncertain (Lortie, 2002), but as charter schools proliferate, the future of teaching as a profession seems to be not only uncertain, but also unequal. Charter school teachers experience different kinds of authority over their work across different charter schools, leading to unequal professional treatment across school context.

Different experiences with teacher professionalism not only affect teachers themselves, but also impact their students. This study holds implications for equity among schools—when teachers experience professionalism differently, their students necessarily have different schooling experiences. According to Hirsch and Emerick (2006), students have better learning experiences when teachers are treated professionally, and have a voice in determining school level policies and practices. Previous studies have also linked school policies that result in inexperienced teachers, high rates of attrition, and poor working conditions to schools serving low-income students of color (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005). School hiring policies that result in inexperienced teachers and high rates of teacher attrition, like those at Nexus, contributed to constrained professionalism. Previous studies may suggest that they also contribute to less rich educational experiences for low-income students (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005; Hirsch & Emerick, 2006). While this dissertation is not posed to make generalizations about teachers' professionalism across schools serving different student populations, this issue is worth studying further. I suggest research that compares students' classroom experiences when their teachers' professionalism is either supported or constrained through strict managerial oversight. While

many studies aimed at exposing inequities focus on student achievement, it would be useful to explore the way teachers with unequal professional status impact students' access to rigorous curricula as well as social-emotional supports.

This study's findings indicate that some of the variation in charter school teachers' experiences with professionalism also relates to the extent to which their schools rely on alternative certification programs like Teach for America (TFA). At Nexus, the high number of TFA teachers exemplified administrators' assumptions regarding teacher retention. Nexus administrators hired TFA teachers, who are expected to teach for two years, because they assumed that most teachers would leave urban teaching quickly anyway. However, when administrators assumed high teacher attrition, and responded by hiring TFA teachers for two-year stints, they contributed to the "revolving-door" urban teacher phenomenon (Ingersoll, 2001). The two TFA teachers in my sample, Russell and Joshua, rejected the idea that they could be professionals *because* they had little training or teaching experience. It would follow that, in hiring a significant number of TFA teachers (and, more generally, building structures that anticipated teacher attrition), Nexus administrators undermined professionalism in its teachers.

Many charter schools have deep ties to TFA, with TFA alumni serving as charter management organization founders or senior staff (Kretchmar, Sondel & Ferrare, 2014), and these schools and networks rely on TFA teachers for their staffing needs. As noted in chapter one, charter schools tend to have higher rates of teacher turnover than traditional public schools (Renzulli et al., 2011). High teacher turnover, particularly when paired with minimal teacher training, places teachers with limited teaching expertise in classrooms (Darling-Hammond, 2002), encourages teachers to leave their jobs before gaining significant teaching experience, and

prevents teachers from maintaining control over the profession. This dissertation addresses issues related to TFA and professionalism tangentially, as it has sought to understand teacher professionalism in charter schools. However, with only two focus teachers who participated in TFA, the conclusions this study can make about TFA and professionalism are limited. I recommend further research looking into the relationship between charter schools that hire significant numbers of TFA teachers and their administrators' policies and practices around teacher professionalism. This study notes a significant difference in the way Wellspring and Nexus (respectively, an independent and highly networked school) had administrators with different approaches to constraining or supporting teacher professionalism. It would be prudent to further understand whether that difference tends to align with administrators' attitudes toward teacher attrition and TFA hiring. While Nexus administrators implemented managerial policies that constrained professionalism, and also relied on TFA teachers, it is important to understand whether this correlation persists across schools that rely on TFA teachers.

As charter school and network administrators used their autonomy to employ teachers with varying levels of expertise, and enact policies that constrain or support teacher professionalism, they contributed to different experiences with teacher professionalism across school context. Charter school administrators have the power to frame teachers' professional experiences. In doing so, they help to create a fragmented and differentiated field of professional teachers. This study provides insight into the charter school policies and practices that frame the way teachers define, experience, and enact professionalism. School level policies and practices, in turn, were shaped by administrators' responses to external accountability pressures. I recommend further research that delves into the processes and motivations that lead charter

school and network administrators to implement structures, policies, and practices that frame teachers' experiences in different ways.

Implications for policy

Not only does this study hold implications for teacher professionalism in practice, but it also holds implications for understanding how charter school policy itself contributes to, or constrains, teacher professionalism. As administrators responded to accountability pressures from charter authorizers, city accountability ratings, and competition with other schools, they created structures and practices that either supported or constrained teachers' work. Administrators enacted these structures in different ways, and supported or constrained professionalism in their schools. However, external accountability pressure led groups at both schools to seek tighter control over teaching and learning. While Nexus and Wellspring maintained very different experiences with teacher professionalism, external pressure and accountability led administrators at both schools to seek tighter managerial controls. As pressure to produce measurably strong student achievement weighs on network and school administrators, and they respond by implementing stricter control over teachers' work, it could lead to constrained professionalism across charter school contexts.

Nexus's school level administrators—and particularly its network level administrators—implemented tight control over teachers' work in an effort to improve students' test scores and build a positive reputation in the community. Network administrators at Nexus included a chief education officer, a chief executive officer, a chief operating officer, and other network level directors whose positions mimic titles in the business world. It was one of these administrators who told Nexus teachers that the network did not value teacher retention, as described in chapter

four. At Wellspring, the board of directors (made up of leaders from the business community) responded to external accountability pressure by seeking greater control over teachers' work and school level policies. Both schools had a board of directors or upper level management that mimic for-profit organizations' structures. At both schools, people in these positions implemented tighter controls over school wide policies and teacher practices in order to improve the school's scores on standardized tests and evaluations.

These upper-level managers and board members sought to keep their schools solvent—they managed finances, but also managed the economics of participating in Chicago's educational market. They worked to produce good scores on CPS's rating system, to maintain positive results on school climate surveys, to meet charter requirements, and to build strong reputations among the community. Each of these goals served to help the schools compete in Chicago's educational market by attracting students and families. Upper-level managers' and board members' actions align, to an extent, with theory about how schools in market-based systems would work toward improvement in order to compete to attract students and maintain full enrollment (Friedman, 1955; Chubb & Moe, 1990). Notably, the people who help Wellspring and Nexus compete at the market level are either in roles associated with business, or are people whose expertise is in business.

Upper-level managers and board members served as conduits between the school organization and district level market and accountability structures. They passed the pressure to produce results onto school level administrators, who determined school policies and practices accordingly. It was not the purpose of this study to describe the mechanisms by which upper-level managers and board members came to influence school level policy, but it became clear

that those mechanisms differed between the two school sites. Ultimately, the way upper-level managers and board members influenced school level policy mattered for teacher professionalism, as two schools responding to the same pressures ended up with vastly different professional climates. Nexus's principal and teachers described policies and mandates that originated with network-level administrators. While Wellspring's board did not have control over such mandates, they had the power to change school-level administrators when they were dissatisfied with school level policies and practices. Both upper-level managers at Nexus and board members at Wellspring therefore had significant influence, either directly or indirectly, over teacher practice. However, Wellspring teachers' experiences with professional autonomy led them to actively resist board members' intrusions. At the same time, Nexus teachers covertly worked to assert their own professional autonomy.

Even though Nexus and Wellspring had significantly different school cultures and teacher experiences, both schools employed people who worked toward the same goals: of making the school competitive by increasing scores on district ratings. In this way, it seems that upper-level administrators and board members served to align charter schools' goals with accountability mandates, and ensured that different schools (which may have begun with different priorities and perspectives on teaching and learning) reached the identical aim of improving measurable outcomes. As noted in chapter four, market level pressure to produce test scores seemed to prod schools toward implementing increasingly managerial styles of accountability. Upper-level administrators and board members—people with backgrounds or positions focused on business—may contribute to creating increasingly managerial teacher working conditions, and reducing teacher voice in decision-making in an effort to meet

accountability standards and compete with other schools. These findings align with, and build on, previous research on the role of Management Organizations and charter schools (Bulkley, 2005; Torres, 2014b). While Management Organizations stifle teacher autonomy and voice (Bulkley, 2005), this study adds that other forms of upper-level management may serve similar purposes. More research is needed in order to understand whether this is the case. I recommend further research into the function of upper-level administrators, managers, or board members among different charter schools in order to better understand the role they play in determining school and classroom practices, and in determining the way teachers experience professionalism.

Charter school policy was not initially envisioned with this layer of administration existing between schools and their city or district contexts. Yet, in this study, these upper-level administrators seemed to have a significant role in funneling market-level accountability pressure onto schools and teachers. As upper-level managers and board members seek to improve their school according to external accountability metrics, they may also undermine the autonomy charter schools experience. When Nexus administrators used managerial oversight to control teacher practice, they did so with the goal of improving the school's achievement scores. If upper-level administrators and board members at other charter schools have similar goals, and similar business-oriented mindsets about improvement, schools like Wellspring could end up with more managerial policies. In effect, more schools would experience the constrained professionalism that frustrated so many Nexus teachers.

Implications regarding theory

This study also holds theoretical implications for the way scholars understand teacher professionalism, particularly as neoliberal policies extend their reach. A governmentality

perspective helps frame professional teachers as entrepreneurs of their own careers, as neoliberal subjects who prudently work to manage their futures. In this study, teachers' focus on continual professional growth aligns with the idea that teachers are entrepreneurial citizens who aspire to position themselves for successful careers and lives. At the same time, teachers also defined professionalism as rooted in student growth. In this way, teachers positioned themselves as tools to be used in service of their students' aspirations Teachers worked to help students continually improve academically. At Wellspring in particular, teachers sought to help students gain the nonacademic skills and mindsets that would help them engage in continual improvement both in and out of school. By focusing on growth, and seeking to pass that value on to their students, teachers in this study helped their students become entrepreneurial citizens. When teachers defined their professionalism in terms of both their own and their students' growth, they positioned themselves as both subjects of their own aspirational careers, and objects that would aid others in becoming entrepreneurial citizens.

Entrepreneurial citizens position themselves to prudentially protect themselves against future risk (Barry, Osborne & Rose, 1996; Peters, 2005). In order to do so, they aspire to continually improve themselves. Teachers in this study (especially Wellspring teachers) acted in this way, but their entrepreneurial selves served a larger purpose: to help their students grow into productive citizens. In this way, teachers governed their behavior in order to continually improve in service of others. They were responsible not only for their own futures, but also for their students' futures. Certainly, they maintained some focus on improving themselves for the sake of their own careers, but they viewed their own improvement in the context of unselfish goals. They

were driven not simply to protect and improve their own prospects, but also to improve others'

lives.

Many Wellspring teachers understood these dichotomous roles as unproblematic—they

were able to simultaneously work to improve their own lives and also work to be used by others

for their improvement. At Nexus, however, teachers felt limited in their ability to improve

themselves as they saw fit. Their ultimate goals surrounded students' academic improvement,

and they were only covertly able to focus on autonomously defined goals. While Wellspring

teachers were able to act as both subjects of their own lives (actively working toward self-

improvement and protecting themselves against risk) and objects of their students' lives

(allowing themselves to be used as tools that help students reach their aspirations) without

sacrificing either goal, Nexus teachers served more dominantly as objects of their students'

futures. Whether teachers' dichotomous roles are at odds, or whether they work comfortably in

concert, is not a question this study was poised to answer. More research is needed in order to

understand how teachers may be used as objects of students' futures, and the extent to which

teachers are positioned to sacrifice their own goals in order to serve their students, particularly

within the context of external pressure to produce results. Teachers' roles as objects for students'

use may undermine their role as entrepreneurial subjects of their own lives, and may re-frame the

way theorists understand teachers' professional roles.

This study also supports Brenner, Peck, and Theodore's (2010) theoretical arguments

about "variegated neoliberalization." Neoliberalism is not a static phenomenon encompassing all

organizations and people associated with neoliberal policy. In this study, neoliberalism operates

to varying extents as it works within multiple organizational layers. Charter school policy is

certainly rooted in neoliberal ideals, but the way Wellspring and Nexus operated revealed variation in the extent to which neoliberal ideals permeated network, school, and classroom operations. For instance, Nexus policies implemented strict managerial oversight. As Nexus administrators tightly controlled teachers' methods, processes, and practices, they partially rejected the neoliberal ideal of managing from a distance by accounting only for outcomes. While Nexus administrators maintained a focus on outcomes, they also micro-managed process. In this way, Nexus participated in a neoliberal policy context, and implemented both neoliberal and managerial administrative techniques. These findings exemplify neoliberalism as dynamic, variegated, and contextually situated.

"Variegated neoliberalization" (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010) helps explain the variation in teacher professionalism that this study finds across school contexts. As schools layer neoliberal policies with more direct oversight, they change the circumstances in which teachers define, experience, and enact professionalism. Moreover, network and school level administrators maintain the autonomy to implement various policies at the school level, which may or may not align with district, state, or national policies. For this reason, defining professionalism in a variegated neoliberal context is necessarily complex. As teachers work within different school structures, a neoliberal policy context, and complexly varied responses to that policy context, their experiences with teacher professionalism also vary. Conversely, if accountability policies lead school and network administrators to engage in managerial oversight, teachers may find themselves working within managerial contexts while also governing themselves according to neoliberal ideals. As they do so, variegated neoliberalization

may result in teachers being managed and controlled in a variety of deeply complex ways, even as they seek to assert their autonomous practice.

Conclusion

This study holds implications related to governmentality theory, to charter school policy, and to the future of teaching as a profession. The study finds that charter school teachers define, experience, and enact professionalism in ways that reflect school-level policies and practices. While charter teachers define professionalism by teacher and student growth, the school context frames the type of growth teachers envision, and supports or constrains teachers as they pursue their own and their students' growth. Teachers experience professionalism according to the way school administrators interpret and implement accountability policies. As teachers experience either community accountability or managerial accountability, they feel supported or constrained in determining classroom and school practices. Teachers also work to enact professionalism in response to their school contexts—either by supporting the school's stated mission and working to improve school-wide practices, or by carving out space for limited autonomy in tightly controlled circumstances. Even as teachers have varied experiences with professionalism according to their school contexts, market-based accountability levers encourage tighter control over teacher practice, and stand to limit the way teachers define, experience, and enact professionalism in the future.

APPENDIX A

SEMI-STRUCTURED OBSERVATION PROTOCOL,

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSION

Date: Location:

Session title:

Session leaders and positions:

Number of people in attendance:

Description of physical facility:

Description of people in attendance:

Teacher/leader roles in session:

Description of session activities and teacher engagement (Is there evidence of teacher control or input? Is there evidence of responsiveness to teacher needs/desires? Do teachers help lead the session? Do they actively participate? Do they display evidence of questioning, resisting, or supporting the session content or delivery?)

Summary/interpretation of teacher responses:

APPENDIX B

SEMI-STRUCTURED OBSERVATION PROTOCOL,

FACULTY MEETING

Date: Location:
Meeting type: Meeting leaders/titles:
Number of attendees:
Description of physical arrangement:

Description of proceedings:

Teacher engagement/role/leadership (Is there evidence of teacher control or input? Is there evidence of responsiveness to teacher needs/desires? Do teachers help lead the session? Do they actively participate? Do they display evidence of questioning, resisting, or supporting the session content or delivery?)

Approximate proportion of time talking
Leaders: Teachers:

Summary/interpretation of teacher responses.

APPENDIX C

TEACHER SURVEY

Your school is participating in a study on teacher professionalism in charter schools. The study is being conducted by Beth Wright, a doctoral candidate at Loyola University Chicago. If you have questions about the study or your participation in it, please contact Beth at bwright3@luc.edu. By selecting "yes" below, you are providing your consent to participate in this survey, as part of the study. There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study—you may even find it valuable to reflect on your teaching experience! All of your answers on this survey will remain anonymous. You may choose not to answer any question, and you may choose to stop taking the survey at any time. Completing the survey should only take about five minutes of your time. Are you willing to participate in this survey?

A. Yes

B. No

1. Counting this year, how many years have you been teaching? _____

2. Counting this year, how many years have you been teaching at this school? _____

3. What is your highest level of education?

    a. Some college

    b. Bachelor's Degree

    c. Some graduate work

    d. Master's Degree

    e. Doctoral Degree

4. Are you a certified teacher?

    a. Yes

    b. No

5. If so, how did you gain certification?

    a. I became certified through an alternative or accelerated certification program (i.e.,

       Teach for America, Chicago Teaching Fellows, AUSL)

b. I earned a bachelor's degree in education and certification was part of that

program

c. I earned a master's degree in education and certification was part of that program

d. Other (please explain) _____

6. Would you be willing to participate in interviews as part of this study?

a. Yes

b. No

7. Would you be willing to allow a researcher to observe your daily work as part of this

study?

a. Yes

b. No

8. If yes, please enter your name and email address _____

APPENDIX D

TEACHER INTERVIEW 1: SCHOOL CLIMATE,

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Script: Thanks for meeting with me today. For this interview, I am hoping to understand more about how you experience the professional climate at this school, and what that means for your work here as a teacher. I'll be asking you questions about the way school decisions are made, as well as about the relationships between faculty members. Feel free to refrain from answering any question or to stop the interview at any time. All of the things you tell me will remain anonymous.

1. Tell me about what made you want to teach at this particular school. Has the school lived up to those expectations for you? How would you describe the school as a work environment?

2. Tell me about your teaching: how do you determine what teaching methods you'll use? Where do you find teaching strategies?

3. How do you determine what to teach? What kind of curriculum guide do you use for the content you teach? How would you describe your role in determining the content you teach?

4. Please describe your relationship with other teachers in your department. How do your ideas about curriculum/teaching goals/practices align? Do your attitudes toward students generally line up? To what extent do other teachers share your beliefs and values about teaching?

5. What are your typical interactions with other teachers like? What kinds of things do you discuss?

6. Are you generally able to trust other teachers at your school? Tell me about an instance that made you feel you could/could not trust your colleagues.

7. Do you think teachers at this school share mutual respect for one another? Do they have confidence in one another's teaching expertise? How does that play out in their interactions?

8. What kind of (formal or informal) mentoring is available for new teachers at this school? How comfortable do teachers feel observing one another's teaching?

9. Do you think your school encourages teacher collaboration? What makes you think so? Are there any particular routines/structures in place that encourage collaboration?

10. Do you think your school encourages teachers' input on school-wide decisions? What makes you think so? Can you tell me about a time when you knew this was the case? Are there any structures in place that encourage teachers' voices being heard?

11. Tell me about your relationship with your principal. Do you think that is a typical teacher-principal relationship for this school?

12. Do you think the teachers share mutual respect with the administration? Does the administration have confidence in teachers' expertise? Do teachers have confidence in administrators' leadership? How do you see that playing out in their interactions?

13. Do you think this school encourages you to be innovative with your teaching? (How does it do so/why not?) Is there a culture that supports innovation/experimentation among teachers? Does the principal encourage innovative teaching? What kind of opportunities do teachers have to learn about new teaching methods/techniques?

14. Tell me about how decisions are made at this school. How is decision-making authority distributed among faculty, teachers, and administration? Can you tell me about a school-level decision that teachers had a role in? How did it play out? What kind of decisions to teachers have control over? (Curriculum/instruction? Hiring decisions? Discretionary spending? Student behavior policies?)

15. To what extent do you think teachers take responsibility for improving their own teaching? How do they show this?

16. To what extent do you think teachers take responsibility for improving the school? How do they show this?

17. Tell me about your school's leadership. Do teachers generally feel that they can rely on the principal? (What has the principal said or done to instill trust among teachers? / What has the principal said or done to make teachers mistrust him/her?)

18. Imagine that you have a persistent issue with a particular student. Who would you turn to for help?

19. Is there anything else you think I should know about your school's professional climate, how school and classroom decisions are made, or the relationships between faculty members?

APPENDIX E

TEACHER INTERVIEW 2: PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION,

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Script: Thank you for meeting with me today. Last time we talked about the climate at your school. Today, I am interested in understanding how you and your school define teacher professionalism, how that plays out, and what it means to you to be a professional educator. Just to clarify, I'm not talking about dressing or acting professionally. Instead, I'm interested in what it means to be a professional educator. Traditionally, being a professional has meant having expertise and the authority to make work-related decisions. I'm interested in how that might play out for you as a teacher in a charter school. Does it mean having a certain kind of expertise, or being treated in a particular way? As always, please feel free to refrain from answering any question or to stop the interview at any time. All of the things you tell me will remain anonymous.

1. Tell me what it means to you to be a professional teacher. Do you think being a professional educator is different at a charter school, compared to a neighborhood school? Why or why not?

2. What does being a professional mean for your relationship with your students? For your expectations of them?

3. What does being a professional teacher mean for your teaching goals?

4. What does it mean for your collaboration with colleagues? For your professional growth and development? For your commitment to teaching?

5. How do you think your teacher preparation contributed to your understanding of teacher professionalism?

6. How do your relationships with other educators contribute to your understanding of teacher professionalism? Other non-educators?

7. How do you think your own personal values and beliefs inform your understanding of teacher professionalism?

8. Do you think it is important to have professional connections outside of your school? What kind of out-of-school professional activities or connections do you engage with? (e.g., attend professional conferences, read publications, share ideas with teachers at other schools, blogs, social media, etc).

9. Do you think being a professional teacher means the same thing to your fellow teachers at this school?

10. What do you think being a good teacher means to your administration?

11. How do you think having these similar/different definitions among the faculty impacts the school? If you have differences, how do you reconcile those differences in your teaching practice and your interaction with other faculty?

12. Is there anything else you think I should know about what it means to be a professional educator?

APPENDIX F

TEACHER INTERVIEW 3: SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION,

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Script: Thanks for meeting with me again. Last time we talked, we spoke about your definition of teacher professionalism, and how you see that playing out in your work. Today, I am hoping to talk about you're the way your school supports your professionalism. As always, please feel free to refrain from answering any question or to stop the interview at any time. All of the things you tell me will remain anonymous.

1. Tell me about why you chose to work at this particular school. What led you to work at a charter school, rather than some other type of school?

2. What do you think an ideal school would do to foster professionalism among its teachers? How does this play out at your school?

2. What do you think teacher autonomy looks like? How does this play out for you at this school?

3. How do you know whether you are doing a good job? How does your administration know whether teachers are doing a good job?

4. Please tell me about the way teachers are evaluated at this school. How do you feel about this process? Is it fair? Would you change it in any way?

5. How is your school held accountable? (To whom?) How are teachers at this school held accountable? (To whom?)

6. Do you think your administration treats you like a professional? What makes you think that?

7. (If applicable) Do you think the CMO/charter network treats you like a professional? What makes you think that?

8. Do you think your students' parents see you as a professional? To what extent do you think they trust you to do a good job?

9. Is there anything else you think I should know about your definition of teacher professionalism or how it plays out at your school?

APPENDIX G

FOCUS TEACHER SHADOWING,

SEMI-STRUCTURED OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Date: Focus Teacher:

Location:

Schedule:

Time (Start/finish)	Activity Description: People present, teacher role, interactions, authority, decision-making, note points of teacher agency and teacher constraint, evidence of trusting relationships, evidence of routines/structures that support or constrain teacher authority

Miscellaneous notes:

APPENDIX H

FOCUS TEACHER INTERVIEW,

OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell me about the day I shadowed you.

2. What was typical about the day? What was atypical?

3. What would you want me to know about your typical day that I didn't get to see?

4. At what moment during the day did you feel like a good teacher?

5. Was there a time when you felt respected or disrespected as a professional? Tell me about it.

APPENDIX I

ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW,

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you for meeting with me today. In this interview, I'm hoping to gain an understanding of your understanding of teacher professionalism and how you think that plays out in your school. Feel free to refrain from answering any question or to stop the interview at any time. All of the things you tell me will remain anonymous.

1. Tell me about how you came to work at this school. How has this job fit into your career trajectory? What led you to become an administrator at a charter school?

2. Tell me about your teachers. What are their best assets? How do you tap into those assets? What (if anything) would you like to change about them?

3. Describe an ideal teacher. How would that teacher function in the classroom? In the school? What kind of responsibilities would that teacher take on? How would you communicate your respect for this kind of teacher?

4. Tell me about a time when you had an issue or concern involving a teacher. How did you address the issue?

5. How do teachers influence teaching practices? School culture? School-wide policies?

6. How would you describe teacher collegiality at this school? Do teachers' relationships with one another help build teacher expertise or school culture?

7. Describe the school's administrative structure. Who takes on what leadership roles? Who is accountable to whom?

8. How do you think teachers grow as professionals? What do they need in order to improve their practice?

9. Tell me about teacher accountability within the school.

10. Do you feel trusted to do your job well? Do you think teachers feel trusted to do their jobs well?

11. How do you evaluate teachers? How do you think your teachers view that process?

12. How would you define teacher professionalism?

13. What do you see as your role in supporting teacher professionalism in your school?

14. How do you think the teachers at your school would define teacher professionalism? If it differs from your definition, why do you think that is?

15. Is there anything else I should know about teachers' professionalism at your school?

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While at Loyola, Dr. Wright Costello served as a Graduate Assistant to Dr. Kate Phillippo, and later to Dr. Amy Heineke. She served as a writing tutor, a representative on the School of Education's Student Development Committee, and the graduate representative on the School of Education's Academic Council. She taught several courses in both the Educational Policy Studies Undergraduate minor and the Teacher Education Program. Dr. Wright Costello lives with her husband in San Francisco.