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The Influence of Performance Accountability Culture on the Work of High School Principals

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THE INFLUENCE OF PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY CULTURE ON THE

WORK OF HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

BY

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submit a copy with your final dissertation to be bound as page number two.

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Eight additional people who have influenced this dissertation indirectly through their importance in my life. They appear as pseudonyms throughout the text.

DEDICATION

I am eternally grateful to you, Amy, not simply for supporting my decisions to pursue every goal I dream up, but—more importantly—for always helping me to believe that I can achieve them. When I said that I wanted to be a school administrator, you made me see that it was possible. When I struggled through the growing pains of my first position in leadership, you talked me through them and never doubted my ability to become effective. When I said that I wanted to earn a doctoral degree while working full time as a supervisor, you never hesitated to say "go for it." And while I stumbled through this, my first major research project, you kept reminding me that I had what it took to complete it. Seeing you cope with the struggles of life and work with success and grace, I have tried to emulate you in all ways. I dedicate this dissertation to you, Amy—my wife, my best friend, my hero.

M.I.C.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

On December 8, 1987, President Ronald Reagan stood with the General Secretary

of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, in the East Room of the White House to

announce the signing of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. This agreement

would result in the reduction of nuclear arms by destroying missiles and warheads on the

American and Soviet sides, and each nation would be held accountable for its end of the

bargain through inspections that Reagan characterized as "the most stringent verification

regime in history" (Reagan, 1987, para. 8). As he described the treaty and what it meant,

President Reagan used a Russian proverb that would become one of his more famous

lines: "Trust, but verify" (1987, para. 5).

In essence, Reagan commented on the delicate balance of accountability. Two

parties may make an agreement and claim to trust each other, but verification—often, a

system of checking—is necessary in order to ensure that each party is living up to its

promises.

This study is not about the history of nuclear arms reduction. It is about a

different topic, but one that illustrates the challenging balance of the Russian proverb

quoted by President Reagan: the performance accountability culture in American public

education. As we settle into the second decade of the twenty-first century, the calls for

strict accountability in public education are becoming increasingly intense. To borrow

one of Reagan's phrases, "stringent verification regime[s]" abound, and each one carries

its political controversies. This dissertation examines the way methods of holding

schools accountable—of verifying their compliance with mandates and their achievement of outcomes—influence the everyday work of school leaders.

Context of the Problem

Performance accountability in public education, characterized most saliently by an emphasis on measurable student outcomes and the use of rewards and sanctions for schools and educators based on those outcomes, has been a centerpiece of the education reform agenda of each American president since Ronald Reagan (Graham, 2005; Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Although the practice of testing American students to hold them accountable for knowledge and skills before permitting them to advance through the educational system dates back to the Lancasterian schools of the early nineteenth century (Hogan, 1989; Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001), the current movement toward standards-based reform and accountability for schools can be connected in more recent history to the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) (Diamond, 2007; Dworkin, 2005; Mathison, 2008).

This report, published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education at the request of Terrell Bell, secretary of education under President Reagan, used powerful rhetoric to make the claim that American public education was characterized by low standards for teachers and students and, consequently, low achievement and costly remediation once students reached the college level (Mathison, 2008; NCEE, 1983; Ravitch, 1995). In response to this report, President Reagan urged states to effect reforms of their educational systems, resulting in the creation of "more than 250 task forces…helping forty-six states develop comprehensive state action plans to improve

educational outcomes of students" (Schwartz & Robinson, 2000, p.175). Reagan also proposed tax credits and vouchers for private school tuition in order to provide parents with more choices if they were unsatisfied with the quality their local public school (Savage, 1985).

Six years after the appearance of *A Nation at Risk*, President George H.W. Bush held a summit with state governors to create six ambitious goals for public education to be fulfilled by the year 2000 (Mathison, 2008). In 1991, President Bush announced *America 2000*, which was "carefully labeled a national strategy instead of a federal program" and included, among provisions for school choice, "voluntary national tests...based on world-class standards (Schwartz & Robinson, 2000, p.177). Schwartz and Robinson (2000) asserted that Bush's attempted policy "legitimized the idea of national standards and tests as a public policy issue" (p.177). While President Reagan placed the onus on states to effect educational reform, it was President Bush who attempted to use federal policy to address the problems of "a rising tide of [educational] mediocrity" cited in *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Ultimately, however, the United States Senate, fearful of a too-powerful role of the federal government in education, voted down America 2000 (Schwartz & Robinson, 2000).

After President Bush failed to pass America 2000, President Bill Clinton introduced and passed his Goals 2000: Educate America Act in 1994. In President Clinton's own words, the act was "designed to promote a long-term direction for the improvement of education and life-long learning and to provide a framework and resources to help States and others interested in education to strengthen, accelerate, and

sustain their own improvement efforts" (Clinton, 1993, p. 643). Crucially, the act would promote the creation of voluntary curriculum standards by professional associations representing the various academic subject areas and assessments to measure students' attainment of the knowledge and skills outlined in the standards. Goals 2000 would also assemble the National Education Standards and Improvement Council (NESIC), which would certify the quality of each set of model standards submitted. While the Goals 2000 bill itself passed, NESIC was eliminated by a Republican Congress in 1995 because of concerns that the federal government was going to play too powerful a role in public education (Schwartz & Robinson, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 1995). NESIC did not even last long enough for President Clinton to appoint its members (Ravitch, 1996). Still, however, President Clinton worked toward raising educational accountability across the nation, meeting with governors, educators, and business leaders to address three central challenges: "improving educator quality, helping all students reach high standards, and strengthening accountability" (Mathison, 2008, p.12). By 1999, all 50 states except Iowa had either set common standards for education or were in the process of setting them with the help of professional associations such as the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics (Mathison, 2008). Thirty-eight states, at that point, had formally adopted standards in at least one academic subject (CCSSO, 2003).

The Presidency of George W. Bush proved to be successful in passing federal legislation that focused explicitly on performance accountability through the use of standardized test scores. President Bush's *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (NCLB), still in force at the time of this writing, aims to "close the achievement gap and make sure all students, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve academic proficiency" in

reading and math by the 2013-2014 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, para. 2). NCLB mandates that states develop their own assessment and accountability plans that delineate how they will "achieve full proficiency toward state academic content standards" and "close persistent achievement gaps between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers" (U.S. Department of Education, 2003a). Indeed, Rod Paige, Secretary of Education under President Bush in 2003, noted that "*accountability* [italics added] is the cornerstone of our new education law" (U.S. Department of Education, 2003a).

NCLB achieves high-stakes accountability by requiring local school districts and states to publish report cards detailing the achievement of their students as a whole and disaggregated by various subgroups, including racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, and students from low-income families (Paige, 2002). A school that does not achieve *adequate yearly progress* (AYP), as defined by its state, is identified as "needing improvement" and subjected to a graduated series of sanctions—from having to offer its students the opportunity to transfer to another public school to undergoing a thorough "restructuring" that may replace the entire staff or transfer governance to a new agency such as the state or a private company (U.S. Department of Education, 2003b). Thus, NCLB places emphasis on measurable student outcomes, clearly defined consequences for schools that do not achieve these outcomes, and greater choice for parents whose children attend schools that fail to meet AYP.

NCLB has been a source of controversy since its inception. Critics from across the political spectrum have raised concerns about the statistical quality of the test score

measures that are the foundation of each state's accountability system (Kane & Staiger, 2002), the possibility of narrowing schools' curricula to the material that is tested (Dworkin, 2005), and the punitive nature of the law (Finn & Petrilli, 2008). Shortly before President Barack Obama was sworn into office, Finn and Petrilli (2008)—under the auspices of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute—issued an open-letter to the president-elect, criticizing NCLB and offering suggestions for improvement. In their letter, Finn and Petrilli (2008) claim that "decisions about whether a school makes 'Adequate Yearly Progress' (AYP) are opaque and almost random" (p. 6). The letter also recommends that President-Elect Obama call upon the governors of all the states and the state superintendents to produce a system of national education standards with a test to produce valuable educational data and, consequently, much-needed transparency (Finn & Petrilli, 2008). After the data are made available, Finn and Petrilli (2008) argue, the federal government should allow states to rate their own schools based on the data and devise their own sanctions for schools that need improvement. This suggestion would be a departure from the punitive role of the federal government under NCLB (Finn & Petrilli, 2008).

In August of 2009, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute pushed for a system of national standards with the claim that "it's not true that national standards portend loss of local control" (Schmidt, Houang, & Shakrani, 2009, p.9). Thus, near the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, we see a conservative-leaning organization assuaging fears that national standards would limit local districts' and states' autonomy. Schmidt, Houang, & Shakrani (2009) based this claim on detailed comparisons with other countries that have a system of national standards and a national institution to develop

and oversee them. Indeed, by June of 2010, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) officially released the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI), which includes K-12 standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics (CCSSI, 2010b). Although forty-four states, the District of Columbia, and one territory have formally adopted and legislated these state-produced national standards, the CCSSI has not completed the development of tests that are aligned with the standards at the time of this writing. Nevertheless, the CCSSI claims that "having one set of standards will make it easier for states to pool information and resources to develop a shared set of high-quality tests to better evaluate student progress" (CCSSI, 2010a, para. 17). By 2011, two federally-funded national consortia were in the process of developing tests for this very purpose (Sparks, 2011).

An even more explicit movement toward performance accountability in education comes in the form of President Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's Race to the Top (RTTT) program, which was signed into law as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) (U.S. Department of Education, Background section, 2009). RTTT offers a total of $4.35 billion in the form of grants for which states can compete. In order to win funds from the program, states must show that they are making progress in many of the areas emphasized in NCLB—for example, "achieving significant improvement in student outcomes" and "closing achievement gaps" (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 2). In the language of the program, states must also show that they are implementing reforms in the following four areas:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;

- Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;

- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and

- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools. (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 2)

The reform areas emphasize RTTT's values of producing human capital for global competition, developing quantitative measurements of student progress, improving teacher and administrator quality, and overhauling schools that struggle the most.

Improvement of teacher and administrator quality, as required by RTTT, has produced debate in mainstream media over merit-pay programs for educators and connecting teacher evaluation and retention decisions to students' test scores (Green, 2010; Ripley, 2010)—clear examples of performance accountability. After all, the greatest number of points that a state can achieve in the RTTT grant competition comes from its commitment to eliminate "seniority-based compensation and permanent job security" for educators (Brill, 2010, para. 8), two protections traditionally offered by state law. When competing for RTTT grants, states have to eliminate laws that prevent school districts from using student achievement as part of their evaluation of educators.

The educational policy environment under President Obama is characterized by support for high-stakes performance accountability for students, teachers, administrators, schools, local school districts, and state educational systems. Although RTTT is an

incentive program—states are not required to apply—difficult economic times encourage states to seek more federal funding for education. Thus, the federal government—long seen as a minor actor in the decentralized policy arena of American education—has become a crucial influence on educational reform throughout the country. Fowler (2009) noted that when municipal governments, including local school districts, experience financial crisis, they are inclined to look toward the state for assistance and resources, often resulting in the state's acquisition of more power over the schools. Today, we see a similar phenomenon between states and the federal government; in return for its financial assistance, the federal government acquires greater control over educational reform, and the specific reforms that it espouses help to perpetuate the movement toward performance accountability that began to gain momentum in 1983.

While scholars acknowledge that accountability in education is necessary, some research has broached the possibility of unintended—even perverse—consequences of recent performance accountability movements. Writing about a similar phenomenon in the United Kingdom, Elliot (2001) noted the possibility that increased emphasis on performance indicators may limit the flexibility with which teachers can respond to individual students' learning needs. Ball (2001) and Anderson (2005) referred to various forms of fabrication and outright cheating on the part of individuals and schools in response to ever-increasing demands of performance accountability. Ball (2001) and Niesz (2010) also cited schools' exorbitant focus on impression or image management rather than on authentic school reforms, demonstrating unanticipated responses to increased media and public surveillance on schools and their teachers. Apple (2000) argued that as school choice options increase and public education becomes marketized,

schools need to spend valuable resources competing for student enrollment. Sergiovanni (2000) wrote about the depletion of the local character and culture of schools as a result of stricter accountability measures; he also noted that school leadership becomes "redefined" under these new conditions of public and governmental surveillance on teachers and administrators (p. xi).

Problem Statement

The call for higher levels of accountability in education asserts pressure on the role of leadership in American schools. The purpose of this study is to examine the perspectives of high school principals on how performance accountability culture influences the decisions they make, the initiatives they pursue, and their chief areas of focus in their positions. For this purpose, I have designed a qualitative multiple case study approach that will reveal the role of performance accountability at the local level, the way principals cope with accountability mandates, the perceptions of principals toward the accountability culture, and the overall influence of the accountability culture on the way principals function in their jobs.

Although accountability in public education has been a predominant subject in education research literature since the early 1970s (Adler-Kassner & Harrington, 2010; Ladd, 1996; Richburg, 1971) and has been a central theme of federal education policy since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, there is a dearth of qualitative research from the perspective of high school principals on the influence of performance accountability culture on their everyday work. This study intends to address this gap in the research by focusing on the way public high school principals in the state of New Jersey cope with the bureaucratic demands of performance accountability culture.

To apply the theory of Sergiovanni (2000), who appropriated the language of the critical theorist, Jürgen Habermas, high-stakes external accountability runs the risk of depleting the "lifeworld" of schools in the name of exalting the "systemsworld" (p. ix). In place of the latter term, Habermas (1989) simply uses the word "system" (p. 153), which I will use interchangeably with "systemsworld." According to Sergiovanni (2000),

> Leaders and their purposes, followers and their needs, and the unique traditions, rituals, and norms that define a school's culture compose the *lifeworld* [italics added]. And the management designs and protocols, strategic and tactical actions, policies and procedures, and efficiency and accountability assurances compose the *systemsworld* [italics added]. School character flourishes when the lifeworld is the generative force for determining the systemsworld. And school character erodes when the systemsworld is the generative force for determining the lifeworld. (p. ix)

Sergiovanni (2000) elaborated on these competing interests when he noted that standardized assessments and other accountability measures too frequently determine the values and core missions of schools and their stakeholders. He argued that schools should be structured in the opposite way; that is, values and core missions should determine their accountability systems. Employing Habermas's language once again, Sergiovanni referred to the overgrown size and importance of bureaucratic and external accountability systems as "the 'colonization' of the lifeworld by the systemsworld," resulting in "a loss of character at the individual school site, less authentic leadership, and ultimately less effective schooling" (2000, p. x). Indeed, Sergiovanni suggested that the performance accountability era was marked by the rise of bureaucratic demands (system)

at the expense of fulfilling the basic, locally-determined, moral purposes of school (lifeworld).

While some researchers have made claims regarding the potential insight offered by postmodern and critical theory in the subject of educational administration (Anderson and Grinberg, 1998; Sergiovanni, 2000), little work has been done to apply such theories extensively in a study of performance accountability. My research makes use of conceptual frameworks associated with postmodernism and critical theory in order to understand the influence of new accountability systems on high school principals. In addition to Sergiovanni (2000), who used Habermas's basic notions of lifeworld and system, Niesz (2010) referred briefly, in an ethnographic study of a struggling middle school, to Habermas's idea of communicative action. Anderson and Grinberg (1998) have argued that Foucault's work on the nature of disciplinary power would be productive in studies of educational leadership. In his work on accountability in education, Ball (2001) cited Foucault's work on surveillance and noted that his own concept of performativity owes its origins to the postmodern philosopher, Jean-Francois Lyotard. Nevertheless, little work has been done beyond this. The present study, however, addresses the gap in critical and postmodern theory in the study of performance accountability by examining how theories of performativity, audit society, lifeworld and system, and disciplinary power can be applied to understand the everyday work of school leaders in the era of accountability.

Research Questions

How has the performance accountability culture in education influenced the job of the principal in public high schools in the state of New Jersey?

What initiatives associated with the performance accountability culture are public high schools in the State of New Jersey currently pursuing?

How do principals in public high schools in the State of New Jersey cope with the demands of the performance accountability culture related to test scores, school rankings, and other quantifiable outcomes of school?

What are the perceptions of principals of public high schools in the State of New Jersey toward the performance accountability culture?

What is the relationship between the demands of performance accountability culture and what principals believe to be the core responsibilities of their position?

Design and Methodology

In order to address these research questions, I interviewed high school principals and collected public documents from nine school districts of varying socioeconomic status (SES). In New Jersey, the SES classification of each district is called its *District Factor Group* (DFG), and there are eight such groups: A, B, CD, DE, FG, GH, I, and J, where A is the lowest and J is the highest. After dividing these DFGs into four groups— low, middle-low, middle-high, and high—I selected three participants from the lowest DFGs (A and B); one from a middle-low DFG (DE); two from a middle-high DFG (GH); and three from the highest DFGs (I and J). Employing a maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling technique (Patton, 2002, pp. 234-235), I gleaned qualitative data on the influence of accountability on the job of the high school principal in various socioeconomic environments. Through this design, I intended to discover the principals'

perceptions of the way performance accountability has influenced their work and the relationship between the lifeworld and system in their positions.

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were used to collect qualitative data from the principals. Interview questions elicited the participants' behaviors, experiences, opinions, and values (Patton, 2002, pp. 346-351) with respect to their positions and the accountability systems that affected their work. Although the interview protocol was structured, probes and follow-up questions were used to elicit additional details, clarification, and elaboration on topics relevant to the study (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003, p. 96; Patton, 2002, pp. 372-373;). After developing the interview protocol, I had a jury of experts—three experienced high school administrators—review the questions for validity. I also piloted the interview twice, with two different high school principals, to check for question reliability.

Data were validated further through member checking after I completed the transcribing of the interviews (Creswell, 2003, pp. 196-197). I provided each participant with a transcript of his interview—produced from tape-recordings—to ensure that the data were accurately transcribed.

Once the interview transcripts were validated, the I used a hybrid approach of theory-driven, prior-research-driven, and data-driven codes to make meaning of the data and organize them into thematic categories (Boyatzis, 1998). After several rounds of coding the data and collapsing codes with similar themes, I identified the major themes of the study. Finally, I used a narrative to convey these themes and interpret them through comparison with the reviewed literature and theoretical frameworks either "to confirm past information or diverge from it" (Creswell, 2003, p. 195). Analysis and interpretation

of the data were also used to raise further questions about the influence of performance accountability on the job of a high school principal, questions that might be considered in future research projects.

Conceptual Framework

Using multiple theoretical lenses to analyze the way accountability informed the work of each principal in the study, I used Habermas's (1989) notion of "lifeworld" and "system" (p. 153) to analyze the way principals negotiated between their need to maintain meaningful relationships with students and connections to everyday classroom life and their required management of external and bureaucratic accountability demands. Habermas's work on the concepts of strategic and communicative action was also helpful in analyzing the data (Chambers, 1995).

Ball's (2001) notion of performativity, which is based on the postmodern theories of Lyotard, was used to investigate the extent to which modern performance demands and management based on business or market models may compete with authentic academic work. Ball's theory was also helpful in studying the way high school principals in New Jersey cope with external regulations.

Power's (1997) theory of the audit society was used to determine whether performance accountability measures result in perverse consequences as they alter and make auditable the very objects that they intend to check. I was particularly interested in the extent to which the participants in the study found that auditing colonized the core activities of their schools.

Finally, Foucault's (1995) model of disciplinary power through technologies of surveillance—in this case, accountability systems—was employed to analyze how the

power of the accountability movement asserts itself in the everyday work of principals. Foucault's notion of panopticism has been used to analyze power in educational institutions (Anderson & Grinberg, 1998), and provides a rich theoretical language with which one may interpret the experiences of high school principals under the surveillance mechanisms of the state.

Significance of the Study

This study will augment the existing descriptive literature on accountability in education by presenting the specific experiences and perceptions of principals in various socioeconomic settings in the state of New Jersey. The study will also distinguish itself from most of the literature on accountability by applying theoretical concepts from critical theory and postmodern philosophy. In this sense, I will test the fruitfulness of philosophical concepts—lifeworld and system, performativity, audit society, and disciplinary power—as theoretical lenses with which the work of school administration can be understood. Policymakers in education—that is, those who are responsible for the way accountability is enacted in schools—may be influenced by the findings of this study since it will reveal the day-to-day influence of performance accountability on school leaders and demonstrate some of its unintended consequences.

Delimitations and Limitations

The delimitations of this study are as follows:

1. I collected only qualitative data from interviews of high school principals in the state of New Jersey and from public documents in their districts.

2. Principals who participated in the study were required to have 3 or more years of experience in the position. This delimitation focused the study on

principals who had enough experience to be fully familiar with their

administrative responsibilities and conversant with performance

accountability culture and its demands.

3. Although male and female high school principals with more than 3 years of

experience in their position were eligible to participate in the study, all

interview participants were male.

4. Critical and postmodern theory were used to develop the research questions

and interview questions, to develop some of the codes for analysis, and to

interpret the data collected from the principals and documents.

The limitations of the study are as follows:

1. The sample size, though purposeful, is small and prevents the possibility of

generalizing the findings to all principals in the state of New Jersey or other

locations.

2. Due to the design, cause and effect relationships cannot be determined. It

cannot be said that any particular element of performance accountability

culture causes a particular behavior of a principal.

Definition of Terms

Performance accountability refers to any system that measures or rates the

effectiveness of students, teachers, administrators, schools, school districts, or statewide

educational systems based on specific learning outcomes and applies consequences or

interventions to people or groups that fail to meet a specified standard.

District Factor Group (*DFG*) refers to the system of classification of New Jersey schools according to socioeconomic status. A school's DFG ranking is determined based on census data and analysis of the following indicators:

    i.   Percent of population with no high school diploma

    ii. Percent with some college

    iii. Occupation

    iv. Population density

    v.   Income

    vi. Unemployment

    vii. Poverty. (Department of Education, n.d.-a, para. 5)

The *Principal* is the highest-ranking administrator in a school. He/she is ultimately responsible for all school operations and supervises and evaluates other school administrators, faculty, and staff. He/she is hired, supervised, and evaluated by the superintendent of schools, the chief school administrator of the district.

A *Public High School* is a tuition-free educational institution serving students in grades 9 through 12, funded in part by local tax revenues and the state. This term is used to refer to traditional public high schools, not charter schools, which are publicly funded but more experimental in their orientations and less encumbered by regulations.

Standards are curriculum guidelines that specify the content that students must learn and the skills they must acquire by the end of each grade level or course of study.

Summary

Chapter I of this study placed the notion of performance accountability within the context of the national public policy environment since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 and traced its evolution through the presidencies of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. The chapter then described the problem under study, stated the research question and subquestions, provided an overview of the conceptual framework, stated the significance of the study, described the delimitations and limitations of the research, and defined fundamental terms. Chapter II will review the related literature, including scholarship associated with performance accountability and the work of postmodern and critical theorists whose concepts were used to interpret the data.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A rich body of literature on the performance accountability culture in education

examines the impact of accountability on schools, including its effect on students,

teachers, and administrators. This chapter will begin with a brief review of the history of

accountability in American public education, including a description of the significant

federal legislation and policy associated with accountability. It will also provide an

explanation of the way performance accountability is manifested in the state of New

Jersey, which is the location selected for data collection and analysis in this study. Next,

the chapter will provide a brief overview of the extant literature, identifying the current

state of scholarship on this topic and highlighting articles and studies that explore the

impact of performance accountability on public education. A description of the

methodology for the literature search will then be provided, followed by discussion of the

limitations of the literature review and the criteria for inclusion and exclusion of

literature. Because this dissertation focuses on the way performance accountability

culture influences the work of high school principals, the chapter will provide a thorough

review of articles and studies on the influence of performance accountability culture on

school leadership. Furthermore, since the present study distinguishes itself from others

by applying critical theory and postmodern philosophy, a review of the theoretical

framework of this dissertation will be provided. This review of theory will focus on the

concepts of performativity, audit society, lifeworld and system, and surveillance—all of

which will be used to understand the influence of performance accountability on the job of high school principals.

The Evolution of Accountability

Ravitch (2002) noted that, in the nineteenth century, the only type of accountability associated with schooling was targeted at the student. Within this system of accountability, either the child was fit for school, or he/she was not. This emphasis is quite different from the question people ask today: are the schools serving the children adequately? Thus, at the end of the nineteenth century, fewer than 1% of adolescents attended high school; the rest were considered unfit for the academic work. Tests were used to determine if students should be promoted to the next grade and those who failed the tests would be retained.

Parkerson and Parkerson (2001) credited the English charity school reformer, Joseph Lancaster (1778-1838), and two authors of teacher training manuals in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, Edwin C. Hewett and Charles Northend, with the early development of "market-based instructional strategies," which placed a premium on the evaluation of students through frequent exams (p. 102). Hogan (1989) added that schools designed in the Lancaster fashion encouraged students to be ambitious and promoted competition among them. As the market economy of the early republic developed, the value of accountability made its way into the schools. Within Lancasterian schools for the poor—the first of which opened in New York in 1806, followed by many others throughout the country (Good & Teller, 1973)—students were held accountable for what they knew before they were permitted to advance to another level. According to Hogan (1989), Lancaster introduced the "meritocratic principles" (p. 384) of the market to the

classroom by implementing frequent "inspections" (p. 388) of students' knowledge and advancing them to the next level when they were ready. Although Lancaster was not the first to practice teaching in this way, his ideas were extremely influential in the creation of the modern English and American classroom.

Prior to 1900, Ravitch (2002) explained, colleges generally accepted the students who applied, but the most competitive schools—the Ivy League schools—administered a test for their applicants. In 1900, school leaders claimed that it was too difficult to prepare students for the various tests and requested that one test be used; thus, the College Entrance Examination Board was created to administer a single test for college admissions. This test helped determine the subject matter that teachers would teach so that they could prepare their students for college admissions. Here, we see an early version of a test determining the content of curricula.

Testing became more widespread in schools during the 1930s and 40s through the development of the field of educational psychology, which attempted to make the education profession and its decisions more scientifically-based (Ravitch, 2002). Much of the early work in this area is attributed to the influence of Edward Thorndike, an educational psychologist at Teachers College, Columbia University, who advocated the use of standardized tests of students to help teachers plan appropriate instruction (Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001). According to Thorndike's philosophy, everything in existence could be measured quantitatively and qualitatively, including education, even if some types of measurements in education took decades to produce (Good & Teller, 1973).

Although testing became prominent during the 1930s and 40s, the educational Progressives of this time period did not believe in retaining students as a result of their performance on tests; rather, they believed in keeping children *in* school so they could avoid the bleak prospects of the job market during the Great Depression (Graham, 2005; Ravitch, 2002). Stricter enforcement of child labor laws also resulted in higher school enrollments at this time (Graham, 2005). Schools were more child-centered now and the curriculum had moved beyond "the notion that there was a core body of knowledge that all children should master" (Graham, 2005, p. 74). Indeed, Graham pointed out, schools had to adjust to the needs of children as greater numbers of them entered high school, and the curriculum began to shift some of its focus toward social and emotional learning. Concomitant with this focus was a tendency not to retain students at a certain grade level lest it should have a negative psychological impact on the child (Ravitch, 2002). Students who in a previous era would have dropped out of school during their elementary years were now enrolled in high school—but without the advanced academic skills necessary for the traditional curriculum. "By 1920," Graham (2005) showed,

> almost 17 percent of the seventeen-year-olds were high school graduates and rising rapidly, reaching 60 percent in 1954.... Certainly it was easier to hold the reluctant learner in school if you did not worry about his mastering a subject at the level appropriate for his grade. (p. 75)

Thus, schools had lost the system of holding individual students accountable at this point.

Ravitch (2002) claimed that a shift toward accountability for performance—that is, for outcomes as opposed to inputs—can be traced to the 1966 "Coleman Report," which examined differences of educational resources and achievement among children of

various demographics. James S. Coleman was the principal investigator of the so-called "Coleman Report," *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, which was published in 1966 as part of the federal government's evaluation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. One of the central findings of this landmark study was that integration of middle- and low-income children provided academic benefits to students, especially those from poorer backgrounds (Coleman, 1966). According to Coleman, "a pupil's achievement is strongly related to the educational backgrounds and aspirations of the other students in the school" (p. 22). Interestingly, the achievement of White students from families with strong educational backgrounds was not affected much if they were placed in a school with children of relatively weak educational backgrounds; but, when minority students from families with relatively weak educational backgrounds were placed in schools with students who came from strong educational backgrounds, their achievement tended to increase. Simply providing more funding for schools and their facilities, however, was found not to be sufficient for improving educational outcomes.

By 1970, 4 years after the publication of "The Coleman Report," there was a greater interest in the United States in tracking educational data and holding schools accountable. In the late twentieth century, the notion of accountability shifted from a focus on inputs (e.g., quality of teachers, number of teachers in schools) to a focus on outputs (indicators of student performance) (Ladd, 1996). Ladd (1996) noted that the interest in holding schools accountable for performance was partly the result of an enormous increase in educational spending between 1974 and 1992. After making adjustments for inflation, Ladd noted, real per pupil spending rose 29% during this time period—this, while American students failed to show improvement on the National

Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) over the same 18 years. The introduction of the NAEP in 1970, it should be added, marked a new interest in compiling quantitative data about educational performance.

A very early paper on educational accountability, published by Richburg in 1971, highlighted some of the causes of the accountability movement and its major events as it was then developing. According to Richburg, public opinion of the educational system, as measured by Gallup polls and a significant increase in voters' rejection of school bonds, influenced the desire for output accountability in the schools. Richburg cited a Gallup Poll, for example, in which 70% of the respondents favored achievement testing in schools with public comparison of results among districts. He also tracked school bond issues between 1960 and 1970 and found that 11% were rejected in 1960, 33% in 1965, and 52% in 1970. Furthermore, Richburg notes that performance contract programs were being tried in various parts of the country (for example, in Gary, Indiana), in which a private organization would take over a school district's instructional operations and then implement an evaluation system to measure the cost effectiveness of the program. Finally, voucher programs were in their nascent stages, stimulating "consumer and market principles in which the school must produce in a competitive market" (p. 8).

Adler-Kassner and Harrington (2010) argued that the interest in greater accountability is a part of the human capital framework of discussing education. Those calling for greater accountability believe that "the purpose of schooling...has to do with fueling the economy" (2010, p. 74). Adler-Kassner and Harrington noted that accountability was barely mentioned in education literature prior to 1970, and they cited

Ohmann (2000) who found 585 titles published about education and accountability between 1970 and 2000. In contrast, only 6 titles about accountability were published before 1970—and they were not even about education. Adler-Kassner and Harrington used the University of Michigan's library databases in 2009 and found 7 titles about accountability published before 1973 and 5,817 in the years that followed. When accountability and education were searched together, the authors found two sources before 1970 and 750 between 1970 and 2009.

What happened after 1970? Adler-Kassner and Harrington (2010) claimed that the economic dominance of the United States became less certain in the late twentieth century as capitalism became more global. Thus, education seems to be following the types of accountability that are used in the business world: more quality assurance measures and a notion of "streamlining process and product" as industries strive to do (p. 82). Parkerson and Parkerson (2001) also attributed calls for greater accountability to the economic slowdown of the 1970s. They claimed that Americans became concerned that students would not be able to compete with their international peers when they entered the workforce. Parkerson and Parkerson (2001) noted that, in the media, many conservatives blamed the recession on some of the progressive educational programs of the 1960s such as inquiry-based instruction, Montessori schools, and team teaching. Thus, a "back to basics" movement and a push for more student accountability emerged during Sidney P. Marland's tenure as commissioner of education under President Richard Nixon. In 1980, Ronald Reagan was elected President and conservatives in the media tended to criticize the "liberal teachers" of the Carter era—possibly a response to the National Education Association's support for Carter's candidacy in 1976 (Parkerson &

Parkerson, 2001, p. 121). In this more conservative era, marked by Republican

presidential terms between 1968 and 1992—with the exception of Jimmy Carter's 4-year

term—"the tide of public sentiment turned toward regarding schooling primarily as

preparation for employment, not citizenship" (Graham, 2005, p. 162).

In the last few decades of the twentieth century, the American public also became

concerned about American students' low performance on international assessments.

Tienken (2010) noted that American students scored the lowest on the First International

Mathematics Study in 1964 and the First International Science Study in 1970, yet he also

pointed out that these results have no bearing on U.S. economic competitiveness; that is,

the very students who scored poorly on these exams became the workforce that, since

1998, has ranked 1st or 2nd in economic competitiveness since 1998, according to the

World Economic Forum. Thus, the notion that performance on international tests bodes

poorly for the American economy is a controversial one and cannot be taken for granted.

Poor performance on international exams, economic slowdown, and the rise of

Ronald Reagan's conservative presidency paved the way toward the 1983 publication of

A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), a federally

commissioned report that warned Americans of the "rising tide of mediocrity" that

characterized public education in the United States (p. 5). This report cited the efficiency

of production and success of exports in Japan, South Korea, Germany, and other

competitors—the result, it claims, "of knowledge, learning, information, and skilled

intelligence...spreading throughout the world as vigorously as miracle drugs, synthetic

fertilizers, and blue jeans did earlier" (p. 7). Meanwhile, *A Nation at Risk* claimed, the

quality of American education was declining. The report cited 13 "indicators of risk" (p. 8), including:

- the low level of American students' performance on international tests;
- the declining performance of high school students in math and reading, as measured by the SATs between 1963 and 1980;
- the inability of high school students to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills such as drawing inferences;
- an increase in the number of students taking remedial courses in college; and
- an increase in remedial education and remedial training programs in the military and in corporations. (p. 8)

In response to these risks, the report recommended a more rigorous curriculum; the use of measurable indicators of student achievement such as "a nationwide (but not Federal) system of State and local standardized tests" to determine when a student is ready to progress to another level of schooling (p. 28); an increase in instructional time; and higher standards for teacher preparation. Although *A Nation at Risk* enjoyed a great deal of media attention and arguably resulted in lower citizen confidence in the public schools (Guthrie and Springer, 2004), it has been the subject of controversy in the education world, much of which is focused on the quality of the data it reported. Relying, for example, on a decline in SAT scores between 1963 and 1980, for example, ignored the fact that the number of students taking the SATs had dramatically increased during this period while the high school dropout rate significantly decreased, resulting in weaker students taking the exam (Guthrie & Springer, 2004).

Ravitch (2002) noted that the call for accountability in public education during the 1980s was related, in part, to the status of education as the largest expenditure in every state budget in the United States. In many cases, it cost each state about 40% of its budget. This large expenditure, combined with growing information that students were not achieving as highly as their international peers, caused a greater push for performance accountability. Thus, in the decades that followed *A Nation at Risk*, we see the development of state standards, more testing, market-based reforms and school choice (e.g., vouchers), state or private takeovers of poorly performing education systems, and reforms that look toward the business world for ideas of how to make education more efficient and effective (e.g., performance pay and competition among schools).

As described in Chapter I, the movement toward performance accountability in American public education has evolved significantly since the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*. The America 2000 and the Goals 2000 legislative acts of Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, respectively, called for greater accountability and raised the issue of developing national curriculum standards, which finally came to fruition in 2010 for mathematics and English language arts under the auspices of the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI). Furthermore, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation of President George W. Bush and the Race to the Top (RTTP) program of current President Barack Obama have achieved an unprecedented federal involvement in educational accountability. While the former law has implemented state-level testing in grades 3-8 and in high school, mandating certain levels of improvement and placing sanctions on school districts based on students' scores, the latter program has incentivized major reforms to education including the adoption of

competitive standards and assessments, new data management systems to track student performance, and educator evaluation systems that are tied to student achievement. At the time of this writing, two national consortia, which have received grants from RTTT, are developing assessments tied to the Common Core State Standards and expect to implement these exams by 2014. The SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) has 31 member-states while the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) has 25 member-states (Sparks, 2011, p. 11). As suggested by the numbers, some states are members of both consortia.

New Jersey's Accountability System

Since New Jersey will be the setting of the present study, it is necessary to provide an explanation of its performance accountability system and how it evolved. According to the New Jersey State Department of Education, New Jersey began using state-mandated, standards-based assessments in 1978 (NJDOE, n.d.-c). In 1975, the state legislature passed the Public School Education Act (PSEA) in order to "provide to all children of New Jersey, regardless of socioeconomic status or geographic location, the educational opportunity which will prepare them to function politically, economically and socially in a democratic society" (NJDOE, n.d.-c). An amendment to this law in 1976 called for minimum state standards in reading and math and made it legal to implement testing as a graduation requirement. The first exam used as a graduation requirement, the Minimum Basic Skills Test, was administered to ninth graders in 1981-82. Those who failed were able to retake the test multiple times before graduation.

The NJDOE (n.d.-c) noted, however, that in 1985-86, the state implemented a more rigorous graduation test called the Grade 9 High School Proficiency Test (HSPT9),

which held students accountable for basic skills in reading, writing, and math. This test was moved to the eleventh grade in 1988 and became a graduation requirement for students who began high school in the fall of 1991. An eighth grade test known as the Early Warning Test (EWT) was also introduced at this time in order to help districts identify students who needed skills remediation before the eleventh grade exam.

Taking on various forms and names over the years, this testing program evolved and expanded over the course of approximately two decades into the current system, which includes the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) in grades 3-8, testing language arts literacy and math in each grade and science in grades 4 and 8; the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) in grade 11; and end-of-course exams in biology and algebra in high school (NJDOE, n.d.-c). This assessment system complies with the federal *NCLB Act of 2001* and attempts to assess students' skills and knowledge in reference to the Core Curriculum Content Standards, the first set of which was adopted in May of 1996. These standards were intended to be revised every 5 years and now include the national math and English Language Arts standards known as the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI).

In addition to state-mandated testing as a form of accountability, the State of New Jersey began to publish school report cards in 1989 ("Jersey will send home report cards on schools," 1989). Depending on the level of the school (primary or secondary), these reports provided parents and the general public with data on indicators such as: per pupil spending, student performance on state tests, student performance on SATs, staff-to-student ratios, instructional time, drop-out rates, student transience, and graduation rates (Hanley, 1989). The report cards also published the school's key data points side-by-side

with state averages, inviting comparison ("Jersey will send home report cards on schools," 1989).

The publication of report cards did not come without controversy. Immediately after the reports were adopted and published, critics such as the New Jersey Education Association (the state teachers union) warned that the report cards would cause people to make unfair comparisons between schools of varying socioeconomic levels ("Jersey will send home report cards on schools," 1989). Today, the report cards are available online and juxtapose a given school's performance with other schools in the same district factor group (DFG), classification groups based on demographics. Furthermore, the private sector rates schools as well. Perhaps most prominently, *New Jersey Monthly* magazine has been publishing a bi-annual ranking of public high schools in the state since September, 1988 (Schlager, personal communication, April 4, 2011). National rankings of public high schools as an additional form of accountability include those published by *Newsweek* and *U.S. News & World Report*.

Current State of the Literature

Although proponents of performance accountability have claimed that the new emphasis on educational outcomes has caused schools to address well-known achievement gaps and pay more attention to less privileged students (Guthrie & Springer, 2004), many criticisms of the current system appear in the literature (Dworkin, 2005). These criticisms, often cited as the unanticipated consequences of performance accountability systems, include claims that

> these systems narrow curricula to what is tested, promote teaching to the test,
> encourage school personnel to cheat, produce heightened test-taking skills

without the actual learning of content, place too much emphasis on a single

indicator in violation of test theory, discriminate against students who have

trouble with multiple-choice tests, harm poor and minority-group members, and

increase the dropout rate. (Dworkin, 2005, p. 170)

Guthrie and Springer (2004) added that while accountability has its benefits—including

an emphasis on school systems' outputs rather than merely the resources they are

provided—we now have a "federalization of education policy, a trend that accelerated

with *NAR* [*A Nation at Risk*] and that now threatens the creativity and diversity of local

school systems that have been among the nation's greatest strengths" (p. 9.). Other

researchers have also warned that federalization of education reforms may be a detriment

to the local character of schools and their local strengths (Sergiovanni, 2000; Zhao,

2010).

Cizek (2001), a proponent of high-stakes testing for the purpose of accountability,

also cited some of the criticisms commonly launched against the use of tests. According

to Cizek, critics claim that consequences of testing include: instruction methods that

match only those that the tests seem to value (often emphasizing lower-order thinking);

narrowing of curriculum or neglect of subjects not tested; negative effects on teacher

morale; a development of anti-testing attitudes among the students who are tested;

harmful effects on students' self-esteem; and "the possibility that high-stakes tests have

differential effects by student ethnicity" (p. 2). But, Cizek noted that many of the

conclusions of studies of high-stakes testing that raised the issue of unintended

consequences were based on either extremely small samples or the mere perceptions of

teachers and administrators. In response to the critics, he argued that the testing culture

has resulted in teachers' deeper understanding of the science of testing; a greater variety of educational options for students (charter schools, magnet schools, Advanced Placement [AP] and International Baccalaureate [IB] programs), fueled by parents' knowledge of educational systems through newly-available data; higher-quality tests (more reliable, bias-free, and requiring sophisticated thinking) as a result of the ever-present critique of tests; and teachers' increased sensitivity to students' special needs—and therefore, more intervention.

In the years following Cizek's defense of high-stakes testing, however, numerous studies have provided empirical evidence of the unanticipated consequences of the performance accountability systems. In addition to those listed by Dworkin (2005), researchers have found a diversion of resources toward some students at the expense of others (Booher-Jennings, 2006; Cullen & Reback, 2006; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Dworkin, 2005; Ladd & Zelli, 2002); elitist models of education in which schools select for admission only those students who will help raise the schools' test scores (Apple, 2000; DeMoss, 2002); manipulation of school demographics within districts (Dworkin, 2005); multiple forms of fabrication in order to maintain compliance with standards regulations (Adler-Kassner & Harrington, 2010; Ball, 2001; Cullen & Reback, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Husbands, 2001); increased and suspect exemption of students from testing (Cullen & Reback, 2006); an exorbitant focus on marketing, public relations, and image-management (Apple, 2001; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Elliott, 2001; Lubienski, 2005; Niesz, 2010; Smyth, 2001); and a loss of democratic practices in school leadership and decision-making (DeMoss, 2002; Gleeson & Gunter, 2001; Leithwood, Steinbach, & Jantzi, 2002; Reed, McDonough, Ross, & Robichaux, 2001; Smyth, 2001).

This literature review will focus on these unanticipated consequences of performance accountability, but it will emphasize the implications of these issues on the behaviors of school administrators. Of particular interest is the way school leaders cope with performance accountability culture in their everyday work.

Review Methods

In order to collect literature associated with the evolution of accountability—both at the federal level in the United States and at the state level in New Jersey—and the consequences of performance accountability on schools, I used the ProQuest, JSTOR, ERIC, and CQ Researcher online databases; SetonCat, the general catalog, at Seton Hall University's Walsh Library; and print and online editions of journals and newspapers. Of particular interest were the consequences of performance accountability on leadership, school climate, school and district initiatives, and educators' behaviors and coping mechanisms. Since market-based reforms constitute a form of performance accountability, I also collected studies of marketization and its influence on schools and educators. Furthermore, the theoretical frameworks of this study required literature that applied ideas from Habermas, Foucault, Power, and theorists interested in the concept of performativity in education. When articles could not be retrieved in full-text format from an online library database, or when articles of interest were listed in the references of other literature but appeared in journals that were not available in the Walsh Library collection, I used Google searches for copies located elsewhere or contacted the authors via e-mail and was able to procure electronic copies directly from them.

The following keywords, entered in multiple combinations with an AND Boolean Operator and the terms *education* OR *schools*, were used to locate literature in the

databases listed above: *accountability, accountability movement, performance accountability, market-based reform, A Nation at Risk, No Child Left Behind* or *NCLB, America 2000, Goals 2000, Race to the Top, consequences and accountability, leadership and accountability, principals and accountability, administrators and accountability, standards, high-stakes testing, impression management,* and *public relations. Higher education* as a subject was eliminated from these searches in order to limit the search results to studies and articles relevant to K-12 education.

After locating and studying a few articles on these subjects, I noticed similarities between accountability regimes and Michel Foucault's (1995) concepts of disciplinary power and panopticism. This realization led me to search for literature that included Foucault's name, at which point I came across Anderson and Grinberg's (1998) article, "Educational administration as a disciplinary practice: Appropriating Foucault's view of power, discourse, and method." Arguing for the relevance of Foucault's theory of disciplinary power in the study of educational administration, this article led me to search for additional texts in postmodern philosophy and critical theory: the original work of the theorists themselves as well as studies in which their theories were applied directly to research in educational administration. As I studied the literature on performance accountability in education, I found that the theoretical works of Foucault, Habermas, Ball, and Power were either relevant to the topic of accountability or directly referenced by the authors of the studies.

Limitations of the Review

Because performance accountability is a prevalent topic in K-12 education at the time of this writing, this literature review may miss scholarship that emerges

contemporaneously with this dissertation. Furthermore, since each major event or policy change in the evolution of performance accountability—the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, the signing of Goals 2000 into law, the development of state curriculum standards, the rising prominence of high-stakes testing, to name a few—has produced its own rich body of evidence-based commentary and empirical studies, this literature review cannot possibly consider all of the extant scholarship. Instead, I have attempted to provide a thorough review of post-NCLB accountability literature that has direct implications for leadership and the everyday work of principals in K-12 schools.

Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion of Literature

In conducting my search for literature and preparing this review, I included literature of the following types:

- peer-reviewed studies from journals;

- evidence-based commentary in peer-reviewed journals;

- books and book chapters that approach the topic from a theoretical framework (e.g., Sergiovanni's (2000) *The Lifeworld of Leadership: Creating Culture, Community, and Personal Meaning in our Schools*, which directly applies Habermas's notion of lifeworld and system);

- books on the history of education in the United States;

- conference papers;

- government reports;

- newspaper articles providing details of accountability policies;

- evidence-based commentary from think tanks; and

- dissertations.

Although the performance accountability movement, as described in the opening of this chapter, became prevalent in the early 1970s and gained a great deal of momentum after 1983, I have limited my thorough treatment of peer-reviewed studies and evidence-based commentaries to those published after NCLB or shortly before this legislation was passed—that is, while it was being debated. Other sources may pre-date this legislation if they provide theoretical frameworks or relevant historical information.

Polemical books were excluded from this review in order to limit the opinion-oriented material to strictly evidence-based commentary from peer-reviewed sources. Furthermore, studies predating NCLB by more than 2 years were excluded in order to keep the review as relevant as possible to current trends in performance accountability.

Examination of Current Literature

Unintended Consequences of Performance Accountability

As noted earlier, much of the scholarly literature on performance accountability focuses on its unintended consequences. Even studies and commentaries that acknowledge the benefits of performance accountability, such as its attention to racial or socioeconomic achievement gaps and its emphasis on the *outcomes* of schooling, tend to find pernicious side effects in the system of accountability mandates. Dworkin (2005), for example, contended that performance accountability can "lead schools to game the system" (p. 171). Examples of such gaming may include focusing the most attention and resources on the so-called "bubble kids": those students who were just below the passing score in the previous year and have a chance of passing if they are given extra remediation. Booher-Jennings (2006) cited the common strategy of focusing on the bubble kids, or what some teachers have actually called "the accountables" (p. 4). She

referred to this practice as "rationing education" (p. 1), or "educational triage" (p. 2), and she described its use in an elementary school in Texas. Her use of the word "triage" suggests that the teachers have little choice in the matter; they are simply responding to emergencies in order to survive as a school. In triage, the teacher rations education such that the students who are close to passing will get the most attention. Those who stand little chance of passing and those who will definitely pass the state exam are left on their own. Unfortunately, in this situation, educational decisions are not made according to morality; rather, the decision to focus on the bubble kids is a "sterile management imperative," one that is difficult to refute because of the "scientific underpinnings" of data-based teaching (2006, p. 3).

Corroborating Booher-Jennings's (2006) argument, Ladd and Zelli (2002) found that teachers working under the North Carolina accountability system gave the least amount of attention to students performing at grade level. Cullen and Reback (2006) also noted that schools working within the Texas accountability system of the 1990s were likely to focus most of their attention on students who were likely to fail state tests. In a study of four urban elementary schools in Chicago, Diamond and Spillane (2004) found that the use of educational triage depended on the school's level of performance. Low-performing schools actively used available data to try to get off probation, focusing on "certain students, certain grade levels, and certain academic subjects" (p. 29). Here, the authors noted the bubble student phenomenon, in which schools target students who are close to passing and need extra attention—to the detriment of other students who are not near the cut-point for proficiency. High-performing schools, however, were more able to address the needs of all students. These schools focused intensively on instruction for

each and every student, but the low-performing schools demonstrated a "calculated, strategic effort to respond to the policy demands of the external environment" (p. 36).

While schools may strategically divert resources and attention to particular students, they also demonstrate a tendency to re-focus their curricula in order to improve their accountability scores. Drawing from multiple case studies (three high schools of varying socioeconomic status [SES] from each of five different states: California, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania), Perna and Thomas (2008) reported that teachers in all contexts had less autonomy and felt a need to narrow the curriculum. For example, in a school in Pennsylvania with above-average achievement, one teacher noted that there was no longer room in the curriculum for certain periods of literature or writing styles. In their study of Chicago elementary schools, Diamond and Spillane (2004) cited decreased emphasis on social studies and science in their instruction because of the accountability system's use of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, which emphasized reading and math. Similarly, quantitative data from North Carolina showed that principals advocated for decreased focus on subjects other than math and reading and urged teachers to spend more time teaching test-taking skills (Ladd & Zelli, 2002).

The effects of narrowing curricula in response to accountability measures can even be seen at the state-level, according to Rich (2003). He related an example of teachers narrowing the curriculum by concentrating on the tested subjects (usually English language arts and math) at the expense of other subjects, such as science. According to Rich (2003), California demonstrated increased test scores on its own state-mandated exams, but its fourth and eighth graders posted some of the lowest science scores in the nation on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP),

commonly known as the nation's report card. Indeed, California's students outperformed only three other states in the country on the NAEP science section.

Building upon the idea that a focus on one kind of testing can actually correlate with students' lower performance on other types of tests, Marchant and Paulson (2005) issued a warning that may sound counterintuitive: the use of an additional high-stakes test—like a high school exit exam—may actually harm students' abilities to perform well on the SAT, a high-stakes test used in college admissions decisions. The implication here is that the high school exit exams are narrowing curriculum so much that they undermine schools' ability to teach reasoning skills that may actually help students perform well on the SAT. The practical implication is that school leaders must find a way to appropriate the mandates of the state—such as, "all students must pass the high school exit exam"— in a way that does not corrupt the worthy curricular goals of teaching critical reasoning.

Unanticipated consequences of the performance accountability culture come in more pernicious forms than the narrowing of curricula, though. Dworkin (2005) argues that as public school choice options increase, schools may select for admission only those students who are most likely to help the school achieve AYP. They may also manipulate school demographics at the district level, placing a high concentration of racial or ethnic subgroups in some schools so that fewer schools in the district fail to meet AYP. Another strategy might be to spread racial or ethnic subgroups around a district so that they will be small enough not to be counted for AYP. As evidence of these gaming practices, Dworkin cited a study by Wells (2002), who noted that, in a voucher program in Cleveland, suburban schools engaged in "creaming"—that is, taking only the best and ultimately accepting no students from urban schools. Dworkin also noted that the

relaxation of laws that used to require desegregation plans in large metropolitan districts made it possible for school systems to manipulate demographics in the ways described above. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this kind manipulation is pure speculation; Dworkin did not provide any evidence that this has taken place.

Still, however, DeMoss (2002) cited empirical evidence of the creation of elitist models in response to demands for higher performance accountability. In a study of the role of a school principal in managing a high-stakes testing culture, DeMoss analyzed four matched pairs of elementary schools, each pair from a different Chicago neighborhood. All schools were from low income settings, but one school in each pair ranked in the highest quartile of improvement in reading scores for the city, and the other ranked in the lowest quartile for improvement. DeMoss found that the principal played a significant role in determining how the school would respond to the accountability demands of the city system. While more successful principals emphasized curricular improvements and not just test-score gains, and were able to empower teachers as professionals without giving them total autonomy, one principal pursued an elitist model, accepting only students who could handle its rigorous, magnet-school-like program. DeMoss found this model inadequate, though in a different way from those schools whose principals advocated "whole-school scripted programs" or those who merely tried "to avoid censure" by providing resources only to those most likely to pass the state test (p. 129). According to DeMoss, the elitist model is inadequate because the children who could not attend this school "still need educational services" (p. 127).

While the students were never officially turned away from this elite public school, administrators were able to divert struggling students to other schools by telling their

parents, upon registration, that their children would likely be placed below grade level or would experience an alternative curriculum. Furthermore, while tenured teachers who did not agree with this elitist model could not be fired, "the principal supported counseling out those who didn't fit," as one staff member said (DeMoss, 2002, p. 114). Although this school thrived and resembled a private school with its small classes and traditional curriculum, the children who were essentially turned away from this school had to attend other schools that may not have been able to meet their needs.

Apple (2000) noted that as school choice options increase, schools must compete for their students. In addition to forcing schools to emphasize marketing and public relations activities, the marketized environment creates what Apple calls a

subtle, but crucial shift in emphasis—one that is not openly discussed as often as it should be—from student needs to student performance and from what the school does for the student to what the student does for the school. (p. 235)

Of course, a school in this environment wants students who will enhance its scores, and thus its ratings, which will continue to draw more competitive students to their school.

As schools compete for students, some of them are prone to what Ball (2001) called "fabrication" (p. 216). Ball's definition of fabrication as a result of performativity will be discussed in the theoretical section, but other researchers have cited the tendency of schools to respond to calls for accountability in inauthentic ways. Adler-Kassner and Harrington (2010) expressed concern about the growth of calls for performance accountability, claiming that its definition depends on who the audience of the accountability is. When the audience is external to the educational institution, accountability has to do with proving that the institution is achieving its goals; when the

audience is internal, the goal is organizational improvement. The authors referred to the latter type of accountability as a "responsibility frame" (2010, p. 90) and they supported it because of its authenticity and the greater respect it has for the professional judgment of educators:

> Where the accountability frame opens by *telling* [emphasis added] teachers what they need to know about their students, responsibility begins with the assumption that teachers know their students and their local educational contexts and are *genuinely* [emphasis added] committed to improvement within those contexts. (Adler-Kassner & Harrington, 2010, pp. 90-91)

The implication here is that external accountability can lead to inauthentic demonstrations of success while internal accountability, which respects the judgment of professionals in their local environments, is dedicated to meaningful and authentic (genuine) reforms. Indeed, much other work has been done to show that external accountability measures can result in fabrication or an exorbitant focus on impression management by teachers and administrators (Ball, 2001; Niesz, 2010).

The story of the so-called "Texas Miracle" in the late 1990s provides a prime example of fabrication—one that goes well beyond educators' inauthenticity in their efforts (Anderson, 2005). Writing about this scandal, Darling-Hammond (2007) reported that the Houston Independent School District engaged in strategic retention of students, failed to report significant dropout rates, and saw their test scores increase tremendously. Anderson (2005) noted that after the Houston district was found to have fabricated its dropout rates, the state of Texas changed the ranking of most of its schools from the highest performing to the lowest—a change that was reported in *The New York Times* in

2003. Nevertheless, Anderson argued that the disgrace of the Houston schools was outweighed by the celebration the schools enjoyed when they were given awards for posting such improvements. Drawing on the theory of spectacular power, Anderson claims, "single news stories have short shelf lives and are crowded off the page by some new spectacle. By the time a story is debunked, the effect has already been achieved" (2005, p. 3).

One of the Houston Schools' strategies was to retain students before their testing year so that they would not be counted in the testing pool (Darling-Hammond, 2007). After multiple retentions, the students would either skip the testing year or be counseled into dropping out of school. Darling-Hammond also noted that schools in Houston exempted students by labeling them as special education or Limited English Proficient (LEP), even when the students did not deserve these labels. Writing about the Texas accountability system of the 1990s as well, Cullen and Reback (2006) noted a tendency to exempt students who were unlikely to pass the exam—practices they referred to as "gaming" (p. 3) or "strategic behavior" (p. 1). Crucially, Cullen and Reback found high exemption rates for Hispanic and Black students. Up to 7% of Hispanic students and 14% of Black students were exempted from tests in schools where other ethnic groups outperformed Hispanic and Black students overall.

Cullen and Reback's (2006) study of the Texas accountability system analyzed data from 1993 to 1998, measuring the incentives that schools had to raise their exemption rates or encourage students to be absent on test days. Indeed, the researchers found that schools encouraged some students to be absent on testing days and classified more students as learning disabled in order to raise their exemption rates. The

researchers also controlled for the funding incentives that schools might have to classify more students; that is, they focused only on the incentives offered by the accountability system. As Cullen and Reback contended,

> When bureaucracies use heterogeneous inputs, as in the education sector, there is inevitably a trade-off between designing an accountability system that is "fair," in terms of accounting for its heterogeneity, and 'manipulation-proof,' in terms of ensuring that measured performance represents real accomplishment. (2006, p. 3)

Schools are able to account for their heterogeneity by exempting students with limited English proficiency or certain learning disabilities from the exams, but at what point do the exemptions begin to obscure the school's actual performance? Cullen and Reback (2006) concluded their study by claiming that school ratings are inaccurate. The implication was that policy decisions were made on false data. Even property values in a given neighborhood or district, which change based on school ratings, were a reflection of manipulated data.

Making a more theoretical argument about fabrication, Husbands (2001) discussed the unanticipated consequences of the new performance management in the UK, noting that "any assessment or evaluation framework impacts on the behaviours it is intended to measure" (p. 11). Thus, the new accountability system did not only measure, but it influenced the very things it measured—altering instruction and other practices in schools. This is a concern especially where the measures of pupil performance have an impact on teachers' careers or salaries, the reputation of the school, or the funding of the school. Husbands invoked the well-known Campbell's Law (as cited in Instutute for

Quantitative Social Science, 2007), which states that "the more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision-making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor" (Institute for Quantitative Social Science, 2007, para. 1). This point is particularly relevant at the time of this writing since the federal Race to the Top program has incentivized the creation of teacher evaluation systems that are based in part on student performance. Some of these evaluation systems may include bonuses or raises for teachers whose students show growth in test scores. In his State of the Union Address in 2011, President Obama made a statement that suggested the notion of financial incentives for teacher performance. Although he did not mention performance pay directly, President Obama noted that

> in South Korea, teachers are known as "nation builders." Here in America, it's time we treated the people who educate our children with the same level of respect. We want to *reward* [emphasis added] good teachers and stop making excuses for bad ones. (Obama, 2011, para. 39)

New Jersey Governor Chris Christie was more direct in his 2011 State of the State Address:

> We must cut out-of-classroom costs and focus our efforts on teachers and children. I propose that we *reward* [emphasis added] the best teachers, based on merit, at the individual teacher level.... Teaching can no longer be the only profession where you have no *rewards* [emphasis added] for excellence and no consequences for failure to perform. (Christie, 2011, paras. 214 and 219)

It remains to be seen how performance will be defined, but the advent of national testing aligned with the Common Core State Standards Initiative suggests that exam scores will have a role to play.

In his work on fabrication, Ball (2001) noted that performance culture ironically results in people's "'bringing off' of performances" (pp. 211-212), which is to say that a culture that demands high performance induces people to perform in another sense of the word—that is, in the way that one performs on a stage. This phenomenon is ironic in a culture that is looking for reports of hard data and truth.

Ironies of Performance Accountability

Other researchers have found additional ironies in the accountability culture. In their study of the way accountability policies impact principals in North Carolina, Ladd and Zelli (2002) found that principals of schools serving higher-income students perceived themselves as having more power than those at lower-income schools to remove weak teachers. The researchers poignantly asked "where such teachers go," implying that they end up in schools serving less advantaged populations (p. 519). The irony here is that the accountability policies (NCLB especially) are intended to diminish the achievement gap between traditionally advantaged and disadvantaged students. Furthermore, in the North Carolina system, Ladd and Zelli found that the chance of getting monetary rewards at high-performing schools cause teachers to avoid taking positions in disadvantaged schools.

Perna and Thomas (2008) found an ironic set of circumstances in the diverse array of 15 high schools they studied in California, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. Using focus groups with students and parents and semi-structured

interviews with teachers and counselors, Perna and Thomas revealed "the de facto diminishment of college opportunity, especially for capable students attending the nation's most underperforming schools" (p. 2). The problem is that the accountability system, which relies on students' performance on high-stakes testing, causes schools to focus more on the testing than on "activities that promote college enrollment"—for example, college counseling (p. 2). This situation is particularly disturbing to Perna and Thomas because the tests themselves do not align with the skills necessary in college and employment.

Perna and Thomas (2008) examined the way the testing policies influence what they call "key predictors of college enrollment": namely, "high school graduation, academic preparation, knowledge and information" (p. 7). As demonstrated in their study, students and teachers believed that exit exams had a negative impact on the rigor and relevance of the school's academic offerings. One ninth grader at an underperforming school said, "Every time they [the teachers] bring up the subject about the FCAT [Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test]—it's always about the FCAT and nothing about the world" (p. 15). Other students noted the school's central interest in making sure it looks good, providing special tutoring for courses that have end-of-course exams.

Students at low-performing schools also believed that their opportunities for college enrollment are diminished by the public's perception of their schools, according to Perna and Thomas's study (2008). The school's low test scores made them believe that they would not be ready for college. In this case, we see that public accountability influences the students' sense of their own readiness.

Furthermore, Perna and Thomas (2008) found that high school exit exams diverted resources from core academic activities to testing. For example, one low-performing high school in Pennsylvania employed someone to drive around town and pick up students to ensure their attendance on testing days. Others hold raffles and offer ice cream sundaes in the cafeteria on testing days. Crucially, although low-performing schools do not provide students with much preparation for the SAT (which would help for college admission), they do provide tutoring and Saturday programs for the state exams.

Counselors in the study noted that they have a difficult time meeting with students to discuss college planning because the students must spend most of their time preparing for the exit exams (Perna & Thomas, 2008). Teachers were also reluctant to let their students see counselors because they were pressured to prepare their students for the exams. Thus, struggling students did not know if they were even eligible for college until it was too late to begin the college or post-secondary education counseling process. Some of these students, according to Perna and Thomas, did not begin thinking about college planning until the very end of their senior year.

Marchant and Paulson (2005) found irony in the effects of graduation exams on graduation rates, dropout rates, and SAT scores. The authors make a compelling claim because, with their quantitative data, they were able to prove a rather surprising result—namely, that states with graduation exams may actually be harming their students with this accountability requirement, causing higher numbers of dropouts, lower graduation rates, and less success on SAT scores. It may be intuitive to say that states with exit exams must have higher standards than those who do not have such exams. Furthermore,

one might think that these high standards would lead to higher SAT scores—but they do not. As noted earlier in this literature review, the state exams typically do not require the kind of critical thinking that the SAT demands, and so the curriculum ends up being geared toward lower-level thinking skills. Moreover, Marchant and Paulson's data are even more powerful because they have controlled for what they identify as confounding demographic factors (e.g., ethnicity and SES, which are often cited as predictors of success on the SAT and high school graduation).

It has been argued extensively that the tests used in state accountability systems are problematic. Dworkin (2005) noted that under NCLB, states have been left on their own to choose the types of tests they would like to use. Some states have designed exams on their own; others have used commercial tests such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Dworkin argued that the development of fair tests—that is, tests checked for validity and reliability—requires more time than NCLB has provided. Even those states that use commercial tests, which have been checked for validity and reliability, have had to design and add their own sections to cover state-specific curricular content. These additional sections may not be considered fair in a technical sense (Dworkin, 2005).

States also vary in the way they collect and analyze their data (Dworkin, 2005). Some states use the results from a single year to determine if a school has made the federally-mandated Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP); others analyze their data 2 or 3 years at a time. The General Accounting Office (as cited in Dworkin, 2005) has warned that errors in data collection may result in inaccurate determination of whether schools are making AYP.

Furthermore, students' mobility poses a problem (Dworkin, 2005). If a school has high student-mobility, its results can change significantly from year to year. This is especially the case for schools that have many low-income or minority students—the very students that the law purports to serve. In Houston, Booher-Jennings (2006) notes, a significant percentage of special education students and African American students never gets counted in the AYP calculations because they are especially mobile: "Ironically, the very students NCLB was designed to target are often those least likely to be counted" (p. 4).

Indeed, Darling-Hammond (2007) claimed that NCLB has done more to create a crisis than it has to address one. At the time of her writing, Darling-Hammond noted that NCLB managed to label one-third of the country's public schools as failing to meet AYP. Schools with the neediest students end up getting punished—an irony because the legislation was supposed to help these students. In fact, the law unintentionally encourages schools to close its doors on students who are likely to bring their scores down. Darling-Hammond called this "a one-way accountability system that holds children and educators to test-based standards they cannot meet while it does *not* hold federal or state governments to standards that would ensure equal and adequate educational opportunity" (p. 247). The accountability law, she showed, focused on the outputs of schools, not the inputs. Furthermore, as an accountability system, its concern is to measure schools, and measurement does not improve schools on its own.

Darling-Hammond (2007) pointed out yet another irony in the NCLB law: schools with many LEP students, or students with disabilities, have a harder time meeting the law's standard because all of the subgroups that represent these students must also

show proficiency—and yet "students are assigned to these subgroups *because* they cannot meet the standard" (p. 249). When they do meet the standard—that is, when they learn enough English not to be categorized as LEP, they are moved out of the subgroup. Darling-Hammond asked how this subgroup could *ever* reach proficiency in this system.

Furthermore, many states use norm-referenced tests, or criterion-referenced tests that resemble norm-referenced tests in the way their cut-scores and questions are determined (Darling-Hammond, 2007). On any norm-referenced test, 50% of the students must fall below the norm, and some group of those students must always fall below the cut point that marks proficiency. Thus, the idea of reaching 100% proficiency by 2013-14—which the law requires—is impossible. There must always be students who fall below the proficiency cut point. Ironically, then, there is an incentive for states to lower their standards within this system. A state with high standards risks having most of its schools labeled as "needing improvement."

Darling-Hammond (2007) also suggested that schools that do not meet the standard end up having an even more difficult obstacle to overcome. Using Florida and North Carolina as examples, she claimed that when schools are labeled as "needing improvement" or "failing"—labels that are frequently specious given the arguments about the system above—they find it extremely difficult to keep or attract qualified and experienced teachers. The implication is that once a school is deemed "failing," a downward spiral begins and it is almost impossible for the school to get out.

Marketization as Accountability

Although the testing system and its accompanying legislation have been criticized extensively (as outlined above), they have made performance accountability and market-

based reforms of public education possible. Indeed, discussions of performance accountability cannot ignore the related topics of school choice and marketization. The marketized environment, in which schools compete with one another for students, operates as a form of accountability itself. The idea, based on neo-liberal economics, is that the free market will hold schools accountable for their performance. Parents will choose schools for their children based on the schools' performance relative to nearby schools.

According to Apple (2000), proponents of marketized environments cleverly call them politically neutral. A meritocracy is supposedly formed wherein schools have to show, and are rewarded for, their "entrepreneurial efficiency and effectiveness" (p. 234). The problem, however, is that while those who support market-based reform refer to markets as neutral (or based on merit alone), they may actually reproduce the current system of inequality among schools.

Apple (2000) called attention to the market-reform experiment in the United Kingdom, which began with its 1993 Education Act, a law that gave local educational authorities (LEAs) an annual opportunity to defect from the local system and enter the competitive market. Apple used the UK example, however, to show that many problems can result from this system. Performance indicators were published in "examination league tables" so that parents could compare schools with one another, and schools ended up competing for students (p. 235). Thus, in a marketized environment, schools need to advertize themselves, and the result is an emphasis on marketing and public relations at the expense of core academic activities.

Furthermore, middle class parents have the most advantage in the marketized environment, according to Apple (2000). They have the comfort and the capital—both social and economic—to find the best schools for their children and get them admitted into those schools. Those with lower incomes tend to be more alienated from school officials and the system as a whole; they do not know how to engage in the system as well as those in the middle class. Thus, Apple argued, the market perpetuates an unequal distribution of resources.

Karen (2005) also pointed out this irony of performance accountability. He noted that while NCLB claims to address racial/ethnic and income-based achievement gaps that resulted from what President George W. Bush famously called "the soft bigotry of low expectations" (p. 165), the law has "ignored sociological research on the role of schools and communities in challenging or reinforcing discrimination and inequality" (p. 165). According to Karen, four decades of research in sociology have shown that factors beyond the school impact student learning—and these factors, which reveal discriminatory practices, need to be addressed in addition to the work of schools themselves. They include:

> unequal access to medical and dental care; unequal access to housing; unequal access to labor markets and adequate incomes; unequal access to vibrant communities with high levels of social capital; and yes, unequal access to educational resources. (2005, p. 168)

With these factors in mind, it becomes clear why Apple (2000) argued that a free market for education does not really present a fair game for all participants.

Lubienski (2005) saw the marketizing of education as part of a more general trend

of neoliberal economics: services and industries that used to be run by the state, such as

defense and the distribution of water and electricity, are now privatized to a greater

degree. The philosophy behind this movement depends on a distrust of bureaucracies.

Lubienski noted that people tend to act according to their self-interest—even bureaucrats

who are responsible for agencies that provide public goods. Bureaucrats, since they are

people after all, can also be influenced easily by interest groups such as teachers' unions.

When this happens, the bureaucracy becomes less efficient and less responsive to

people's real needs. As Lubienski (2005) noted:

> [The] bureaucratic administration of public services necessarily leads to
>
> institutional pathologies such as unresponsiveness to consumers, a lack of
>
> innovation, inefficiencies in resource allocation, growing costs, and
>
> ineffectiveness in securing desired outcomes. (p. 467)

So, a free market becomes the solution to these problems. Unlike a complicated and

inefficient bureaucracy, the free market creates a simpler relationship between the

provider and the consumer. The belief is that schools will more easily respond to student

needs in this business-type model.

Lubienski (2005), however, cited the case of Michigan, which began statewide

choice reforms in the mid-1990s and had little success. The reforms included open

enrollment, privatization of management in certain schools, and support for charters. The

result was little or no innovation in the classrooms, but more marketing and the

dedication of financial resources to selling the schools. Over the course of 5 years,

Detroit lost 10% of its students and ended up spending $1.5 million on advertising in a

single year to attract more students. Even suburban districts devoted thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars to marketing. These funds, of course, could have been used for the core responsibility of schooling: instruction. Furthermore, cities like Detroit, which are low-performing, end up getting "an extra financial penalty" in having to market themselves (Lubienski, 2005, p. 477).

Lubienski (2005) claimed that although market-based reforms were supposed to incentivize improvement in schools (a form of accountability), the research showed that classroom practice did not change in response to business-like competition. The lesson has been that we cannot simply change the way school systems are structured and expect classroom practice simply to reform itself. Lubienski also noted that, compared to overhauling a school district's curriculum, "marketing is relatively risk-free and inexpensive"; hence, its allure as a solution (p. 479). But, since marketing relies on symbols and not on substantive change, education itself changes little—if at all.

Schools' recent emphasis on image or impression management in response to market reforms has been documented widely in the literature on accountability. Apple (2001) argued that when marketized reforms and new accountability systems are implemented, principals and other administrators need to spend significant time working on enhancing the image of their school. According to Apple, in neo-liberal, market-based reforms, the state becomes a regulator of schools that compete with one another. Of course, this environment places additional burdens on school leaders because the system requires from schools the "constant production of evidence" that they are doing effective work (p. 416). Furthermore, evidence must appear in standardized forms (performance indicators) so that there can be a basis for comparison among schools (p. 416). The result

is that schools become more similar to one another. As we will see in the theoretical

section of this chapter, Sergiovanni would argue that schools in this environment end up

losing their character and much of their effectiveness. Furthermore, schools' results must

be widely publicized for consumption—a phenomenon that Foucault might call a

surveillance technology that transforms schools, teachers, and administrators into

disciplined objects of the public's gaze. Foucault's work on power through surveillance

will be explained in the theoretical section of this chapter as well.

Smyth (2001), who writes about the commodification of teaching in marketized

environments, noted that education in the marketplace resembles corporate culture in that

it must respond to consumer demands and its outputs need to be measurable. The notion

of selling a school is also important in the marketplace; thus, we see an emphasis on

public relations or impression management. This emphasis is partly a result of public

rankings and increased scrutiny of schools. Indeed, *New Jersey Monthly*, a prominent

magazine in the "Garden State," has been ranking the state's public high schools bi-

annually since September, 1988 (Schlager, personal communication, April 4, 2011). In

the magazine, schools are ranked according to state-mandated and standardized test

scores, enrollment in rigorous courses such as Advanced Placement programs, class size,

and other factors related to school environment.

In their study of four urban elementary schools in Chicago, Diamond and Spillane

(2004) found that in low-performing schools, principals felt pressure to show immediate

results, especially because they had been assigned probation managers. Consistent with

the theme of marketing, the schools' responses "tended to be cosmetic and superficial

with regard to classroom instruction" and they used a "pep-rally strategy" to encourage

teachers and reinforce their confidence that they could get off probation (p. 19). In their observation account, the authors noted that one staff meeting had "a revival meeting atmosphere" (p. 20). These school leaders also bought various instructional programs to impress probation managers, even though the programs were not necessarily coherent or well-conceived in their adoption; they were just decorative. When observers came to the school, leaders reminded teachers to have their planners visible, their classrooms well-decorated, and their students well-behaved. Diamond and Spillane concluded that their strategy was "cosmetic, emphasizing the trappings of instructional improvement while the actual instructional practices are not emphasized" (p. 22).

Niesz's (2010) recent ethnographic study of an urban middle school in Philadelphia that was in danger of reconstitution or privatization focused exclusively on image-making. At Cavner Middle School (a pseudonym), the principal's public relations work made it seem as if innovative reforms were taking place throughout the school when they reflected only the work being done in two honors classes.

In her study, Niesz (2010) referred briefly to Habermas's notion of technical rationality—a concern with efficient means to produce ends. When technical rationality is applied to education, the concern is not with the ends themselves or the values that they represent, even when those values conflict with the principles and belief systems of most educators. Niesz claimed that in such an environment, it is difficult for people to communicate rationally and without coercion (what Habermas would call the ideal of "communicative action," as we will see in the theoretical section of this chapter) (Habermas, 1989). Although Niesz did not cite Bolman and Deal (2008), I might add that when technical rationality takes over, there is an exorbitant emphasis on

organizational structures—flow charts, administrative processes, organization—without regard for the quality of the work done within these structures. While the structural frame of organizational theory cannot be ignored, it should not be the only lens through which leaders view their organizations. Bolman and Deal (2008) would argue that effective leaders are able to see their organizations through the human resource, political, and symbolic frames as well.

Niesz (2010) found contradictory goals at Cavner: The promotion of progressive reforms, authentic performance assessments, service learning—alongside a strict mandate to spend more time preparing students for standardized exams. There were also new security measures as testing became a focus.

> The phrase *zero tolerance* could be heard often and in many different contexts throughout the school. Security guards and police officers on walkie-talkies roamed almost empty hallways and guarded the doors of the school. At one point, students were informed that bathroom breaks were off limits except during lunchtime. All of the bathrooms were locked. (2010, p. 379)

Niesz (2010) reported that while posters in the school advertised the schools' various initiatives, the teachers she interviewed were unaware of what these initiatives meant. It was clear to Niesz that the school was focused on product, not process. For example, when the principal invited outsiders to the school to publicize its improvement efforts, she ended up *requiring* selected teachers to pursue certain projects they had developed so that outsiders could see this work. The principal once asked a teacher to use an interactive whiteboard on the day that a journalist visited. She also ordered CD

ROMs to put students' writing projects on them, but showed no interest in the process used by the teachers to get students to write effectively.

At Cavner, two teachers who advocated service learning and other progressive pedagogies were given so much support by the principal that their colleagues "resented" them (Niesz, 2010, p. 388). Thus, these teachers ended up isolated and unable to influence their colleagues. According to Niesz,

> An irony of image making as part of a multifaceted school survival strategy was that the kinds of pedagogy that were promoted to construct an image of a good school did not proliferate in the ways that they might have in a more equitable context (2010, p. 388).

Surely, good things were happening, but the culture at Cavner lacked mechanisms and genuine support for the effective sharing of best practices.

Niesz noted that Cavner teachers would sometimes hear about initiatives, but they were not given professional development to help fulfill these goals. Niesz referred to "an instrumental or technical orientation to change" rather than a genuine effort to change; new programs or initiatives were "primarily ornamental" at Cavner (p. 389).

Tellingly, the two teachers who were supported in their progressive work had to look outside the school for collegial discussions—the "communicative action" to which Habermas refers. Quoting Habermas (1984), Niesz noted that

> the way to participatory democracy [in organizations] is through the kind of communication in which 'the actions of the agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through acts of reaching understanding.' (Niesz, 2010, p.390)

Put simply, colleagues need to be working collaboratively with a common goal and a view toward understanding one another. If colleagues or leaders are calculating or strategizing their way to success, there cannot be true participatory democracy. The present study will build upon the application of Habermas's theory of communicative action as it examines the influence of performance accountability on high school principals in New Jersey.

Loss of Democratic Practices Under Performance Accountability

Adding to the concern that performance accountability may deplete democratic practices in school leadership, Elliott (2001) borrowed the term *audit culture* from Power (1997) to describe the way schools function under new accountability systems. Elliott (2001) argued that audit cultures are characterized by a low level of trust in the professionals providing services. After all, when the stakes are high and certain goals need to be achieved—goals that the staff may not agree with—school leaders may find themselves unable to use the democratic practices they value in decision-making. In their study of the way high-stakes testing accountability impacts principals' perception of their own empowerment and their ability to empower others in South Florida schools, Reed et al. (2001) showed that principals in lower-performing schools found themselves issuing more directives and were unable to use committees for decision-making. After conducting 26 interviews of principals by phone in a diverse array of schools—those rated according to a letter grade system of "A" through "F"—Reed et al. found that schools in the C-F range, the middle- and lower-performing schools, were the least likely to use democratic practices. "Interestingly," they noted, "the only principal that

mentioned student-initiated programs was from one of the 'A' schools involved in the study" (p. 15).

Reed et al. (2001) cited research that suggested that accountability using high-stakes tests can have a negative impact on principals' sense of empowerment. For these researchers, empowerment in a school involves teacher professionalism and autonomy, sharing of decision-making among stakeholders, and general democratic leadership.

When the Florida Accountability Act was signed into law in 1999 (as cited in Reed et al., 2001), schools began to receive letter grades based on their performance on standardized tests. Schools that were assigned an A were given more autonomy in their budgetary decision-making. D and F schools, however, had to prioritize funds to raise student achievement on the tests. B and C schools received neither increased nor decreased autonomy.

According to Reed et al. (2001), principals of C schools reported low morale among teachers and difficulty attracting teachers to work at their schools. Principals of D and F schools indicated that much of their work revolved around the testing. As one principal noted, "they 'eat, drink, sleep, and breathe' the tests" (Reed et al., 2001, p. 9). Most principals, however, felt that they could control *how* they accomplished goals at their schools, but they did not have control over the goals themselves. Describing the phenomenon of standards-based reform, Sergiovanni (2000) wrote about the danger of school leaders' having control only over the means, not the ends. Thus, the school leader becomes the technician implementing someone else's goals.

Principals in all of the schools in Reed et al.'s (2001) study noted that the accountability system influenced their leadership behaviors. A and B school principals

explained that a concern with raising test scores competed with their ability to promote innovative practices. C school principals claimed that almost all of what they do concerns raising test scores. One principal said the following about high-stakes testing: "It runs everything" (p. 14).

Not surprisingly, Reed et al. (2001) found that principals in schools with higher scores on the tests were more able to empower their staff and provide professional development in student-centered and social-emotional learning. Nevertheless, principals of all the different levels of schools spoke of *some* degree of empowerment (their own and their ability to empower others). They noted that their own attitude toward the accountability climate determined their empowerment. In response to Reed et al., we might ask: did the use of telephone interviews—as opposed to in-person—prevent the building of a rapport between researcher and principal, thereby influencing the validity of the data? It seems possible that a principal would be loath to admit, even to a university researcher who would keep identities confidential, that he/she does not feel empowered or able to empower others.

In their concluding remarks, Reed et al. (2001) noted, "If [principals] are being forced to operate in ways that are counter to what they know to be best practices, then their ability to make a positive difference in young peoples' lives will be greatly diminished" (p. 21). Following up on this work, the present study will ask principals how the performance accountability culture drives them to operate in ways that contradict their own notions of best practice.

Leithwood et al. (2002) also reported on the loss of democratic practices in schools under performance accountability systems. During the 1999-2000 school year,

interviews with 48 teachers and 15 administrators at five secondary schools in Ontario, Canada, which had just implemented major accountability reforms with common testing of all students and publicized results for schools, revealed that teachers were upset with the autocratic way in which accountability measures were implemented. Although this dissertation is about accountability in the United States, Leithwood et al.'s study is relevant because the model of accountability employed in Ontario is strikingly similar to what has been described so far in this literature review. According to the authors, it became the principals' job to "recover at least some of the teacher commitment to policy implementation lost when governments use authoritarian strategies in their initial restructuring and policy making" (p.110). Leithwood et al. called this "buffering" (p. 110). Essentially, the principal needs to give teachers good reasons to make changes— reasons that differ from those identified by the government. Unfortunately, however, the principals in this study found themselves asking department heads to make major curricular changes without seeking their input or giving them adequate time to accomplish these goals.

Leithwood et al. (2002) were especially interested in the role that emotions play in professionals' motivations to comply with government accountability initiatives. They found that administrators reported that the new accountability culture added to their workload significantly because they had to address the low morale of teachers. Principals were upset about what they believed to be unreasonable criticisms of teachers and their professionalism, and they were anxious about working with teachers who were resistant to change. According to Leithwood et al. (2002), a major weakness of this accountability system was the way it was implemented by the government. They noted that the

government used "control strategies" rather than "commitment strategies" to motivate teachers to change (p. 113). While control strategies regulate inputs, process, and outputs, commitment strategies create structures for teachers to rely on their professional discretion and expertise to design innovations themselves. Bolman and Deal (2008) might classify commitment strategies as part of the human resource frame of organizational theory because it empowers professionals to contribute to change initiatives.

According to Leithwood et al. (2002), "Most of what we know about building commitment to change tells us that feelings of enthusiasm and satisfaction are an important part of what sustains people under conditions of risk and uncertainty" (p. 115). When the government uses control strategies, they undermine the very goals they claim to be trying to achieve. Reduction of the government's "social legitimacy with educators" is a result of control strategies (p. 115). Teachers need to see that the government is trying to improve teaching and learning. If they see other motives behind the policies, they are much less likely to comply and fulfill the goals. In the latter case, it becomes the principal's job to give teachers motivation to make changes.

Of course, professionals have no choice but to implement accountability legislation. But, without the emotional commitment of teachers, Leithwood et al. (2002) argued, it remains questionable if students are truly learning more—that is, if their educational experience, overall, is improving. The problem for principals is that they need to comply with, defend, and implement policies with which they may disagree completely. This was a difficult task for the teachers and administrators in Leithwood et al.'s (2002) study, especially since they saw a "lack of moral authority on the

government's part" (p. 111). Instead, these professionals saw themselves as rightfully accountable to students and parents.

Taking the work of Reed et al. (2001) and Leithwood et al. (2002) together, we see a loss of democratic practices both within schools and between governments and school systems. In the description of Niesz's (2010) study, it was noted that participatory democracy within organizations required what Habermas called "communicative action"—that is, rational communication among participants without egocentric calculation or strategic maneuvering. The goal in this type of communication is to reach mutual understanding, not to coerce others into doing something they ordinarily would not do. Though he does not mention Habermas, Smyth (2001) advocated educational reform that resists the new performance management regime and focuses on a type of communicative action. As "an antidote to the managerialist ideological onslaught," Smyth noted that school culture must have a "tolerance for ambiguity, contestation and open-ended difference" (p. 129).

Indeed, Smyth (2001) noted, the performance accountability culture has a definitive idea of what educational outputs are preferable; it does not tolerate disagreement on this point. The teacher is not trusted and is asked merely to comply with demands and fulfill accountability policies. Smyth also argued that school cultures must openly and honestly discuss power relationships and how the school may, in some cases, reproduce social inequalities; without such acknowledgement, a school will not be able to create a democratic culture. In performance accountability culture, hierarchical structures and directives make it difficult for people to share diverse perspectives on what the aims of teaching should be, or to work toward democratic educational practices. Structure and

bureaucracy become more important than a public sphere in which educational professionals construct meaning.

> Schools are places, above all, in which people are continually…testing out and reformulating ideas on how they understand the world, and their role as active agents trying to change it. There needs to be ongoing affirmation that this is a desirable thing to do. (Smyth, 2001, p. 130)

Unfortunately, however, the marketization of schools creates a system that does not tolerate difference because the ultimate goal is to compete with other schools and ensure that the preferred educational outputs are high enough for accountability standards.

Gleeson and Gunter (2001) corroborated the idea that the role of the school administrator has changed significantly under performance management. Since the 1960s, they claimed, the role of school leaders has changed from "that of leading professionals, working with teachers, to that of chief executives with responsibilities for monitoring efficiency and effectiveness" (p. 151). For leaders, there is a tension between being "transformational" and "bureaucratic" (p. 151). On the one hand, administrators need to be visionaries, leading their staff to fulfill the vision; on the other hand, they have to be managers of data, closely examining the performance of the staff against specific standards of accountability.

Measurement of Outcomes in Performance Accountability

Indeed, the management and use of data play a significant role in performance accountability systems. As noted previously, the federal Race to the Top program awards grants partly based on states' commitment to developing data systems that track students' performance and evaluate educators using this data. Interested in the extent to which

teachers and administrators are using data to enhance their own and their schools'

effectiveness, Ingram, Louis, and Schroeder (2004) conducted a longitudinal study of

nine high schools acclaimed for their use of a school improvement practice called

Continuous Improvement. This model of improvement is similar to the notion of

organizational learning in that it relies on teacher collaboration and the reaching of

consensus through dialogue. The authors defined organizational learning (OL) as

> the social processing of knowledge, or the sharing of individually held knowledge
>
> or information in ways that construct a clear, commonly held set of ideas…. This
>
> process may be deliberately cognitive, but it more often develops from the
>
> accretion of mutual understanding over time in a stable group. (2004, p. 1261)

Again, while the authors did not mention Habermas, this definition of OL connects to the

idea of "communicative action" in an institution.

Using interviews and focus groups in nine schools to collect data on the

continuous improvement practice and the schools' cultures, Ingram et al. (2004) found

that teachers and administrators used both systematic data and "anecdotal information,

experience, or intuition" to make decisions (p. 1267). The use of systematic data and

other types of judgment were about equal in these schools.

When considering teacher effectiveness, teachers and administrators in Ingram et

al. (2004) noted the use of data beyond high-stakes tests, some of which is not easily

measurable: student success in college and after college (collected in some schools

through surveys), students' evaluation of their high school courses, students' behaviors in

class, and student character in the world beyond school (their socialization as a result of

what is taught in school). Teachers and administrators also measured teacher

effectiveness through anecdotal and intuitive data—not systematically collected data. In fact, they rarely indicated the use of test scores to evaluate teaching effectiveness, whether those scores were on high-stakes exams or teacher-made assessments. Furthermore, teachers appeared to be more likely to use systematic data when working in groups (e.g., for school improvement) than when operating individually as classroom practitioners.

Overall, Ingram et al. (2004) found "two major disconnects between current education policy and how teachers judge their effectiveness and the effectiveness of their school" (p. 1272):

1. About half of the teachers and administrators in [the] sample judge teacher effectiveness and school effectiveness by some indicator other than student achievement." (p. 1273)

2. Even when achievement data are considered as indicators of teacher effectiveness, locally developed achievement measures, such as teacher assessments and course grades, are still viewed as more critical than standardized achievement tests or norm-referenced state tests that are usually part of accountability policies. (p. 1273)

Teachers did not trust the use of data because, as they noted in interviews, they had seen it used for manipulative purposes—for example, to support a decision that had been made privately before any analysis took place.

According to Ingram et al. (2004),

Many teachers noted how difficult it is to measure the things they want and need to know. For example, many teachers would like to know how successful their

students are in adult life, seeing this as an important indicator of whether a

student's educational experience was of high quality, yet they question how

anyone could ever capture this kind of information. (p. 1276)

Furthermore, the interviewed professionals claimed that there is no time in a teacher's

overloaded schedule to systematically collect and analyze data. Schools are not

structured to make this possible.

Overall, the researchers concluded that the challenges or barriers to the use of

systematic data are cultural, technical, and political. If people mistrust the use of data—

that is, they believe it will be used to manipulate decision-making or to "distort facts"—

then the organization has a cultural problem and a political challenge/barrier (Ingram et

al., 2004, p. 1282). The technical barrier results from overloaded teacher schedules that

do not provide the time for systematic study of data. With regard to the political barriers,

Habermas might say that in the political arena, we would see data being used for strategic

action, not to arrive at truth and consensus through the fair process of communicative

action. Again, communicative action in the context of the lifeworld of a school is

necessary for a productive use of data that people can trust.

Indeed, much research has cited the notion that not all educational outcomes are

easily measurable. Zhao (2009) quoted Einstein's trenchant observation to make this

point: "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be

counted" (p. 73). Ladd and Zelli (2002) used the example of "maintaining a nurturing

school environment" as an indicator of an effective school that cannot be measured easily

by the state (p. 522). Cullen and Reback (2006) cited the example of students' social

adjustment in order to show how some outcomes of schooling are not easily reflected in

quantitative data. Merson (2001) warned that performance management can narrow the definition of teachers, limiting them to a system that evaluates only their "teaching and assessment," and ignoring the "moral and pastoral dimensions and duties" of their jobs (p. 76). Corroborating the importance of this dimension of teaching, one teacher in a study by Sikes (2001) in the UK noted the following: "So much of teaching is about relationships and there's something almost pathological about managing relationships" (p. 92). Others have noted that while a student's performance may be high, this does not account for the growth of the individual as a person (Sikes, 2001). Sikes (2001) quoted an administrator in the UK: "I believe that education is about helping people become more fully human and under that there are obvious implications for performance management" (p. 95). The danger is that the new performance management speaks in a discourse that is "technicist, managerialist, and mechanistic" in that it ignores what is human about the teaching enterprise, especially its basis in relationships (Sikes, 2001, p. 97).

Mahony and Hextall (2001) pointed out the complexities of determining what data is worthy of collection and evaluation when assessing education:

Defining what is to count as an appropriate outcome in education is difficult enough, finding indices which adequately capture these outcomes is yet more difficult, and developing devices with which to appraise achievement of these outcomes is of yet another order. (p. 184)

These authors also asked: When rating teachers based on student performance, how does one tell if an outcome is the consequence of the work of one particular teacher as opposed to the cumulative effect of every teacher the child had in the past? How do we account

for variables that schools and teachers cannot control? Thus, developing an accountability system that includes the collection of qualitative data (e.g., through interviews and surveys) to determine if schools are meeting their objectives, as Gentle (2001) has suggested, would not fully address the problems raised by Mahony and Hextall.

Although the terms *outputs* and *outcomes* are often used interchangeably in discussions of performance accountability, Elliott (2001) drew an important distinction between them. Drawing on Power (1997), Elliott noted that evaluation generally measures efficiency and economy, but it does a poor job of measuring effectiveness, which is defined as the "match between outcomes and intentions" (2001, p. 193). Outcomes are not the same as outputs, he stated. The latter include such things as test scores and attendance rates, without taking into account the "contextual complexities which shape such activities" (p. 194). Thus, there is no way of knowing if the outputs demonstrate effectiveness—that is, if there is an empirical connection between the organization's intentions and the outputs. Audits measure only what is measurable, and so when we audit, we lose concern for the things that cannot be measured because they lie outside of the audit system. Building upon this theory, the present study asked principals to discuss the aspects of their performance that might be difficult, if not impossible, to audit.

Gaps Between Policy and Practice in Performance Accountability

If such a rich body of literature has been critical of the performance accountability system, one may be tempted to explore the extent to which the policies actually influence everyday educational practice. Drawing on data from teacher observations and

interviews of 84 elementary school teachers in Chicago during the 1999-2000 school year, Diamond (2007) found that there are many influences on teachers' work, and the accountability policies fall among these many other influences. While fewer than half of the teachers cited state standards or testing as influential on their general instruction, 83% claimed that principals influenced their instruction. More specifically, when asked about the content they cover, teachers noted that testing and standards shape this aspect of teaching more than principals, students, and other teachers/colleagues. The teachers also cited a greater emphasis on math and language arts than on science and social studies, since the latter two subjects are not tested. Some teachers said that they covered these subjects after the testing. With respect to pedagogy (how teachers teach, what strategies they used), however, the teachers noted the influence of their own experience or ideas, colleagues, students, and textbooks—not testing, standards, or general accountability policies.

Diamond (2007) found, in his classroom observations, that teacher-dominated lessons took place in an overwhelming number of classrooms. This means that teachers were asking most—and in some cases all—of the questions, and teachers were interacting mostly with individual students; that is, there was little or no student-to-student interaction. Thus, the study confirms that accountability policy has not influenced teachers to change their strategies and use a more interactive pedagogy; instead, they rely on traditional "didactic pedagogy, characterized by lecture, seat work, memorization, and recitation—particularly in the lowest-performing schools" (Diamond, 2007, p. 285). Of particular concern with respect to social justice is that African-American students, more than any others, were likely to be the recipients of this kind of instruction. Diamond

concluded that changes in content, not pedagogy, are more likely to be catalyzed by performance accountability systems.

Asking why there is such a gap between policy and teaching practice—other than the determination of content—Diamond suggested that the accountability culture follows the bureaucratic/rational choice model of organizational change. In this model, the government provides rewards and consequences to incentivize actors to follow a policy. Implying that this model is ineffectual, Diamond claimed that it also assumes that the policy makers can directly influence classroom instruction. This study, however, questions the strength of the link between policy and the classroom. The findings of this study are ironic because the new accountability movement, which, since 1983, has emphasized moving away from factory model education and toward greater rigor, critical thinking, and problem solving so that students can compete in a global economy, has not influenced teachers to discontinue the use of more didactic strategies. Low-income students and students of color tend to be the recipients of this kind of teaching. Thus, the new accountability culture does not necessarily address racial and socioeconomic inequality with respect to the types of teaching to which students are exposed.

The Rhetoric of Accountability

In addition to indentifying the many unanticipated consequences and ineffectual qualities of performance accountability, researchers have noted that the rhetoric of accountability manages to pigeonhole its opponents as either irresponsible or recalcitrant. As New Jersey governor, Chris Christie, claimed in his 2011 State of the State address, "Teaching can no longer be the only profession where you have no rewards for excellence and no consequences for failure to perform" (Christie, 2011, para. 219).

While Christie made this statement in the context of a proposal for tenure elimination or reform, its language implies that *all* other professions operate under a system of performance accountability that the education sector has yet to embrace.

Similarly, writing about the performance accountability reforms in the UK at the turn of the 21st century, Merson (2001) noted the prevalence of the term *modernisation* in the discourse surrounding education and teacher reform. The term *modernise* is effective, he stated, because "it does not invite debate or scrutiny, for to be against modernising implies a commitment to the past, a failure to adapt to the present and the future, and the trap of luddism" (2001, p. 70). Merson noted that the UK wanted to modernise the teaching profession by making its "culture, structure, rewards, and conditions" match those of "other professions in a modern economy" (p. 70). This goal is similar to what Governor Christie proposed.

Mahony and Hextall (2001) argued that even the notion of common curricular standards is often taken as self-evidently necessary—as if standards are not based on ideologies that are subject to debate. Arguing for common standards in 1995, Ravitch noted that the American public would not tolerate various or loose standards in airline security, the safety of cribs for babies, and health regulations for restaurants. Surely, it is difficult to argue against the idea of having uniform standards in these areas because they all have an impact on people's safety. Yet Mahony and Hextall (2001) took standards to be rather value-laden and far-reaching in their effects. In defining what is to be taught and then, indirectly, affecting how teaching takes place, standards "construct a world within which people are meant to act and they define ways of acting within that world" (p. 185). Furthermore, "the struggles which take place over standards are then conflicts

over definitions of the nature of the world and society and what is important within them"
(p. 185). Since standards are non-negotiable, schools are limited in the extent to which
they can democratically arrive at what students need to learn. The allure of standards,
however, is that "they are so overlaid with a cloak of technicism"; they do not appear to
be defining the nature of the world, only to be holding students and educators and schools
accountable for levels of performance (p. 186). It is rather difficult to take issue with
such a seemingly innocuous purpose, but as the rest of this literature review has shown,
levels of performance are not so easily defined, measured, or agreed upon.

Theoretical Framework

While some of the foregoing literature mentioned the work of postmodern and
critical theorists, or used some of the language associated with such theories, the present
study distinguishes itself by using the work of four theorists rather explicitly in order to
understand the way performance accountability influences the job of a high school
principal. The following section will provide an explanation of Ball's notion of
performativity; Power's concept of the audit society; Habermas's theories of
communicative action, lifeworld, and system; and Foucault's theory of power and the
panopticon. The common ground of these theories is their concern with the way
surveillance and audit technologies are used in modern societies and institutions to
exercise power and promote certain kinds of behavior. Moreover, they raise the
possibility of perverse consequences when such systems are implemented. Because of
the complex nature of some of the concepts in these theories, and because they will be
used in the analysis and interpretation of the data collected in this study, I will need to
explain them at some length.

Performativity

Writing about educational accountability within the context of the United

Kingdom after the system of performance management was introduced in the late 1990s

and 2000, Ball (2001) built upon the postmodern philosophy of Lyotard and examined

the concept of performativity in education and elsewhere in the public sector. As Ball

defined it,

> Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation, or even a
>
> system of 'terror' in Lyotard's words, that employs judgements [*sic*], comparisons
>
> and displays as means of control, attrition and change. The performances—of
>
> individual subjects or organisations—serve as measures of productivity or output,
>
> or displays of 'quality', or 'moments' of promotion or inspection. They stand for,
>
> encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or
>
> organisation within a field of judgement [*sic*]... The issue of who controls the
>
> field of judgement [*sic*] is crucial. 'Accountability' and 'competition' are the
>
> lingua franca of this new 'discourse of power' as Lyotard describes it. (p. 210)

For Ball (2001), performativity or performance culture plays a role in constituting people

in the educational system—that is, making up who they are or become. Performativity is

not just an innocuous mode of regulation; it actually *produces* a certain kind of person

within the system: "Thus are new social identities created—what it means to be educated;

what it means to be a teacher or a researcher" (p. 211).

Ball's theory of power as it is manifested in performance culture is also

reminiscent of Foucault's (1980, 1990) theory. For Foucault, power is not simply a

repressive or negative force; it is *productive.* Power, as it plays out in performance

culture, produces or creates a kind of teacher, a kind of student, a kind of parent, a kind of principal—and so on. This power often functions through technologies of surveillance (Foucault, 1995), ways of watching people or organizations within the system to ensure that they are reaching or maintaining the expected levels of performance. Foucault (1995) used Jeremy Bentham's nineteenth century image of the panopticon, an architectural structure that made it possible for all occupants of a public institution, such as a prison, to be seen at all times, as a metaphor for a society that was obsessed with surveillance. Accountability culture can be said to use surveillance by demanding the visibility of educational outputs (for example, test scores). Ball, however, thought accountability went beyond Foucault's notion of power. To quote him at length again:

> It is the database, the appraisal meeting, the annual review, report writing and promotion applications, inspections, peer reviews that are to the fore. There is not so much, or not only, a *structure* of surveillance, as a *flow* of performativities both continuous and eventful—that is *spectacular*. It is not the possible certainty of always being seen that is the issue, as in the panopticon. Instead it is the uncertainty and instability of being judged in different ways, by different means, through different agents; the 'bringing-off' of performances—the flow of changing demands, expectations and indicators that make us continually accountable and constantly recorded.... (pp. 211-212)

Moving beyond Foucault, Ball (2001) saw the education professional as subject to instability and constant change. Indeed, one might relate this constant change to the continuous revision and development of new curriculum standards in the state of New Jersey, which often come with implementation dates that are unpredictable. Testing in

the state of New Jersey is also ever-changing, with announcements of revisions coming as late as a few months or weeks before the administration of an exam.

Ball (2001) argued that the accountability system is powerful in that it is ever-changing and therefore unpredictable. It can be said to keep its subjects "on their toes" and constantly insecure. Ball even cited teachers who spoke of their new professional insecurities, always wondering if they were doing the right thing. For example, a teacher undergoing inspections in Jeffrey and Woods's (1998) study noted,

> …every time I do something intuitive I just feel guilty about it. 'Is this right; am I doing this the right way; does this cover what I am supposed to be covering; should I be doing something else; should I be more structured; should I have this in place; should I have done this?' You start to query everything you are doing—there's a kind of guilt in teaching at the moment. (p. 118)

So what are the consequences of this new culture of performativity? Ball (2001) argued that we take part in the "rituals of performance"—even doing things we do not truly believe in—and thereby run the risk of becoming inauthentic (p. 216). Ball called this "fabrication" (2001, p. 216). Individuals and organizations take part in fabrication as a method of resistance to accountability technologies. One might think that this resistance demonstrates the power of those who are doing the fabrication, but the amount of time that must be spent fabricating demonstrates that the individuals or organizations are really taking part in the accountability systems. While fabricating may be an example of "impression management that in effect erects a façade of calculation," it also "requires submission to the rigours of performativity and the disciplines of competition—resistance

and capitulation" (Ball, 2001, p. 217). So, fabrication is not even an escape from the gaze of the accountability system because it takes work to keep the fabrication going.

According to Ball (2001), examples of fabrication would be the self-promotion that universities must do in order to be what consumers want them to be—that is, to compete in the market. These fabrications are calculated and sophisticated, including websites, brochures, promotional events—more "impression management and promotion" that leads to this paradox: the "transparency" that people demand of the organization really becomes "opacity" (Ball, 2001, p. 218). Underneath all the fabrication, we cannot tell what is really happening. As we will see in the discussion of Habermas's work, in the sense that schools must be calculating the impressions they give, they are taking part in market behaviors and strategic or instrumental action, not the kind of communicative action that is crucial to authentic education.

Like many other critics of the accountability culture, Ball (2001) argues that statistics and data can be manipulated in order to fulfill performance expectations. Low performing schools may be inclined to test students when they are especially young so that the school can post value-added gains as the children grow older. Even strong performance can be considered performativity when schools are able to select their students. After all, their high performance is only a function of their selectivity. This type of behavior is illustrated in the elitist and selective school cited by DeMoss (2002) in her study of Chicago elementary schools, described above.

Audit Society

Power (1997) developed the theory of the audit society in his book-length study that examines the way audits became popular in the world outside of accounting in

England during the 1980s. An economist who worked as an auditor at one point, Power introduced his concept noting that "methods of checking and verification are diverse, sometimes perverse, sometimes burdensome, and always costly" (p. 1). Power was especially interested in the costs of auditing, and he used a simple example to clarify the unanticipated costs.

> While it costs me little to check that my children have fastened their seat belts in the car, the use of a private detective to check up on a lover can lead to obsession, despair, and even financial ruin, regardless of whether doubts and suspicions are verified. (p. 1)

Although this example is personal and simple, it illustrates the idea that the desire to check and verify is based on the level of trust between two parties.

One of Power's (1997) central claims was that, while auditing may lead to internal improvements, its real purpose is often to make an organization legitimate to external parties. This idea is reminiscent of the work in sociology of Meyer and Rowan (1977) who claimed that organizations take part in evaluation or auditing rituals in order to legitimize themselves—even if these rituals have no positive impact on the functioning of the organization. Auditing is supposed to make organizations transparent, an important characteristic in democratic societies, where the citizenry needs to stay informed.

Although Power (1997) did not refer explicitly to Habermas, he used terms that Habermas might use. On a cautionary note, Power used the terms "decoupling" and "colonization" to refer to the ways that auditing can be ineffective and effective, respectively (p. 13). The former term refers to the ways auditing can be separated from

the core functions of an organization (a decoupling) so that the audit never affects those core activities. Decoupling sometimes refers to the ways that organizations subvert the audit process, keeping it separate, or buffered from, the central purposes of the institution. The latter term refers to the ways auditing can be effective but in unintended ways. Here, auditing colonizes the core activities of an organization and values efficiency and economy over that which is less easily measured: effectiveness and performance. The problem is that financial types of evaluation are used for organizations whose outcomes are nonfinancial (e.g., hospitals, schools, police departments). In this situation, "organizations are in effect *colonized* by an audit process which disseminates and implants the values which underly [*sic*] and support its information demands. The audit process can be said to fail because its side-effects may actually undermine performance" (Power, 1997, p. 95).

As an example of decoupling, Power (1997) cited the creation of special bodies or committees to deal with auditing so that it does not disrupt the core activities of the organization. Indeed, the present study asked principals to discuss the creation of structures, either within the school or their districts, for the purpose of adhering to accountability guidelines. But the question arises: can "pure decoupling" really take place (Power, 1997, p.96)? Power suggested that while organizations may try to protect their cores from the audit process, it ends up costing them valuable resources to create these sub-units or new structures to address the process, thereby affecting the whole organization.

Power (1997) also noted that while colonization may be considered by some to be an unanticipated consequence of accountability, it is usually the *point* of

auditing/accountability; it does not exist just to check, but to instill certain values in the organization it is checking. Indeed, auditing can actually change the organization that it is checking. In order to hold an institution accountable, the audit process concerns itself with "rendering it auditable," which is to say that it demands indicators that are easily quantified or measured (p. 99).

Power (1997) noted that, in the 1990s, for example, a British government agency (the Higher Education Funding Council) was concerned with rendering higher education research more auditable and accountable for its public monies by demanding that researchers fill out timesheets for their work. Although this demand never came to fruition, it

> reflects a more general trend: the need to measure at an appropriate level of detail
> to make auditability possible. This is a level of detail which has little to do with
> accuracy or even representational faithfulness, but which reflects a certain
> legitimized style of technical elaboration. (Power, 1997, p. 99)

Power highlights some unintended consequences of the trend to audit scientific research in higher education: Researchers are encouraged to teach less and research more; also, the need to produce a long list of publications causes scientists to avoid activities that are not part of the audit but are equally important: for example, editing books or reviewing the research of others before publication in peer-reviewed journals. Paradoxically, the new auditing causes researchers to avoid spending their time auditing/checking the work of their colleagues for validity before publication.

In education, the effects of auditing may be long-term, influencing the types of teaching that instructors use. Power (1997) argued that the need to audit the outcomes of

teaching in higher education has caused professors in the UK to rely more on a "delivery" philosophy rather than other orientations to teaching (for example, more interactive or creative forms) because the effects of delivery, or didactic forms of teaching, are measurable in the short term (p. 102).

Lifeworld and System

Sergiovanni (2000) is perhaps the most prominent educational researcher who has appropriated the theoretical framework of lifeworld and system to analyze the way accountability systems and their bureaucratic processes have colonized the core purposes of educational institutions. According to Sergiovanni, a school's lifeworld includes its mission, traditions, norms, human needs and purposes—all of which contribute to a school's character. The system, on the other hand, includes such things as accountability regulations, efficiency measures, management plans and structures, policies and procedures—all of which we might identify as bureaucratic concerns. High-stakes testing, because of its role in holding schools accountable, belongs in the category of the system. While the system is necessary in order for a school to function well, it should not, according to Sergiovanni, "be the generative force for determining the lifeworld" (p. ix). When the system determines the lifeworld—or, as Sergiovanni and Habermas would put it, *colonizes* the lifeworld—schools lose their unique character. Sergiovanni's work aims to determine how colonization of the lifeworld of schools influences school leadership and character.

Sergiovanni (2000) emphasized the importance of maintaining each school's unique character. A drawback of the performance accountability system is that it requires schools to adhere to standards created by someone else. Although schools are often

given freedom to determine *how* the standards may be fulfilled, educators are still given little professional discretion because these standards, after all, were not created with the specific values and needs of their local communities in mind. He claimed that educators are less likely to feel empowered when they are limited to determining the means of education and not the ends.

Placing a premium on local values, Sergiovanni (2000) criticized reforms based only on high performance theory and hierarchical management structures. Instead, he argued for a "community theory" of reform.

> As schools become communities, they are less driven by bureaucratic characteristics such as hierarchies, mandates, and rules and by the personalities and interpersonal skills of their leaders. Instead, the school's values and purposes become the driving force. As this happens, a new hierarchy emerges—one that places ideas at the apex and principals, teachers, parents, and students below as members of a shared followership that is committed to serving these ideas.... Community theory places the lifeworld of a school at the center and uses this lifeworld to generate an effective and efficient systemsworld as a means to achieve its lifeworld-defined ends. (p. 24)

The key here is that the ideas to be followed are locally determined, not mandated from a distant governing body.

Sergiovanni (2000) noted that schools with character—that is, those with the lifeworld at the center—are more effective. By "school effectiveness," Sergiovanni means, "achieving higher levels of pedagogical thoughtfulness, developing relationships

characterized by caring and civility, and recording increases in the quality of student performance" (p. 24).

As a meta-analysis, Sergiovanni's book-length work cited studies that found greater effectiveness in schools with character. Hill, Foster, and Gendler (1990), for example, analyzed 13 high schools in New York City and Washington, D.C. They found greater effectiveness in what they call "focus schools"—that is, schools with locally determined, focused, and clear missions. High schools with these kinds of missions were able to solve their own problems and remained less encumbered by external mandates and regulations. They included Catholic schools and public schools with special missions—like magnet schools (Hill, Foster, & Gendler, 1990). More comprehensive high schools, they found, had "diffuse missions defined by the demands of external funders and regulators" (1990, p. vii). Because of so much external accountability, these schools were also unable to solve their own problems or preserve their unique character.

Hill et al.'s (1990) study is reminiscent of what Bolman and Deal (2008) stated about the difference between highly centralized organizations like McDonald's and decentralized organizations like Harvard University. Professionals who work for the latter type of organization are afforded a great deal of discretion because they are highly educated and encouraged to use their creativity to solve problems. McDonald's, however, values a highly standardized model in which workers are not encouraged to add their own creativity to their production. A hamburger produced in Kansas is supposed to be the same as a hamburger produced in New York. Indeed, Power (1997) referred derisively to what he and other researchers have called the "McDonaldization" of higher education (p. 103). As public primary and secondary schools become more standardized

as a result of the Common Core State Standards Initiative and their accompanying tests, we might ask whether these schools, too, will lose their individual characters.

Sergiovanni (2000) also cited multiple studies that draw a distinction between a social contract and a covenant. The former, which is appropriate in business and politics, is more legalistic and carries consequences if one of the parties does not fulfill the expectations defined in the contract. A covenant, however, is a promise based on trust. It is "maintained by loyalty, fidelity, kinship, sense of identity, obligation, duty, responsibility, and reciprocity.... [It] is concerned with quite different institutions—families, communities, friendship groups, and voluntary associations are examples" (p. 63). Using this definition, Sergiovanni argued that covenantal communities are appropriate in schools. Contracts, he noted, create a business/customer environment in which each party attempts to fulfill its self-interests. The school responds to parents' and students' (i.e., customers') demands, thinking that it will serve itself well by doing so. In the meantime, the students and parents, acting as customers, make demands that will not necessarily serve the entire school community well: "This selfish customer mentality erodes commitment to the common good and neglects the cultivation of collective responsibility for that good" (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 65). Elsewhere, Sergiovanni (2001) has argued that as customers, we are self-interested and have "little or no loyalty to the 'vendors' who are providing us with services" (p. 73). The implication is that as students are treated more as customers, they will have little loyalty to their schools.

As we move into market-based reforms, it seems natural to think of students and parents as customers—and, by logical deduction, the school as a business responding to consumer demands. While this may seem rational and innocuous at first glance,

Sergiovanni (2000) noted that schools cannot serve the greater good in this model. In a study that analyzed discourse related to academic dishonesty, Zwagerman (2008) noted that schools should not be surprised that students, when defined and treated as customers, are tempted to cheat. After all, if schools are businesses selling grades that students can use for future success, it is no wonder that the student-customer often breaks the fiduciary relationship between him and the teacher in his attempt to get the most goods—that is, the highest grades—out of the teacher-vendor. In this model, "student work is academic 'capital' traded for grades" (Zwagerman, 2008, p. 6).

The overall point here is that discourse and practices that reinforce a business/customer model can have perverse consequences in educational organizations. Market-based reforms that require schools to compete with one another for resources and thrive only to the extent that they fulfill "customer" demand may turn schools away from their core educational values. Anderson (1998) noted that the equation of schooling with a consumer product neglects the idea that schools serve a social good that goes beyond what the individual student/consumer gets. All of society, not just teachers, principals, parents, and students, have a stake in the quality of schools. Anderson (2005) also noted that schools are beginning to use the language of business in their discourse: for example, "quality," "continuous improvement," the student as "customer," the superintendent as "CEO" (p. 16).

Sergiovanni (2000) supported an accountability system that would honor social/emotional learning as well as academic achievement, both of which would be defined by local missions. Such a system differs vastly from the current accountability system, which measures schools against standardized criteria; it would require qualitative

evaluation in addition to the quantitative systems that are in place now, and would involve both internal and external review teams. Schools would be evaluated based on the systems they create to achieve their own, democratically determined missions. The lifeworld of a school would be sustained by a school community with a shared purpose and vision. Unfortunately, the current system of nationally or state-determined standards leaves little room for schools to sustain their lifeworlds and unique characters. All schools are encouraged to conform to the same model in the current system.

Since Sergiovanni (2000) merely touched the surface of Habermas's theory of lifeworld and system, it is necessary to review other critics of his theory and examine directly the work of Habermas himself. In order to understand fully Habermas's notion of lifeworld and system, one must understand the distinction he made between strategic and communicative action. In the review of literature above, communicative action was noted as a necessary condition of genuine, collaborative, and democratic work in education. Niesz (2010) noted that the current accountability system, which can lead to an exorbitant emphasis on image or impression management, creates an environment that is not conducive to communicative action.

According to Chambers (1995), when people participate in communicative action, they make claims and arguments aimed at reaching "mutual" and "genuine understanding" (p. 237). The understanding reached is based on the logical quality of the arguments used. In strategic action, however, the "participants are primarily interested in bringing about a desired behavioral response" in their audience (p. 237). These participants will often try to influence one another using techniques beyond logical arguments: for example, "threats, bribes, or coercion" (p. 237). In the case of strategic

action, then, the person who is convinced to behave in a certain way does not even have to understand *why* he should act in that way; he just does it to avoid the consequences. In communicative action, participants work to convince—not coerce—one another through reason, and all participants must be given an equal opportunity to ask questions and provide input.

Communicative action takes place in a healthy lifeworld. According to Love (1995), the lifeworld is concerned with meaning, norms, and values. In the private sphere, these relations of meaning can be found in families or workplaces. In the public sphere, these relations can be found in discussions of politics or opinions in which people use communicative action to convince one another. Systems are different in that they "are coordinated through the steering media of money and power" (p. 50). In the private sphere, these would include markets (privately owned companies are the actors); in the public sphere, systems would include the state, which is influenced by money and power. Thus, whether we are talking about the lifeworld of the public or private sphere, we are talking about a place where communicative action is prevalent. When money and power are significant influences—as they are in public and private systems—strategic action, marked by coercion, threats, and consequences, is prevalent.

Habermas's (1989) concern is that the lifeworld can become colonized by the system. This is what Sergiovanni (2000) claimed is happening in schools when bureaucratic demands for external accountability start to deplete the individual character of each school. White (1995) noted that people feel a loss of meaning and freedom when the lifeworld is colonized by the system—that is, when the lifeworld is no longer protected from the influences of money (economic markets) and power (the state or

bureaucracy). The system may help to make the lifeworld function rationally and efficiently, but it can also become so powerful that it leads to "pathology" in the lifeworld (p. 8). This is when, as Sergiovanni (2000) stated, the meanings, norms, and values of the lifeworld are actually determined by the system—rather than the other way around. In the literature review above, it was noted that many researchers have expressed concern about the marketizing of education. From the perspective of Habermas's theory, the concerns arise because markets are steered by the influences of money and power—strategic action, as opposed to communicative action.

Bolton (2005) explained that in modernization—defined by the evolution of capitalism and the decline of dogmatic or autocratic rule—the lifeworld becomes rationalized. This rationalization is possible only through communicative action, in which people are able to question previously accepted ideas (e.g., religious doctrines) and convince one another through argument. This kind of emancipation is ideal, Bolton stated,

> but the actual result in modern capitalist societies is different: the lifeworld loses power at the expense of powerful forces Habermas calls 'system.' Examples are the monetization of transactions, markets, law, and bureaucracy. Originally designed to reproduce the lifeworld materially, these grow increasingly complex, uncoupled from the lifeworld, and accomplish more and more of the coordination necessary in society. (p. 16)

Ironically, then, the very systems that help to coordinate a more emancipated society actually cause people to feel a loss of freedom and meaning. When applying this idea to schools, we might say that the systems that help to structure or coordinate school

effectiveness—for example, data systems that track student performance—become so powerful that they deplete, or colonize, the lifeworld of schools.

Habermas's (1989) own words provided a grim description of his colonization thesis: "the rationalization of the lifeworld makes possible a heightening of systemic complexity, which becomes so hypertrophied that it unleashes system imperatives that burst the capacity of the lifeworld they instrumentalize" (p. 155). Put simply, systems help coordinate activities in the lifeworld, but they can become so large that they actually damage the lifeworld itself.

Bureaucracies, which are examples of systems, are developed in order to facilitate efficiency and regulate activities. Using the example of public welfare policy, which is designed to help those who are disabled, elderly, or poor, Habermas (1989) noted that while modern welfare and its legal entitlements bring about a public good, the bureaucratic system that implements welfare can be counterproductive. Habermas used the term "juridification" (p. 364) to describe the way bureaucratic systems colonize the state's process of caring for the needy. Interested only in the implementation of benefits, the state determines, legalistically, which claims are valid and worthy of a benefit. The bureaucracy, however, is unable to treat individuals appropriately or address the causes of their needs because the law requires generalizations:

> In the end, the *generality* of legal situation-definitions is tailored to *bureaucratic implementation*, that is, to the administration that deals with the social problem as presented by the legal entitlement. The situation to be regulated is embedded in the context of a life history and of a concrete form of life; it has to be subjected to violent abstraction, not merely because it has to be subsumed under the law, but so

that it can be dealt with administratively. (Habermas, 1989, p. 363)

This "violent abstraction" of individuals' concerns and situations is necessary when the organization that provides the entitlements is large and operates from a distance. Adding to Habermas's theory by applying it to education, we might wonder about the state's inability to care for the individual child's needs through centralized, bureaucratically implemented curriculum standards. Or, we might wonder about the state's inability to care for the individual school's or district's needs—especially as we see more federal, and therefore distant, control of education.

Habermas (1989) cited the paradoxical consequences of juridification in many social institutions, including prisons, drug rehabilitation services, psychiatric hospitals, religious groups, social work, and public schools. In these cases, we have a dilemma:

> The *dilemmatic structure of this type of juridification* consists in the fact that, while the welfare-state guarantees are intended to serve the goal of social integration, they nevertheless promote the disintegration of life-relations when these are separated, through legalized social intervention, from the consensual mechanisms that coordinate action and are transferred over to media such as power and money. (p. 364)

The lifeworld is colonized by the system because money and power—not communicative actions—determine the way social issues are to be addressed. Again, applying Habermas's theory to education, this may also be the case when curriculum standards and accountability systems are created; Habermas might say they are created through the strategic action of the political and legislative process, not communicative action.

In fact, Habermas (1989) addressed the public educational system as well, noting that while bureaucracy benefits parents and students by protecting their rights, it "penetrates deep into the teaching and learning process.... The compulsion toward litigation-proof certainty of grades and the over-regulation of the curriculum lead to such phenomena as depersonalization, inhibition of innovation, breakdown of responsibility, immobility, and so forth" (pp. 371-372). Education, Habermas argued, must take place through communicative action—that is, through participants achieving mutual understanding. Strategic action, on the other hand, involves the kinds of threats that accountability systems make. Here, we can infer threats at the level of the classroom, between teacher and student, and much larger threats, like those made by the state against the school in order to keep the school functioning according to prescribed norms. In response, Habermas suggested, educators either adhere to the law too closely, or they fabricate their adherence.

As the systems of modern society grow larger and more and more unwieldy, Habermas (1989) argued that the lifeworld of family, schools, public welfare policy, and any institution supporting social integration needs to be protected from "falling prey to the systemic imperatives of economic and administrative subsystems growing with dynamics of their own" (p. 373). While Habermas was not clear about how this protection should take place, Sergiovanni (2000) recommends more localized systems of audit and accountability, based on the individual needs of each community.

Disciplinary Power and the Panopticon

Anderson and Grinberg (1998) made an early case for the usefulness of Foucault's theory of disciplinary power in the field of educational leadership and

administration. They argued that Foucault's conception of power, which is disciplinary and normalizing, shows how all notions within education (or any institution, for that matter) were socially constructed and part of a "regime of truth" (p. 341). By digging into the past and studying the evolution of a particular method or technique in education, "Foucault invites us to consider that events could have been constructed differently" (p. 341). Using Foucault, we start to question or "problematize taken-for-granted concepts and categories" (p. 341).

Thus, while performance accountability systems may have the allure of a scientific and rationalistic method for ensuring high-quality schools, we may miss the perverse consequences of such a system if we do not question and investigate it. It may sound perfectly rational to say, "We should pay people according to their performance," but the idea becomes complicated when we start to question what this notion of performance really is. Regimes of truth, to appropriate a Foucauldian term, have their own definitions of performance, and one may be high test scores.

Furthermore, Anderson and Grinberg (1998) pointed out that Foucault's interest in surveillance has a special connection to accountability systems in education, which are based on technologies of surveillance or inspection. These technologies include published report cards on schools, use of test scores to rate schools, published rankings of schools, and various forms of performance pay for educators. Anderson (2007) noted that the media, in manufacturing a crisis in American schools, participates in this surveillance by creating for the public a spectacle of educational crisis. In particular, Anderson and Grinberg (1998) cited inspection systems that began in 19th century Britain. These systems set up a norm and "pathologize" or "marginalize" those who do

not live up to the norm (Anderson & Grinberg, 1998, p. 346). Administrators themselves, in implementing the accountability technologies, can lose the ability to question the system; they simply take it for granted. According to the authors, Foucault would want principals to question the norms they have been coerced to live by.

Anderson and Grinberg (1998) also cited Habermas and suggested that scholars use his work and Foucault's to find ways in which resistance—not just normalization—is possible. This resistance is not simply a decision to rebel for the sake of rebelling; rather, it is an attempt to include more voices in the discussion of educational leadership and improvement, especially those voices who would be considered marginalized or outside the norm. For Habermas (1989), a critical theorist, this kind of work has to take place in democratic, participatory institutions that allow voices of difference to speak without danger. Thus, communicative action is necessary here; when people are communicating strategically, they can use threats and coercion, which result in inauthentic participation.

It is necessary to provide a thorough discussion of Foucault's theory of power in order to show how it might be applied to accountability systems in education. A post-modern philosopher interested in the way power circulates through modern society and its institutions, Foucault used the genealogical method to trace the evolution of modern institutions such as prisons, psychiatric institutions, hospitals, and schools from their earliest stages of development. His explanation of the nature of power—what he calls "disciplinary power"—that is most applicable to performance accountability in education can be found in his study of the birth of the prison and modern punishment (Foucault, 1995, p. 173).

Interested in the way judicial punishment began to change in the late 18th century (through a so-called "reform movement"), Foucault (1995) noted that prior to the Enlightenment, the punishment of criminals was generally public and involved torture of the body. It was a way to remind people that the sovereign was still in power after a criminal had broken the law and, in so doing, had become an enemy of the state. This sovereign power, according to Foucault, was "a power which, in the absence of continual supervision, sought a renewal of its effect in the spectacle of its individual manifestations.... [It was] a power that was recharged in the ritual display of its reality as 'super-power'" (p. 57). Since pre-industrial western societies did not have technologies to keep people under surveillance at all times—nor did they need them, because the types of illegalities were fewer—every now and then the sovereign had to re-assert itself in front of the people and let them know who was in charge and who made the law.

According to Foucault (1995), some problems in traditional punishment began to emerge in the late 18th century, including the creation of a carnival-like atmosphere during public torture or execution; the tendency of the public to sympathize with and exalt or glorify the criminal who was being victimized by the torture; and the unintended effect of uniting the lower classes in solidarity against the sovereign, who was seen as punishing people in a cruel and unreasonable manner. Furthermore, as capitalistic society emerged, it created new types of illegalities. Instead of the older crimes of "blood," the rise of the middle class and their commercial activity brought about fraud, tax evasion, theft of property, and various illegal practices associated with day-to-day business dealings (p. 87). It was necessary, at this time, to begin policing people on a regular, uninterrupted basis; that is, constant supervision would be needed instead of the

irregular public spectacle of sovereign power through torture. This new kind of power is called "disciplinary power" (Foucault, 1995, p. 173).

Disciplinary power was used in the architecture of factories and schools, which were designed so that workers or students could always be supervised and their activities could be measured carefully by the clock. Foucault noted that in workshops and factories it was possible "to observe the worker's presence and application, and the quality of his work; to compare workers with one another, to classify them according to skill and speed; to follow the successive stages of the production process" (p. 145). Applying Foucault's work to the education system today, we may be reminded of the ability, through new forms of data analysis, to compare students with one another, schools with one another, states with one another, and so on. "The school" in the early 19th century, Foucault noted, "became a machine for learning" (p.165). If the teacher could not supervise all students, older pupils were used to teach the younger children to ensure that everyone was occupied at all times. This new power circulated very quietly through these systems; unlike sovereign power which can become too excessive, disciplinary power is "a modest, suspicious power, which functions as a calculated but permanent economy" (p. 170). In this new model, everyone is kept under continuous surveillance.

With more and more students in school, a hierarchy of supervision had to be created to keep everyone accountable and occupied. Power in this structure, Foucault (1995) noted, is not at the top; rather, it circulates throughout the whole system or network—it is a "multiple, automatic, and anonymous power" (p.176).

In the modern architecture of power, Foucault (1995) argued, we find a new kind of visibility. We move from "the scarcely sustainable visibility of the monarch" to the

"unavoidable visibility of the subjects" (1995, p. 189). People are always under the supervisory gaze, which is inherently judgmental and inflicts penalties on those who do not conform or measure up to the standard or norm. Foucault calls this a "normalizing judgment" (1995, p.177) and claims that post-modern society is a "society of normalisation [sic]" (1980, p.107) that works on a global level. To this description, we might compare the idea of standards-based educational reform, in which there are punishments/sanctions for those who do not live up to the norm or standard set by the state. In Foucault's (1995) theory of power, everyone must be visible. Power, however, is not seen; its objects are seen. In disciplinary power, "it is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the individual in his subjection" (p.187).

The purpose of disciplinary power is always to view, and thereby to know, its objects. Foucault (1995) used the image of the panopticon to symbolize this system of gazes that kept everyone under surveillance. Developed as a sketch by Jeremy Bentham in 1843, it represents the ideal structure for surveillance in institutions like prisons. In this structure, inmates are situated in cells that are arranged in a circle around a central tower. A supervisor can stand in the tower and see the inmates, whose cells are lit naturally with windows. The tower, however, is not lit, so the inmates do not know when they are being watched; they only know that they can be watched at any given time. In one of his most famous passages, Foucault (1995) explained what the panopticon ultimately does:

> Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of
> conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of

power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers. (p. 201)

Indeed, this model makes it easy to see schoolchildren, patients, workers—any members of an institution—and to know them. It allows for easy classification and sorting of people according to their differences, and to measure them against norms. Bentham even noted that workers could be observed and timed while performing tasks, and then paid accordingly.

While we do not live and work in the panopticon, Foucault (1995) suggested that disciplinary power functions in a way that is similar to this architectural ideal. In situations where many people must be supervised, disciplinary power uses technologies of surveillance to measure their performances, come to know them as well as possible, and push them toward the norms—norms which are created by discourse in all of the disciplines and reinforced by those who work in them.

The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the 'social-worker'-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behaviour, his aptitudes, his achievements. (Foucault, 1995, p. 304)

Indeed, Foucault claimed that disciplinary power, or the power of norms, is so strong that people willingly subject to it and hold themselves responsible for reaching the norm.

When applying Foucault's (1980) work to this study of performance accountability, we need to keep in mind his warning that when we study power, since it is not to be found in a particular person or governing class, we need to examine its most local manifestations, "those points where it becomes capillary" (p.96). In other words, we should examine the very technologies that keep people under surveillance and that work to normalize them. For the present study, this means we must examine principals' experiences with technologies of surveillance that are used in the accountability culture— all of the technologies that measure them, sort them, compare them, rank them, and punish them. As Foucault (1990) stated, power circulates throughout networks in societies or institutions; it cannot be identified with a center, a person, or a class at the top of society. With respect to power, he stated, "let us not look for the headquarters that presides over its rationality" (p. 95). Power, instead, is everywhere and yet often "anonymous"; indeed, when it comes to rules and norms, "it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them" (p. 95). Thus, it becomes clear why people tend to take for granted the circumstances in which they find themselves. This is why Anderson and Grinberg (1998) argued that Foucault's work would be helpful in educational leadership. When we problematize the performance accountability system that evolved through the late twentieth century to the present day, we begin to understand it more deeply and to see that circumstances could be different from the way they are.

Other Dissertations

The present study builds upon work done in two dissertations as well as that reviewed in the literature above. Carver (2008) focused on the way accountability and high-stakes testing impacts the work of central office administrators. A qualitative case study of a school district in Ohio, it examined the way central office administrators negotiated between the desire to support democratic leadership and the need to comply with autocratic state or federal demands. Indeed, this study demonstrated a great deal of tension between federal mandates and the generally accepted core competencies of school administrators, which include distributed leadership, development of professional learning communities, capacity building, and sustainable leadership. Carver (2008) also noted that while much research has been done on the way testing and accountability policies influence the work of teachers and students, little research has been done on the impact of these policies on the work of administrators. While Carver focused on central office administrators, the present study takes high school principals as its central concern.

Although Nelson (2002) also focused on principals, she was primarily concerned with identifying the ways in which principals of urban elementary schools might negotiate the tension between high-stakes accountability policies and the principals' own social justice goals. The dissertation is a qualitative study of three urban elementary school principals in Texas who were identified as successful and oriented toward social justice in their work.

Nelson (2002) demonstrated that the principals see themselves as oppressed by the system and forced into becoming oppressors themselves; as having to negotiate between goals of leading a caring organization and implementing high-stakes

accountability policies; and as unwillingly supporting a system that reproduces social inequality. She also revealed the principals' uneasiness with a system that demanded caring for consistency and standardization among schools, efficiency measures, and improvement of test scores, while the principals also wanted to maintain a system that cared for the individual needs of students and supported the individual or local character of their schools. It is difficult to do both simultaneously, Nelson argued.

Nelson (2002) also reported on the principals' feeling of what she calls "coerced collusion" (p. 155). Although they did not believe in the accountability system that they implemented, which had high-stakes consequences for their students, they had to implement it anyway, thereby contributing to the "educational inequity" that, they believed, the system only perpetuated (p. 156). Noting that the accountability policies and tests favor White middle-class teachers and students, the principals saw themselves as oppressing teachers and students who did not fall into this category.

Nelson did not use the conceptual frameworks of Ball, Habermas, Sergiovanni, or Foucault, but her findings support further work using these theoretical lenses. Habermas would be interested in the way caring within a school's lifeworld can become threatened by, or colonized by, system-based types of caring—that is, bureaucratic demands. Although the bureaucratic demands are based on the system's caring for the students' prospects of success, this caring undergoes what Habermas would call a "violent abstraction" (Habermas, 1989, p. 363)—because it ignores individual cases in its effort to create a perfect system that works for all. Furthermore, applying Foucault, we might say that the principals in Nelson's study are, in effect, "principle[s] of [their] own subjection," revealing the way power circulates through an institution and causes people

to act in ways that contradict their belief systems (Foucault, 1995, p. 203). My study applies these theorists to investigate how their frameworks and language will help us to understand the way the job of a high school principal is influenced by the new accountability culture. My focus on high school principals from schools of various demographics also distinguishes it from previous work done on the impact of accountability on the work of school administrators.

Summary

This chapter began with a description of the evolution of accountability in education since the early nineteenth century: specifically, how it developed into a system of *performance* accountability through historical events, cultural shifts, and landmark legislation. Next, the chapter provided a description of New Jersey's system of educational accountability. An overview of the current state of the literature on accountability was then provided, followed by a discussion of the methodology employed for this review, its limitations, and the criteria for inclusion and exclusion of literature. At the center of this chapter, a specific review of the literature provided an analysis of the following topics within performance accountability: the unintended consequences of accountability systems, the ironies of these systems, marketization as a form of accountability, the effect of accountability on democratic practices in schools, the way outcomes are measured by new systems, gaps between policy and practice in the accountability culture, and the rhetoric used in the advocacy of new forms of accountability. Because this dissertation uses multiple theoretical lenses to study the influence of accountability on the work of high school principals, this chapter also provided an overview of the following theoretical concepts that are used to raise the

important issues in the study: performativity, audit society, lifeworld and system, and disciplinary power and the panopticon. Finally, this chapter reviewed two other dissertations with topics related to the present study. Chapter III will explain the methodology used in this dissertation.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of high school principals on how performance accountability culture influences the decisions they make, the initiatives they pursue, and their chief areas of focus in their positions. I chose a qualitative multiple case study approach in order to address this purpose through analysis of the lived experiences of principals within this culture. Documents pertaining to school district initiatives and interviews of principals revealed the role of accountability at the local level, the perceptions of principals toward the performance accountability culture, the way principals cope with accountability mandates, and the overall influence of the accountability culture on the way principals function in their jobs. In this chapter, I will explain my background—why I initially became interested in this topic—and provide a description of the methods used to answer the research questions. Following an explanation of the design of the study, I will describe how I selected the participants and provide a brief profile of each principal and his site of employment. I will then explain how I collected data, analyzed the data, and validated the research procedures and findings. Finally, this chapter will address the delimitations I have set and the limitations inherent in the approach.

Background

At the time of this writing, I am beginning my fifth year as the Supervisor of English Language Arts for grades K-12 in a competitive New Jersey school district. Prior to becoming an administrator, I taught high school English for 6 years at a diverse, semi-urban high school and college composition for 1 year at a large midwestern university. In

2002, shortly after I had begun my career in public education, I saw an advertisement in the newspaper for a position called "Director of Public Relations" at an urban school district. The description beneath the title noted that the district was seeking someone who would be able to improve the public's perception of its schools. I remember finding this title and description confusing; I had never thought of a school district's need to spend financial resources on public relations and marketing.

In these early days of my career, I also remember seeing a cover of *New Jersey Monthly* magazine that read, "Top 75 High Schools." I was unaware at the time that *New Jersey Monthly* ranked the state's high schools bi-annually. The notion of ranking public schools struck me as surprising because I had not thought that schools, particularly public schools, competed with one another—and yet I was disappointed when I saw that the school where I taught had not made the list.

Approximately 5 years later, when I became an administrator, school rankings and public relations became a part of my everyday work; I knew that the community I served placed great value on them. Perhaps I was naïve in my early belief that public relations and competing for rankings were activities with which public schools should not concern themselves. Nevertheless, as I became more experienced in my supervisory position, I began to understand that these activities were normal. I started to see schools change their weighted grading scales by adding even more weight to honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses so that, presumably, their high school seniors in the most challenging classes could report higher grade point averages (GPAs) to college admissions offices. I saw schools require students to take AP Exams after taking AP courses because the local magazines were rating schools on the number of students sitting

for these exams. I saw schools develop elaborate websites and purchase billboard space to advertise the well-rounded education they were offering. Indeed, public schools used a variety of strategies to appeal to their constituents and keep up with their competitors, and as performance accountability culture became the norm in the first decade of the twenty-first century—as manifested in high-stakes testing and the development of school choice programs—these strategies seemed to multiply before my eyes.

I wanted to find out if my anecdotal observations reflected real trends, and when I began my doctoral work in educational leadership in 2009, I set out to read as much as I could about performance accountability culture. Quickly, I discovered that many scholars had studied performativity in its various manifestations and they had much to say about its unanticipated consequences. Little qualitative work had been done on the way high school principals were influenced by performance accountability, so I set out to explore this phenomenon myself. I wanted to know how performativity influenced the day-to-day work of high school principals, if at all.

Design

I selected a multiple case study approach in order to glean data from several subjects who share the experience of serving as high school principals within performance accountability culture. Because my purpose involved examination of perspectives, a semi-structured open-ended interview was selected as an appropriate method to garner participants' firsthand accounts. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) noted that the "interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (p. 95). Indeed, the principals' interpretations of performance accountability were meant to

provide accounts of the way school leaders are affected by increasing surveillance of schools and their outcomes. Collection of public documents that described the vision, mission, and goal statements of the participants' school districts also enabled me to identify and analyze elements of performance accountability culture as they appear in district communiqués.

Since high school principals have firsthand experience of local initiatives associated with performance accountability, knowledge of the ways they cope with accountability mandates, and knowledge of their own perceptions of the culture and of the influence of bureaucratic demands on their abilities to accomplish their core missions as principals, I designed the interview questions (see Appendix A) with a view toward collecting such data. Furthermore, since the research questions are not focused on any particular socioeconomic status (SES) group, the maximum variety sampling—that is, the sampling from the various eight district factor groups—enabled me to identify themes that cut across different strata.

Sampling

In order to investigate the way performance accountability influences the job of high school principals in a diverse array of settings, this study employed a maximum variation sampling technique. Patton (2002) noted that this type of purposeful sampling can be powerful because it allows the researcher to detect commonalities among heterogeneous settings: "any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon" (p. 235). If common themes are detected in a

diverse array of settings, Patton explained, those themes are even more powerful and relevant *because* they were found in diverse settings.

Following Patton's (2002) advice, I selected nine principals from schools that represent four different levels of socioeconomic status (SES): low, middle-low, middle-high, and high. Using census data, the state of New Jersey ranks its school districts in SES by classifying them according to the following criteria:

1. Percent of population with no high school diploma

2. Percent with some college

3. Occupation

4. Population density

5. Income

6. Unemployment

7. Poverty (NJ Department of Education, n.d.-a, para. 1)

The classification of each district is called its *District Factor Group* (DFG), and there are eight such groups in New Jersey: A, B, CD, DE, FG, GH, I, and J, where A is the lowest and J is the highest. In order to divide this range of districts into low, middle-low, middle-high, and high SES, I broke down the DFGs as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

District Factor Groups in New Jersey and Socioeconomic Status

A and B	Low
CD, DE	Middle-low
FG, GH	Middle-high
I and J	High

I secured three participants from low SES high schools; one participant from middle-low;

two participants from middle-high; and three participants from high. Although individual

characteristics related to the various DFGs were taken into consideration during the

interpretation, common themes that cut across the spectrum of districts were the chief

interest of the study.

Furthermore, each principal selected for the study needed at least three years of

experience in the position in order to participate. This requirement enabled me to focus

on principals who had completed their induction into their jobs, received a standard

license to serve as principal in the state of New Jersey, and would have familiarity with

the range of responsibilities inherent in their positions. Some principals—for example,

those with more than 5 or 10 years of experience—were also able to reflect on the way

their responsibilities had changed since they assumed their positions. Thus, purposeful

sampling helped to ensure that I would solicit volunteers who had "the necessary

experience or knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation" (Gay, Mills, &

Airasian, 2009, p. 430).

Taking advantage of the professional network of my own supervisors in the district where I am employed as the K-12 Supervisor of English, I located the first two principals for the study. The superintendent of my district and the principal of my district's high school referred me to these two participants. I then used "snowball" sampling (Patton, 2002, p. 237) to select additional principals for the study; that is, I asked the initial participants to recommend other principals who were experienced enough with performance accountability to offer a rich perspective on the topic. This technique helped me secure seven additional volunteers for the research. Finally, after acquiring site approval from the superintendents of the nine districts where I intended to collect data, I contacted the principals by phone and e-mail to schedule the first interviews.

Profiles of the Participants and Sites

To protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and their school districts, county names and idiosyncratic geographical details are not included in the profiles and findings. All participants, school districts, and geographical identifiers have been assigned pseudonyms.

Furthermore, in order to provide an indication of each school's academic performance as measured by state-mandated testing, I will report each school's aggregate scores for the Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics sections of the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) in 2009-10, the test that all students must eventually pass in order to graduate from public high school in New Jersey. Because schools must focus intensely on the population that does not pass the exam, I will report the percentage of students in each school who fell below proficiency. The opposite approach, reporting

the percentage of proficient students, may obscure the challenges faced by the principal of each school. Table 2 provides a summary of the demographic information for each participating principal and his school.

Table 2

Summary of Demographic Information for Each Principal and School

Principal	DFG	School	Enrollment	% Partially Proficient: Language Arts Literacy	% Partially Proficient: Math
Mr. Vadala	A	Washington Technical Academy	700	40	60
Dr. Valentine	B	Dobson High School	1300	11	28
Dr. Lynch	B	Fullerton High School	500	13	28
Mr. Deutsch	DE	Tenney High School	1250	12	23
Dr. Lindley	GH	Pleasant Valley High School	1350	5	10
Dr. Krug	GH	Northwood High School	1200	6	16
Mr. Sudol	I	Arundel High School	1400	2	10
Mr. Alcindor	I	Danforth High School	1700	4	6
Dr. Gold	J	Paul Township High School	1400	2	5

Those students who do not pass the HSPA after their first attempt must begin preparatory work toward the Alternative High School Assessment (AHSA). Students are

given two more opportunities to pass the HSPA during their senior year, but they may

also graduate if they pass the AHSA. These reported scores are snapshots of each

school's academic performance, capturing the data of only one cohort of students on one

exam; thus, for the purpose of this study, they are not meant to be comprehensive

indicators of the school's quality. Nevertheless, since these scores directly impact each

school's standing in the eyes of the state of New Jersey, which must comply with No

Child Left Behind legislation in order to receive federal funding, they provide the reader

with a sense of the level of challenge facing each principal with respect to performance

accountability. The scores also impact independent rankings of the schools, such as those

provided bi-annually by *New Jersey Monthly* magazine. Overall, 11th grade students in

the state of New Jersey in 2009-10 performed as follows on the HSPA: 88% passed the

Language Arts Literacy section while 12% were deemed partially proficient; 75% passed

the Mathematics section while 25% were deemed partially proficient (New Jersey

Department of Education, 2010b).

Mr. Vadala

Mr. Vadala is the principal of Washington Technical High School, an urban

school serving students in grades 9-12 and designated as an "academy" in a system of six

high school academies in Congress City, a DFG A district. Students must apply to their

schools of preference, and according to Mr. Vadala, Washington is usually third in the

list of students' preferences—at least among students who are more academically-

oriented (7/13/11). The two most preferred schools in the district are known respectively

for their gifted and talented program and AVID (Advancement Via Individual

Determination), a program that provides support and academic challenge for students

"who have the desire to go to college and the willingness to work hard" (AVID, n.d., para. 2) but are not performing up to their potential. Washington, however, offers a series of vocational and career-oriented programs, including concentrations in subjects such as nursing and other health sciences, skilled trades such as plumbing, and hospitality and retail services. The school also offers Advanced Placement (AP) and honors-level courses in traditional academic subjects such as English and mathematics. Washington High has approximately 700 students, and over 200 of them have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs); that is, they are classified as special education students. According to Mr. Vadala, the school's "hands-on" program makes it attractive to students with IEPs (7/13/11).

Mr. Vadala noted that his school struggles to perform well on state-mandated tests. In 2009-10, nearly 40% of Washington's 11th graders scored below proficiency (called partially proficient) on the Language Arts Literacy section of the HSPA, and nearly 60% of Washington's 11th graders were partially proficient on the Mathematics section.

Mr. Vadala has been in the field of education for 31 years and has been a high school principal for 6 years—all in the Congress City district. When I interviewed him, he was about to begin his second year as principal of Washington. Mr. Vadala began his career as a physical education teacher and shortly thereafter became supervisor of physical Education, health, driver's education, safety, and athletics. He also served as a disciplinarian in the position of "teacher on special assignment" and as a house director, a position equivalent to a high school principal but responsible only for one of the district's high school academies. When he officially became a principal 6 years before the study,

he was in charge of all six academies. Now, each academy has its own principal—they are no longer called house directors—and he is at the helm of Washington Technical (8/20/11).

Dr. Valentine

Dr. Valentine is principal of Dobson High School, the single high school in the Dobson Regional system, a DFG B district. Dobson High has a comprehensive program and draws students from five suburban elementary school districts. Dr. Valentine described the community as chiefly "blue-collar" yet "very diversified" socioeconomically (7/11/11). "We have a lot of construction workers, plumbers, people that make a living by trade," Dr. Valentine said. While there are some "poverty-stricken places" in the community, there are also students from "million-dollar homes coming in" (7/11/11). Approximately 1,300 students attend Dobson High School.

Dr. Valentine has been in the field of education for 15 years, all in the Dobson district. Having grown up in the community, he is also a graduate of Dobson High School. At the time of our interview, Dr. Valentine was entering his fourth year as principal, and had served as a vice principal, the supervisor of English, Social Studies, and Family/Consumer Sciences, and a teacher of social studies.

In 2009-10, 11% of Dobson's high school juniors did not achieve proficiency in Language Arts Literacy on the HSPA. The performance was weaker in Mathematics: approximately 28% of the juniors failed this section of the exam. These scores are comparable to the averages across New Jersey, but during our first interview, Dr. Valentine noted that he and his leadership team would be implementing new programs and reforms during the 2011-2012 school year to raise the scores.

Dr. Lynch

Principal of Fullerton Junior and Senior High School, a small DFG B school serving students in grades 7-12, Dr. Lynch faces challenges that are somewhat unique. Nearly half the students are either first-generation Americans or immigrants themselves. Because the school has a such a high percentage of English language learners, Dr. Lynch noted, "literacy is a big concern of ours—it's been a big push for years now" (7/18/11). He has a long perspective as principal of Fullerton, having assumed the position 21 years ago. When I interviewed Dr. Lynch, he was entering his 36th year in the field of education. He was a vice principal and a teacher of business in other, more affluent districts before becoming principal of Fullerton.

Because Fullerton has approximately 550 students, Dr. Lynch has been able to assign one team of teachers to each grade level between 7th and 11th grades. Thus, with the exception of 12th grade, each grade level has one teacher for each of the core academic subjects and these teachers are able to communicate easily about their students, whom they all share in common. Consistent with the focus on literacy, Dr. Lynch calls these grade-level teams "literacy teams" (7/18/11). Performance on the HSPA Language Arts Literacy section has been traditionally better than that on Mathematics. In 2009-10, 13% of the students failed the Language Arts Literacy section while 28% failed the Mathematics section. These scores are very much in line with state averages.

Mr. Deutsch

The principal of Tenney High School, Mr. Deutsch, is relatively new on the job but has been in the district for 16 years. He had just completed his third year when I interviewed him, and prior to serving as principal, he had been a vice principal with

disciplinary responsibilities and a physical education teacher. The Tenney school district, a suburban community designated as DFG DE, has an ethnically diverse and relatively blue-collar population, according to Mr. Deutsch (7/14/11). Mr. Deutsch told me that, over the course of the last twenty years, the population of the school has become more and more diverse linguistically and the district has struggled to keep their HSPA scores above the state averages. Approximately 1,250 students attend Tenney High School and nearly 550 of them speak a language other than English at home. In 2009-10, 12% of the school's students failed the Language Arts Literacy section of HSPA, and 23% fell below proficiency in the Mathematics section.

Much like Dr. Valentine and the administration at Dobson, Mr. Deutsch and his leadership team have allocated resources toward improving test scores, not only emphasizing exam practice in class, but also running a HSPA boot camp during the district's spring vacation. The drive to raise scores on the HSPA, SAT, and AP Exams was evident throughout my first interview with Mr. Deutsch, who referred frequently to the higher performance of his neighboring districts.

Dr. Lindley

Dr. Lindley began his career as a physical education teacher, but he has been an administrator for 17 of his 21 years in the field of education—all in relatively affluent school districts. He has 5 years of experience as a principal, and when I interviewed him, he was entering his third year as principal of Pleasant Valley High School, one of two high schools in the large suburban town of Parson, designated as a GH district. Serving approximately 1,350 students who tend to perform well on state assessments, Dr. Lindley expressed little concern about aggregate test scores at Pleasant Valley. In 2009-10, fewer

than 5% of the juniors failed the Language Arts Literacy section of the HSPA and 10% failed the Mathematics. These are not the best scores in the state, but they are well above New Jersey averages.

As principal of a high-performing school that is traditionally ranked among the top 50 high schools in the state in various publications, Dr. Lindley focuses less time on raising HSPA scores than he does on getting more students to take AP classes and score well on their AP Exams (7/12/11). Throughout our interview, Dr. Lindley promoted the school's extra-curricular programs, discussed his "pride in the very well-rounded education" offered by Pleasant Valley, and named a number of honors earned by students in various academic contests (e.g., New Jersey Math League and Merck Science Day) (7/12/11).

Dr. Krug

The principal of Northwood Junior and Senior High School, a regional school serving students in grades 8-12 and drawing from two towns, is the only participant in the study who worked in another field before entering education. Dr. Krug worked for a software company for 7 years and became a social studies teacher 12 years ago. He said he felt unfulfilled in business, but after realizing that he enjoyed teaching other people how to use the company's software and interpret its findings, he decided to pursue a teaching career in his favorite subject, history (8/21/11). When I interviewed him, he was entering his fifth year as principal of Northwood, a DFG GH school with approximately 1,200 students. According to Dr. Krug, his board of education and district administrators often compare Northwood's performance to that of the high schools in the more affluent

neighboring towns. Dr. Krug said that the two towns served by Northwood differ from neighboring towns and from each other socioeconomically.

We are a little more blue-collar. We are a regional district. So I have one town which is maybe a little more like Danforth [a highly affluent district] which is more white-collar, higher-income bracket, but then I also have this other town which is a little more blue-collar—you know, guys still making 100 grand, but they own their landscaping business, their own sprinkler system. And I would argue that this community does not truly value education as compared to the other ones. (7/20/11)

Dr. Krug feels pressure from the district to raise test scores at Northwood High School, but he believes that the community is less academically-oriented than surrounding communities like Danforth, thus making it especially challenging to measure up to nearby districts.

In 2009-2010, 6% of Northwood's juniors scored below the proficiency mark in the Language Arts Literacy section of the HSPA and 16% failed the Mathematics section. Dr. Krug believes that his school's recent efforts in curriculum revision and rewriting, standardization of lesson plans, and common assessments will lead to increases in state test scores, allowing Northwood to compete with the districts to which it is often compared.

Mr. Sudol

Mr. Sudol is principal of Arundel High School, one of two high schools in a regional district with seven constituent towns. A DFG I school in an affluent suburban community, Arundel serves approximately 1,400 students. Mr. Sudol has been the

principal at Arundel for 8 years, and he has been in the field of education for a total of 38 years. Prior to assuming the position of principal, Mr. Sudol had been a vice principal in charge of attendance and discipline and a teacher of physical education.

Mr. Sudol claims that Arundel's central office administration, board of education, and community frequently compare Arundel's SAT and HSPA averages to those of the other high school in the district. Typically, Arundel lags behind the other high school by a few points, making Mr. Sudol the target of questioning and scrutiny. Nevertheless, Arundel's performance is among the highest in the state. In 2009-10, less than 2% of the juniors failed the Language Arts Literacy Section of the HSPA while less than 10% failed the Mathematics section. Still, however, pressure from the community and ongoing comparison with the other district high school results in school initiatives to raise test scores—both on the SAT and the HSPA. Mr. Sudol has advocated for the dedication of more classroom time to vocabulary development and practice with math problems that are similar to the types that appear on the HSPA and SAT. He also offers an SAT class in the evening, for which students of Arundel and other nearby districts pay a fee.

Mr. Alcindor

When I interviewed Mr. Alcindor, he was preparing for his 6th year as principal of Danforth High School, but he had served as a principal in Alabama for 12 years. Mr. Alcindor began his work in education 44 years ago as an Industrial Arts teacher and after 15 years in that position, he was "tapped on the shoulder to take a promotion," which led to a vice principalship and ultimately a position as principal (8/22/11).

Located in a DFG I district, Danforth High School has a competitive academic environment, but Mr. Alcindor makes a great deal of effort to personalize the school and

look out for what he calls "the underdog," the struggling student who needs close monitoring and consistent academic support (8/4/11). Nearly 1,700 students attend Danforth, and Mr. Alcindor believes it is especially important to prevent the high school from becoming a "mass education system" and to work toward making it "feel very small" (8/4/11). HSPA scores in 2009-10 demonstrated the high level of achievement in this school. That year, only 4% fell below proficiency in Language Arts Literacy and less than 6% were partially proficient in the Mathematics section. Mr. Alcindor believes that personal attention to struggling students and school-wide efforts to improve reading comprehension—even for stronger students who, despite people's assumptions, "are really not, oftentimes, very good readers"—have resulted in these high test scores.

Dr. Gold

Dr. Gold has been principal of Paul Township High School for 5 years. He has been in the field of education for 31 years and has served as a math teacher, the supervisor of the Math Department for grades K-12, and vice principal. Dr. Gold's entire career has been in Paul Township, a DFG J district which has enjoyed many accolades and favorable rankings for consistently high performance. In 2009-10, less than 2% of the juniors at Paul failed the Language Arts Literacy section on the HSPA and less than 5% failed the Mathematics section. Roughly 1,400 students attend this high school.

Dr. Gold admitted to having a relatively laissez-faire attitude toward testing because of the district's long history of success.

Traditionally in this district, and I don't want to say "elitist," but we have been—

Going back for years, I think we felt that we were going to do our thing and if the

outside testing—if we don't find it useful, we never really worried about it....

HSPA doesn't give us much information. You know, the few students it identifies as having problems, we truthfully don't need a test to let us know that they have problem. (7/13/11)

Since test scores have not been an issue at Paul, Dr. Gold said that much of the community's concern focuses on students' admission into prestigious colleges. While Dr. Gold believes that this concern can put too much stress on the students, he admitted that "the positive side is that they [the parents and the students] care—they are striving to be what others think as successful. It works to our advantage most of the time" (7/13/11). This cultural desire for traditional success (e.g., attending a prestigious college) results in high test scores and Dr. Gold's ability to de-emphasize explicit test preparation at Paul High School. Without pressure to raise test scores, Dr. Gold can give his subject-area departments autonomy to develop high-interest courses that simulate college-level seminars, like English electives in American humor, magic and the *Harry Potter* series, and literature about the state of New Jersey.

Data Collection

Because this dissertation aimed to discover the influence of performance accountability culture on the work of principals, including the principals' attitudes toward accountability and the way they coped with its bureaucratic demands, I collected qualitative data from both interviews and public documents. The interviews helped me to learn about perceptions and methods of coping; the documents helped me to identify the initiatives associated with performance accountability culture in the district's official and public language. Table 3 provides an overview of the procedures that were used to collect data.

Table 3

An Overview of the Procedures Used to Collect Data

Research Question: How has the performance accountability culture in education influenced the job of the principal in public high schools in the State of New Jersey?

Sub-Question	Data Source(s)	Objective(s)
What initiatives associated with the performance accountability culture are public high schools in the State of New Jersey currently pursuing?	Documents in the public domain (district vision, mission and goal statements); interviews with principals.	To understand the performance accountability initiatives currently being planned and implemented in public high schools in the State of New Jersey.
How do principals in public high schools in the State of New Jersey cope with the demands of the performance accountability culture related to test scores, school rankings, and other quantifiable outcomes of school?	Interviews with principals.	To understand the various ways in which principals address the mandates of the accountability culture; to understand the lived experiences of principals in the performance accountability culture.
What are the perceptions of principals of public high schools in the State of New Jersey toward the performance accountability culture?	Interviews with principals.	To understand the attitudes of principals toward the performance accountability culture.
What is the relationship between the demands of performance accountability culture and what principals believe to be the core responsibilities of their position?	Interviews with principals.	To understand the influence of bureaucratic accountability demands on principals' abilities to fulfill their professional missions.

District vision, mission, and goal statements were used to identify initiatives associated with the performance accountability culture in education. Interviews, however, constituted the dominant mode of data collection in this study. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) noted that the "interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (p. 95). Indeed, the principals' interpretations of performance accountability provided me with firsthand accounts of the way school leaders are affected by increasing surveillance of schools and their outcomes.

I developed a structured, open-ended interview protocol with 35 questions to collect data that could be compared across different participants and facilitated organization of the data for analysis (Patton, 2002). Follow-up questions and probes, however, were used to elicit from the participants additional details, clarification, and elaboration on topics relevant to the study (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003; Patton, 2002). The interview questions were developed based on the theoretical framework of this study, following Creswell's (2003) description of the role that theoretical perspectives play for qualitative researchers: "they provide a lens (even a theory) to guide the researchers as to what issues are important to examine (e.g., marginalization, empowerment) and the people that need to be studied" (p. 131). Table 4 provides some sample interview questions broached by the theoretical framework of this dissertation.

Table 4

Sample Interview Questions Raised by Theoretical Framework

Sample Interview Question(s)	Theoretical Framework(s)	Theorist(s)
How do rating systems, such as the bi-annual *New Jersey Monthly* high school ranking, influence what you do as principal?	• Performativity • The Audit Society • Disciplinary Power and the Panopticon	• Ball • Power • Foucault
What initiatives are you currently pursuing as principal? What role does State-mandated testing play in your job as principal?	• Lifeworld and System	• Habermas
How is your work as principal formally evaluated or judged? How are you evaluated informally?	• Performativity • Disciplinary Power and the Panopticon • The Audit Society	• Ball • Foucault • Power
What kinds of bureaucratic demands do you have to deal with as principal? In what ways do bureaucratic demands affect your work as principal?	• Lifeworld and System • Disciplinary Power and the Panopticon	• Habermas • Foucault
How have you addressed the mandates of the newly released curriculum standards? What is your opinion of the new standards?	• Lifeworld and System • Disciplinary Power and the Panopticon	• Habermas • Foucault
In your opinion, how has your leadership style been affected by the demands of performance accountability?	• Lifeworld and System	• Habermas
What role does public relations play in your job as principal?	• Performativity • Lifeworld and System	• Ball • Habermas

Shortly after I began each interview, I noticed that the participants had much to

say in response to my questions, and they often anticipated the later questions in my

protocol. Because their responses were so rich and I did not want to truncate their answers in the interest of moving on to the next topic, I ultimately allowed the interviews to follow a more semi-structured design, moving from topic to topic according to the natural flow of the conversation, as long as all questions in the original interview guide were addressed. Each initial interview took between 60 and 90 minutes.

Follow-up interviews took place on the phone with the participants 3 weeks after the initial interview with all of the principals except for Dr. Lindley, who did not respond to two requests. This follow-up interview helped me clarify some of the principals' responses after the analytical process began; it also helped me obtain more data to answer the final subquestion more adequately: What is the relationship between the demands of performance accountability culture and what principals believe to be the core responsibilities of their position? I supposed that the initial interview, focused so much on accountability and bureaucratic mandates, may not have created the ideal forum in which the participants could discuss the reasons why they originally entered education and eventually sought the position of principal. Indeed, the follow-up conversations, shorn of any discussion of the less savory aspects of their jobs (e.g., bureaucratic mandates), enabled the participants to share more information about their original motives for entering the field of education.

Each interview took place in the principal's office or in a private conference room in the school, ensuring that the participants could speak freely about their work without being overheard. All interviews took place after the school year had ended, which meant that the principals had more time than they would have had between September and June, and were almost never interrupted by work-related calls or issues. Only my interview

with Mr. Vadala was interrupted by a fire drill—summer school was in session—causing us to leave the site of the interview and resume in another, less private location. We had only 7 minutes left in the interview at that point, but I noticed that Mr. Vadala was much less critical of his district in the second location. This change in his attitude did not compromise the value of his data, as most of it had already been collected; nevertheless, it reminded me of the importance of speaking to the participants in private and of a major limitation of my interview research—namely, that I was relying on my interview subjects to provide me with truthful accounts of their work, not necessarily the accounts that their district administrators would want to hear. Thus, I focused intently on developing a rapport with each subject and I reminded them that I would keep all data anonymous and confidential. The more natural, conversational flow of the semi-structured interview enhanced this rapport.

I digitally recorded all of the interviews, took field notes during the interview sessions, and elaborated upon these notes immediately after each interview. I then transcribed the data from the interviews into a typewritten format to prepare them for analysis.

Data Analysis

After transcribing the data from the interviews, I read the transcripts and documents without writing anything on them. During this stage, I tried to "get a sense of the whole" while taking separate notes on patterns and themes that I noticed (Creswell, 2003, p. 192). I then read through the transcripts and documents a second time, listing all of their topics in preparation for the development of codes. Once I had read all of the data twice, I developed a preliminary set of codes, adopting what Boyatzis (1998) called

a "hybrid approach" (p. 52) to coding; that is, I used "theory-driven," "prior-research-driven" and "data-driven" codes to locate themes in the data (pp. 33, 37, 31). Thus, the codes came from theory, extant literature, and the language of the participants themselves. I used some a priori codes—that is, codes that came from theory and extant literature—because I intended to discover the extent to which critical and postmodern theory, both of which had been used either implicitly or explicitly in the literature, would be fruitful in explaining the perspectives of the principals. Sergiovanni (2000), for example, used Habermas's notions of lifeworld and system as the starting point in his book-long recommendation of how school accountability ought to be reformed. I was interested in whether concepts from critical theory such as lifeworld and system really did apply to the everyday experiences of high school principals. Some of the data-driven codes—a posteriori codes—were "*in vivo* term[s]" (Creswell, 2003, p. 192). I used in vivo terms when I saw that a particular turn of phrase had been used by multiple participants.

Table 5 provides a list of the preliminary codes created during the analytical process. "Steering at a distance" (sad) is an example of theory-driven code because it comes from the work of Ball (1994) on performativity (p. 54). "Corporate language/schooling as business" (corp) is a prior-research-driven code, having been drawn from the work of Anderson (2005), who noted that the language of business has been increasingly used to describe the work of schools. Finally, "rankings and comparisons" (rnk) and "what's right for kids" (wrk) are data-driven and in vivo codes, respectively, because they come straight from the language of the transcripts.

Table 5

List of Preliminary Codes

Code	Theme	Code	Theme
pr	public relations/impression management	cyn	cynicism
vis	maintaining visibility and transparency	crep	coping with reports
doc	production of documents	foc	inability to focus
rep	production of reports	mor	keeping morale positive
corp	corporate language/schooling as business	posp	positive outcomes of performance accountability
mm	managed management	rwd	rewarding moments
cons	use of consultants	tch	teacher leadership
chc	school choice, competing for enrollment	unf	unfair
inc	raising scores and increasing other indicators	dil	dilemma
blg	blogs as accountability	dsc	disconnected from students
email	email as accountability	ign	ignoring external evaluators or rejecting them
par	involved parents	fab	fabrication
sad	"steering at a distance"	car	caring about kids
pers	personalizing the school	posd	use of data systems for positive purposes
lfw/sys	nourishing the lifeworld v. managing the system	wrk	"what's right for kids"
rnk	rankings and comparisons	auth	authenticity
sc	standardization and consistency	fa	focus on academics
bur	Bureaucracy	data	data collection
tech	technology used for accountability		

Single-Case Analysis

Once I had coded the documents and interview transcripts with the preliminary codes, I read through the data again to make sure the codes were accurate and to identify the major themes emerging from the findings. At this point in the process, I was careful to follow Miles and Huberman's (1994) direction to examine and understand "the dynamics of each particular case *before* proceeding to cross-case explanations" so as to

avoid "superficiality" (p. 207). This attention to each case on its own allowed me to preserve codes that were uncommon but prevalent enough to merit explanation. For example, while the participants typically expressed cynical attitudes toward their responsibility to maintain, analyze, and report many kinds of data in performance accountability culture, three of the nine participants noted positive uses of their electronic data management systems. Thus, I preserved the code "posd" (use of data systems for positive purposes) and adhered to Miles and Huberman's (1994) advice that "The cases that do not fit your emerging explanations are your friends. They surprise you, confront you, and require you to rethink, expand, and revise your theories" (p. 208). The anomalous cases, discovered through single-case analysis, caused me to think more deeply about why a few principals were able to cope with bureaucratic demands while others were not.

Cross-Case Analysis

Next, I proceeded to synthesize the codes into major themes. Cross-case analysis proved to be the heart of my study because it enabled me to find the commonalities among cases that were diverse with respect to DFG status. Whether I was studying a principal from an A district or one from a J district, I found recurrent themes of performance accountability culture. Although the use of cross-case analysis does not prove that the findings can be generalized to cases that were not a part of the study, it does "deepen *understanding and explanation*" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 173). Comparison across cases helped ensure that the emerging themes were not merely "idiosyncratic" to any particular cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 172).

I found three major themes of performance accountability culture in the cross-case analysis: the marketization of public education; centralized and bureaucratic control of schools; and principals' struggles to remain connected to the lifeworld of schools as they managed the demands of the accountability system. I categorized the codes according to these three themes, and then arranged all of the data so that they appeared under one of the three themes.

Once the major patterns emerged into three themes, I interpreted the data within each of the themes. Although the theoretical framework provided multiple lenses through which to view and interpret the data, raising particular issues of focus such as performativity and colonization of the lifeworld, my analysis remained open to any possible emergent themes. Thus, when it became clear that three principals in the study claimed to have coped successfully with bureaucratic mandates, I noted this and reported it as an anomalous finding—one that tested the extant research and theory.

Validity and Reliability

In order to attain reliability in the methods of data collection in this study, I had a jury of experts—in this case, three school administrators—review the interview questions. I then revised the wording of some questions according to the feedback of the experts. For example, one person suggested that I change the question, What initiatives get prioritized? to *How* do initiatives get prioritized? Another person suggested that I remain more open to the possibility that the performance accountability movement might not influence the work of the principal as much as I had been predicting. Thus, she suggested that I add the words, if at all, to the following question: In discussions about public education, accountability for performance has become a prevalent topic since the

early 1980s, and especially over the course of the last decade. How has the performance accountability movement affected your school?

I also piloted the interview protocol twice with non-participating high school principals to check whether the questions would elicit useful data. After piloting the interview, I adjusted the questions as needed. For example, I noticed that the question, What kinds of bureaucratic demands do you have to deal with as principal? was unclear to the pilot participants. I clarified this question by telling participants that the bureaucratic demands could be from the state or the local district, and they could include accountability systems like the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC) or other types of reports that principals are required to produce.

Furthermore, I used member-checking (Creswell, 2003) to attain what Gay, Airasian, and Mills (2009) call "descriptive validity" (p. 375). After I had transcribed the data, I gave the interview participants an opportunity to review the transcripts and verify whether their data had been accurately reported. I also used a second round of interviewing—this one, on the phone and much briefer—as an opportunity to clarify some of the data. For example, I needed to ask one participant how his district completed the requirements of NJQSAC, and he was able to explain this on the phone. The second round of interviewing helped augment the existing data, but the member-checking did not result in any changes to the transcripts.

My final method for validating the accuracy of my findings was to enlist the help of a peer debriefer—someone who recently completed a dissertation and earned an Ed.D. at Teachers College, Columbia University. She reviewed the study throughout the

process and helped me make sure that it "resonate[d] with people other than the researcher" (Creswell, 2003, p. 196).

Limitations and Delimitations

Because the sample in this multiple case study is small, the findings cannot be generalized to explain the experiences and attitudes of all public high school principals in New Jersey with respect to the performance accountability culture. Furthermore, as Bogdan and Biklen (2003) noted, "not all people are equally articulate or perceptive," thus making the practice of interviewing especially challenging (p. 97). This study will rely not only on the perspectives of the interviewees, but also on their ability to explain, with some level of precision, their experiences working within the performance accountability culture. Furthermore, this study used one lengthy, in-person interview for each participant, followed by a brief, follow-up interview on the phone. This method of data collection limited me to evidence that could be gleaned on two occasions for each participant (and one occasion for the principal who did not respond to the request for a follow-up interview).

I have delimited this study to focus only on principals of public high schools in the state of New Jersey with at least 3 years of experience in the position. This strategy enabled me to study principals who have experienced the same accountability regime at the state level. The requirement that the principals have at least 3 years of experience in the position also helped ensure that they were fully familiar with their administrative responsibilities and had progressed beyond the level of induction into their jobs. This level of experience increased the likelihood that the principals would be conversant with the performance accountability culture and its demands. Although male and female

principals were eligible to participate in the study, all interview participants were male. Additional delimitations include the purely qualitative approach to the study and the use of a theoretical framework based on postmodern and critical theory.

Summary

Chapter III provided an explanation of the methodology proposed for this dissertation. It described my background, the design of the study, the sampling technique, the method of data collection to answer the overarching research question and sub-questions, the types of interview questions that were used and how they relate to the study's theoretical framework, and the method of qualitative data analysis that I used to produce the findings. This chapter also described the methods used to attain validity and reliability in the study. Finally, the chapter explained the limitations and delimitations of the study. Chapter IV will present the findings.

Chapter IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter I will present the findings of the interviews and document analyses, organizing them according to the major themes that emerged from the qualitative coding process: the marketization of public education; centralized and bureaucratic control of schools; and principals' tensions between nourishing the lifeworld and managing the system of their schools. Within each discussion of the major themes, I will demonstrate how the findings relate to the theoretical frameworks of this study with a view toward answering the overarching research question: How has the performance accountability culture in education influenced the job of the principal in public high schools in the State of New Jersey?

Marketization

Analysis of interview transcripts and documents revealed the principals' and schools' emphasis on numerous phenomena associated with marketization of public schools. Here, "marketization" refers to "the re-working of existing public sector delivery into forms which mimic the private and have similar consequences in terms of practices, values and identities" (Ball, 2004, p. 3). Practices and values associated with the private sector may include an emphasis on public relations and marketing, the need to compete with other institutions, or the treatment of education—through discourse and practices—as a commodity. This study found four major patterns within the theme of marketization.

1. An emphasis on public relations and impression management.

2. A concern with rankings and comparisons among schools.

3. Competition for student enrollment and resources.

4. The treatment of schooling as a business.

Each of these concerns and practices plays an important role in performance

accountability culture. As schools are increasingly evaluated by states and communities

according to their outputs, principals must manage their schools' appearances to the

general public and to policymakers; cope with the impact of ranking systems and

frequent comparisons with other schools; compete for student enrollment as school

choice becomes more prevalent; and either participate in, or resist, discourse and

practices that treat schooling as a business.

Public Relations and Impression Management

The importance of public relations (PR) and impression management in the job of

a high school principal emerged as the most prominent theme in this study across all of

the participants. When I asked participants to describe the role that PR played in their

jobs as principals, it was typical for them to respond as Mr. Deutsch of Tenney High

School did: "I think it is a major role. It's a *major* role" (7/14/11). Similarly, Mr. Vadala

of Washington Technical Academy said, "You're basically PR-ing the whole time you're

working" (7/13/11). Schools' and principals' emphasis on PR did not require clever

discovery on my part; rather, it was out in the open, something that principals were

sometimes proud to announce. Even district and school mission statements were

forthcoming about the importance of managing their appearances to the public. One of

Tenney's three official district goals was to "improve public relations and the perception

of the school district" (public document). In Fullerton, the district had a "Public

Relations committee to develop and implement a plan to promote the school to the

community" (public document). Northwood published its commitment to produce press

releases and distribute information on a regular basis in order to "help regional press

present the district and public education in general in a positive light" (public document).

Thus, no matter the school's designated DFG, PR was an explicit concern and goal.

The pressure to promote the school, to manage the impressions of the institution

and present it in a positive light, emerged from a need to counteract negative perceptions

in communities or prevent criticism from stakeholders. At Tenney, Mr. Deutsch told me

about various efforts to celebrate students' accomplishments—for example, by printing

posters of the male and female student-athletes of the month and having them displayed

at popular local delis and pizzerias. Mr. Deutsch proudly showed me examples of these

posters, which highlighted the students' sports accomplishments, their grade point

averages (GPAs), the colleges they hoped to attend, and their intended majors or

programs of study. Pointing to a glossy poster with headshots of two students on it, Mr.

Deutsch said:

> Right over here—Sarah—she's got a 4.0 grade point average, and you know
>
> Kevin at that time had a 3.8 GPA. But we're PR-ing our kids in different avenues
>
> in the town. Why? Because now, people are seeing— Sometimes with Tenney
>
> High School, and I'll be quite honest, they'll see different colors [of students] out
>
> in front. And they'll think, 'This place is a sack o' suds.' It's a good place. Just
>
> because we have all different colors doesn't mean we're a bad school. We are an
>
> excellent school. All the different colors to me is what I love, to be honest with
>
> you, rather than teaching a bunch of Caucasian kids. These kids are tremendous.

And sometimes people see it and they think bad things. That was the way it used

to be. We got great kids here, and we need to publicize it. (7/14/11)

Here, Mr. Deutsch felt the need to use PR in order to gain community support and to

counteract what he candidly described as prejudicial feelings in the town.

In elaborating on his work to improve perceptions of Tenney High School, Mr.

Deutsch turned his computer monitor toward me and played a series of videos profiling

some of the highest-performing students in the building. He referred to these as

"promotional" and "pride video[s]," and told me that they were broadcast on the local

access cable network (7/14/11). Each video, which was professionally produced in the

school's television studio, featured a slow-motion, black-and-white moving shot of the

student while the student's voiceover described his/her interests, accomplishments, and

goals. As the narration continued, the student sometimes appeared in different

uniforms—for example, marching band, baseball—to display the well-roundedness of

his/her education at Tenney. The final sentence was always the same: "My name is

_____ and I am Tenney High School." Mr. Deutsch said that he devotes a great deal

of energy to promoting these videos, and as a result, "the kids are dying to get a part of

this. They want to create their own video" (7/14/11).

Much like the posters displayed at local delis and pizzerias, the pride videos

emphasized that Tenney High School was "a good place" (Mr. Deutsch, 7/14/11), as if to

counteract a feeling among stakeholders that it is *not* a good place. The students listed

their accomplishments, painted a picture of the future they were planning, and closed

with a statement that reassured the viewer that *they* are Tenney High School. Crucially,

students who got featured in these videos were required to have attended Tenney High

School since kindergarten, further reassuring viewers that Tenney could produce such successful students from the very start.

At Dobson High School, Dr. Valentine laughed as he told me, somewhat embarrassedly, that he and his administrative team tended to write their own articles and "send them into the local papers telling them what we're up to, just to let them know that not everything you hear is bad. The good by far outweighs the bad" (7/11/11). Dr. Valentine noted that without placing emphasis on PR, it is impossible to garner community support for the schools. Furthermore, when the school is struggling to achieve test scores that meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the principal must counteract negative press that causes people to say, "Oh geez, you are wasting my tax dollars" (7/11/11). Here, it is explicitly clear that the posting of test scores in the local newspapers, a key element of performance accountability culture, can directly result in a principal's need to promote the school and manage impressions.

Even the principals who worked in more affluent communities and had relatively high test scores focused a great deal of attention on PR. In speaking of PR, Dr. Krug of Northwood High School noted that his superintendent "is very big on it" (7/20/11). The general PR practice for Northwood is a commitment to keeping the community informed on a consistent basis. Dr. Krug said that the superintendent "tries to get us in the paper whenever possible," and he also "created a constant contact, an e-mail system that gets messages out, so he's constantly sending weekly things about the good things that we're doing here." Dr. Krug himself takes part in the effort because he wants the community to "feel better" (7/20/11) about the school:

I send out weekly things that are happening in the school, with pictures of kids in

a science class with goggles on, or speaking French in front of a whatever—and

the teacher will give me a quick write-up and take a picture of these kids, and I

will send these e-mail blasts on a weekly basis to the community. (7/20/11)

Furthermore, Dr. Krug emphasized the importance of keeping the school's website filled

with information for parents and the rest of the community. He noted that his school's

struggle to compete with the standardized test scores of neighboring districts, which

newspapers consistently report to the public, requires him to "be proactive" and keep

people informed about the positive aspects of Northwood (7/20/11).

Principals in the most affluent districts in the study, DFG I and J, demonstrated a

concern with PR, but they had fewer strategies or techniques to spread news of their

schools' achievements. Perhaps they felt less need to do so. Nevertheless, principals at I

and J districts perceived PR as a way to remain transparent to their communities. Mr.

Alcindor of Danforth High School admitted that PR plays a "huge role" in his job

(8/4/11), but the point of PR was chiefly to

tell the public that we've got a problem before they find out that we've got a

problem. And we have been pretty successful at that. So, we might say to them,

we know we have a group of kids at the high school that are selling drugs at the

school, we know it's happening, we are watching it, here is what we're doing, and

we will catch them. And we will let you know when we catch them. But our

head isn't in the sand when there is a problem. (8/4/11)

Mr. Alcindor of Danforth High School and Dr. Gold of Paul Township High

School, a J district, both noted that the recent advent of community blogs and local online

news publications like the "Patch" have facilitated much more community discussion of high school issues than people were able to have 10 years ago. Thus, both principals discussed their appearances at Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings in order to address issues proactively and to promote transparency with regard to the school's problems. Dr. Gold noted that every high school, no matter how strong it is, has its problems, so a principal needs to be visible and proactive about keeping parents informed:

> You want people to be comfortable, I think, is how I would describe it. And it's a lot tougher to bash you when they know you directly. Because things are going to happen in a high school, and as great a school as we have, we focus our efforts really on the 10% that are not up to par and— The problems that we deal with, you think nothing's going right sometimes with that and you don't want parents to be focusing on that. (7/13/11)

Thus, Dr. Gold said that he makes an effort to know people in the community and to be generally friendly so that people will be less inclined to criticize him unfairly—that is, to "bash" him and the high school.

For Mr. Alcindor and Dr. Gold, the need to use PR to prevent harsh criticism came largely from the appearance of blogs. Mr. Alcindor said that he generally tells his leadership team that "we need to make sure that we don't do something that is going to get us on the blog in a negative way. So, that's kind of in the back of our minds always" (8/4/11). For these principals, the problem is that bad news can spread quickly nowadays and a principal has to do as much as he/she can to control it. With respect to blogs and other kinds of online news sources, Dr. Gold commented:

I mean certainly 10 years ago you didn't have things like that. That one person could just put something out and the reactions to it cause a whole phenomenon of reactions and opinions and everybody wants to weigh in on things. The old telephone game—news gets distorted quickly with that. (7/13/11)

Here, Dr. Gold expressed some frustration with the negative press that blogs tend to facilitate, and Mr. Alcindor admitted that the online discussions are always on his mind as he fulfills his duties as principal.

Indeed, PR played a role in the work of every principal who participated in this study, but the perceptions of it varied. While some principals, like Dr. Gold and Mr. Alcindor, expressed frustration with the heightened need for PR in performance accountability culture, others—like Mr. Deutsch and Dr. Krug—spoke uncritically and sometimes proudly of their work in PR. Some principals were rather cynical about the need to manage impressions of schools and districts. When asked about the role of PR in his work, Mr. Vadala of Washington Technical said of the principals in his district, "We're just—I hate to say it, I'd hate to call myself a spin doctor, but you kind of are! I mean, PR is very important" (7/13/11). Dr. Lindley of Pleasant Valley High School said of PR, "It's 95% of the job," and his other comments illustrated the position of principal mostly as "sharing what you're doing with the community, gaining or garnering votes for the budget and stuff like that" (7/12/11). Thus, PR proved to be an essential element of the principals' work.

The importance of PR and impression management in the job of a principal corroborates some of what Niesz (2010) found in her case study of a low-performing middle school in Philadelphia. In Niesz's study, much of the change she saw in the

school's effort to reform was "primarily ornamental," as the principal's central concern was image-making (p. 389). It cannot be said that the concern with PR among the participants of the present study precludes authentic and positive academic work, as it did in Niesz's (2010) study. As I will demonstrate later in this chapter, the principals I interviewed and their schools were involved in more activities than impression management. Nevertheless, their commitment to PR—whether proud or begrudging— illustrates Ball's (2001) warning that performance accountability culture can cause schools and school officials to *perform* in another sense—as one does on a stage. Ball (2001) called this type of performing "fabrication," and while it does not equate to outright lying, it denotes the process by which school administrators create versions of themselves and their schools for promotional purposes (p. 216). The danger, according to Ball, is that fabrication can consume a great deal of time—time that could be spent on authentic academic work.

Thus, while producing promotional videos, publishing press releases, or examining blogs to determine how best to counteract negative perceptions of the school, principals could instead be working on instructional leadership. Ball argued that while fabrication may appear like a clever strategy to resist the performance accountability culture because of its attempt to create and control impressions, it actually "requires submission to the rigours [*sic*] of performativity and the disciplines of competition— resistance *and* capitulation" (p. 217). The demand for accountability leads to efforts in PR and promotional work which, in turn, may distract school leaders from academic work that is not related to marketing. It is not possible to tell from the documents and interviews in this study exactly how much the principals' dedication to PR distracts them

from their authentic work as school leaders. No principal can be expected to report his/her own failure to do authentic work. But, it can be said that the principals in this study do take part in various forms of fabrication in response to performance accountability culture—not as acts of dishonesty, but as calculated strategies to create versions of their school for public consumption. Indeed, these strategies may be necessities for survival in the marketized environment of public education.

Employing the language of Habermas, Chambers (1995) drew a distinction between communicative and strategic action. Communicative action, which takes place in a healthy lifeworld, is aimed at reaching "mutual" and "genuine understanding" between participants. In strategic action, however, participants are "primarily interested in bringing about a desired behavioral response" in their audience (p. 237). The principals in this study used PR strategically to improve their communities' perceptions of their school districts. Sometimes the principals were counteracting negative perceptions; sometimes they were hoping to garner affirmative votes for their districts' budgets. In all cases, the principals used PR to influence the behavior of their communities, creating a certain image of their schools that they wanted community members to believe in. Mr. Vadala's cynical admission to functioning as a spin doctor at times (7/13/11), adding that it was *necessary* to be one, raises the question: In the world of performance accountability, where image is paramount, how can we distinguish between a principal's management of impressions and his authentic communication? If PR and impression management are central to a principal's job, how can we distinguish between a principal's marketing of his school and his attempt to describe its work with authenticity and sincerity?

PR is an example of strategic action—explicitly so when it is used to garner yes-votes for the budget. The concern with strategic action in schools is that emphasis on such action can lead to inauthenticity, detracting from the time that principals spend acting communicatively within the lifeworld of their schools (Niesz, 2010). In discussions of principals' work in PR, we see that the system imperative is to acquire community support, and the pathological result can be an inordinate emphasis on image rather than substance.

Comparisons and Rankings

Markets are characterized by competition, and as education becomes commodified across the globe (Ball, 2004), schools must compete with one another for students and resources (Apple, 2000). Ranking systems provide parents, communities, and policymakers with information that facilitates comparison among schools. Readers of magazines such as *New Jersey Monthly*, which rates the state's public high schools bi-annually, can evaluate a high school's performance based on its ranking, which is determined from quantitative indicators including, but not limited to, test scores, number of instructional minutes per day, number of Advanced Placement (AP) exams administered, and faculty-to-student ratio. Although most of the principals in this study did not claim that ranking systems directly influenced their decisions on the job, all of them demonstrated attention to them. When asked how ranking systems like the one published by *New Jersey Monthly* influenced what they did as principals, only Dr. Lynch, principal of Fullerton High School in a DFG B district, said, "not at all. We are never going to be there, so it's irrelevant" (7/18/11) When pressed further, however, Dr. Lynch admitted that he does pay attention to rankings among schools in his own DFG: "That's

more useful," he said, "because it's apples to apples. And in those comparisons, we do very well. Compare us to other B districts and we are at the top" (7/18/11).

Although none of the vision, mission, and goal statements of the districts examined referred directly to the rankings of public schools, the district of Congress City, a DFG A district where Washington Technical is located, employed the rhetoric of competition in its vision: "The Congress City Public Schools will be one of the best school systems in the State of New Jersey" (public document). Likewise, whether or not the principals believed that ranking systems were fair, they demonstrated through their discourse that they paid attention to rankings for a variety of reasons and, to a certain extent, bought into the ethic of competition supported by them. The principals also frequently noted that their district administrators, boards of education, and communities valued rankings, making it impossible simply to ignore them.

Dr. Lindley of Pleasant Valley High School was the only principal who admitted that rankings played a direct role in some of his policy decisions. When I asked him why his school was changing its honors-level courses into AP courses, he answered:

> Because at the levels those honors courses are, they don't really determine the students' knowledge base comparatively speaking to the rest of the country. There is no standardized test for those courses. At least if we go to an AP course we can determine our level of expertise compared to other schools as well as rankings and so forth. That helps with the more AP courses that you offer—it helps with your state rankings and so forth. (7/12/11)

Dr. Lindley valued the comparisons that AP Exams facilitated, and he noted that more AP courses resulted in higher rankings for the school. His concern with state rankings is

hardly surprising because, as he told me, part of his formal evaluation as principal rested on the school's ranking in the state.

It was clear that Dr. Lindley bought into the value of ranking systems. According to him, low-achieving schools can be motivated by rankings to perform better. At a high-achieving school like Pleasant Valley, Dr. Lindley said, "The only thing I jockey for is going from 50 to 40 or 40 to 30" in the State because it is difficult to move more than 10 places when the ranking is already so high (7/12/11). His use of the term "jockey" in this statement demonstrated a metaphorical notion of schooling as a race of sorts, and it suggested Dr. Lindley's competitive attitude with respect to similar schools. Although he did say numerous times that he took rankings "with a grain of salt" because each one has its own methodology, Dr. Lindley frequently noted that Pleasant Valley, as a "top 50 school in the State of New Jersey," must be "doing something right because New Jersey has an excellent educational system" (7/12/11).

The community of Parson, where Pleasant Valley High School is located, places emphasis on high rankings, and Dr. Lindley mentioned that realtors used copies of the rankings to sell houses in the town. While he said that rankings do not change much of what they do educationally at Pleasant Valley High, he said "it changes who moves into town and the clientele that we get to serve because people are moving here because of the school system" (7/12/11). Dr. Lindley's comments are reminiscent of what Apple (2000) has said of ranking systems: middle class parents have an advantage because, after examining rankings, they can use their capital to get their children admitted to those schools. In public systems, this would mean purchasing a home in a district where the rankings are high and property values are high as a result. As Dr. Lindley noted,

"Primarily the value of a house in any school district or any town is based on the school district" (7/12/11). Following Apple's (2000) logic, the system can perpetuate socioeconomic inequality. Districts with high test scores earn high rankings and, in turn, gain higher property values. When the rankings and property values are high, only those families with enough capital can move into town.

Similarly, while Dr. Valentine of Dobson High School, a DFG B school, claimed that low rankings motivated him to make school improvements, he corroborated the idea that rankings promoted division of social classes:

It's frustrating sometimes because one of the truths about testing and ratings that I have found is that money usually is a solid indicator of success on high-stakes tests. The more money, then the better performance.... I don't really see the value in it. Other than citing opinions, or just the division among the classes, I don't— It's something that I think politicians use to— Because they can understand a ranking. It's easy to understand. "Oh, they are at the bottom and this one's at the top. The people at the top must do a better job. They must work harder; they must be doing things right." (7/11/11)

Dr. Valentine did not believe in the value of rankings and demonstrated a cynical attitude toward their purpose; still, however, he had to pay attention to them. After all, he noted that members of the Dobson community tended to criticize his school's low rankings and, from time to time, would threaten not to vote for the school budget because of them. Thus, the ranking systems motivated him to work toward raising test scores.

In Northwood, Dr. Krug said that he found himself fielding many questions from the local board of education as a result of rankings. He could not afford to ignore

rankings because they became such an influential aspect of his relationship with the board:

> The board is very aware of the *New Jersey Monthly* rankings that come out every 2 years, and they are aware of HSPA scores—that they get publicized in the newspapers, so…they call us to the table and say "hey, what are you guys doing to raise our scores? What are you doing here?" So now we are reporting out by subject area what each subject is doing during the course of the year to improve their select area, twice a year. We give those reports to the board of ed. and the superintendent. (7/20/11)

With two reports per subject area every year, Dr. Krug had to be committed to making adjustments to the school's program in order to raise test scores and positively impact rankings. He also said that the board would question the number of students going to 2-year rather than 4-year colleges—another criterion of the *New Jersey Monthly* rankings. For Dr. Krug, this question posed a dilemma: should he push more students to enroll in 4-year schools when they are more expensive and particular students might be better off starting out at 2-year colleges anyway? Although the 2-year schools might be the right choice for certain students, Dr. Krug said, "my *New Jersey Monthly* kills me because I only get a half a percentage point versus a full percentage point. So, I get crushed that way" (7/20/11). Unfortunately for Dr. Krug, the *New Jersey Monthly* methodology resulted in some difficult decisions with respect to how best to guide his students. His statements, "my *New Jersey Monthly* kills me" and "I get crushed," indicate his sense that Northwood's ranking is an element of the evaluation of his own work as principal. Dr. Krug must pay close attention to the rankings.

The necessity to pay attention to rankings demonstrates how the principals and their schools are not shielded from what Love (1995) called "the steering media of money and power" (p. 50). Building upon Habermas's distinction between lifeworld and system, Love noted that systems are controlled by these media. When the principal is conscious of the positive correlation between real estate values and school rankings, when he knows that his evaluation will depend partly on his school's ranking, or when he is told that the fate of the district's annual budget depends partly on the school's relative standing in a magazine rating system, he must use strategic action to gain higher rankings—as opposed to communicative action with stakeholders, including teachers, to determine what is best for students. It may be better, for example, to guide more students at Northwood high school to 2-year colleges, but doing so would be detrimental to school rankings. Here, we see that rankings can have the pathological result of leading all students in the same direction, not taking into account their individual needs.

What becomes important is the school's overall position, not necessarily the individual students and their needs. This phenomenon is reminiscent of Habermas's (1989) warning that the systems of modern society can grow so large and powerful that institutions like schools need to be protected from "falling prey to the systemic imperatives of economic and administrative subsystems growing with dynamics of their own" (p. 373). School rankings, which are an "imperative" of an economic system in which real estate value correlates positively with measurable school performance, and an imperative of an accountability system that relies on the reporting of quantitative indicators and comparisons of one school to another, can become more important than the schools and their lifeworlds themselves. Of course, we cannot say that the principals

completely succumb to the pressure of rankings—after all, they tended to say that they aim to do always "what is right for kids" (Mr. Deutsch, 7/14/11)—but it certainly poses dilemmas for them.

Although it was common for the participants to voice concerns about ranking methodologies and to claim that ranking systems were unfair, they consistently admitted that as principal, one could not ignore the rankings. Schools in I and J districts had the "luxury" (Dr. Gold, 7/13/11) of not worrying much about the rankings because they were consistently high on the lists, but the principals of each of these schools feared the prospect of dropping a few places in the rankings and admitted that the community's interest in rankings required their own attention to them. For example, Dr. Gold noted: "God forbid, in *New Jersey Monthly*, we move down…in the next ranking, what the reaction is going to be" (7/13/11).

The DFG I and J communities' interest in rankings, despite the principals' dismissive attitude toward such systems, was exemplified in an anomalous occurrence that took place while I was collecting my data. Some of the historically highest-ranked high schools in the state did not appear in *Newsweek's* 2011 listing of the top high schools in the nation. Dr. Gold and Mr. Sudol were not concerned about this anomaly themselves, but their communities quickly let them know how disappointed they were. Both principals were not really sure what happened, but they suspected that an important survey from *Newsweek* had not been sent to them, and since the rankings were based on self-reported data, their schools could not be included in the list. Mr. Sudol said,

> I've been hammered by a few parents within our community saying, "Obviously the Principal is not doing anything to amend this." Well, it's out, folks. It's

already been published, so there's nothing we can do for this year, but we already

sent a letter asking, next time when they publish this, can they notify us by e-mail,

or be consistent. (7/18/11)

Mr. Sudol was visibly frustrated as he explained this situation, demonstrating the value

that his community placed on Arundel's appearance in *Newsweek*.

Similarly, Dr. Gold noted that his local Board members and Superintendent began

a chain of e-mails questioning why Paul High School did not appear in *Newsweek*. They

were concerned because, as Dr. Gold said, "Let's put it this way, forget about the

Superintendent, the community certainly puts a lot of stock in, I think, the rankings, or

they certainly take a lot of pride in that" (7/13/11). Knowing that the community would

be upset, administrators got worried and planned a response, placing responsibility on the

"one woman who is pretty much in charge of publicity and information for the district" to

explain to Board members that the *Newsweek* rankings were not as important or reliable

as everyone thought. Both Dr. Gold and the administrator who handled publicity had to

quell some of the community's and board members' fears. In Dr. Gold's words:

> *Newsweek* was done by self-reporting and there were some questions about that.
>
> They changed their procedure. I kind of waited till things died down to mention,
>
> we are putting a lot of stock in this self-reporting. It's nice, but our lives as
>
> educators, I think we're pretty clear most of the time that these outside
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> assessments are fun when you are high and stuff, but there's a lot of question
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> about their reliability… And yet certainly from the buzz from the public, they
>
> follow these things (7/13/11).

Dr. Gold's comments reveal a divide between the board and community on one hand, and the educators on the other, whose concerns differ from those of the lay public. When he says, "these outside assessments are fun when you are high and stuff," his language belittles the importance of rankings. Despite this statement, however, the tension does not go away, as revealed in the last sentence of the comments above: "*And yet*" [italics added] the community thinks the rankings are important. One may wish to ignore rankings, especially when they are scientifically unreliable, but when the community values them, the school district must spend time and resources justifying their exclusion from the latest set of standings.

> Mr. Sudol captured this problem when he said,
>
> Sometimes it makes us do a lot more work on the side to try to prove what we have already demonstrated from other surveys that we put out during the year, but you get a couple of parents that say, "how come I didn't read it?" And so, well, your child was in the 8th grade last year and you never saw it because you were worried about your little grammar school in your sending town. (7/18/11)

The consumption of "time on the side to try to prove" what one has already done illustrates Ball's (2001) claim that in performative cultures, "we are all expected to make our contribution to the construction of convincing institutional performances" (p. 216). Furthermore, even though Arundel had proven its worth through its rankings in the previous year, when new students and parents join the high school community, performance accountability culture reveals its power as "*both* [italics added] continuous and eventful" (Ball, 2001, p. 216). Performativity is eventful in that rankings get published periodically; it is an event when they come out in magazines, and the event is

perpetuated at public board meetings and in community discussions—either in the blogosphere or in person. Performativity is continuous in that principals must be proving and reporting the worth of their schools at all times. The last set of rankings is never enough to ensure that the community believes in the school's standing relative to others.

While rankings measure the relative performance of each public high school in the state, the principals in this study who worked in districts with more than one high school reported a culture of comparisons and local rankings within their own school systems. Mr. Vadala and Mr. Sudol experienced this at Washington Technical High School and Arundel High School, respectively. At board meetings, at PTO meetings, at district administration meetings, and in informal conversations with parents, the performances of Mr. Vadala and Mr. Sudol's high schools were compared to those of others within the district. Mr. Vadala noted that Congress City's central office implemented a five-star system, whereby schools within the district would be awarded a certain number of stars based on their fulfillment of district goals. The problem, Mr. Vadala noted, is that the district goals required the attainment of high test scores, but only two of the district's high schools had programs for gifted and talented or especially motivated students, making it difficult for the other schools to attract students who were likely to perform well on State exams. These two high schools each had five stars awarded to them. Mr. Vadala, principal of a zero-star school, asked,

> We have 5,000 kids at the high school [level]. I said, "What are we doing with
> the rest of them?" Nothing. I said, "If you want this district to look good as far as
> the high schools, we have to address the dysfunctional kids." And I said, "that's

2,000 to 2,500 kids. And we're not helping them." And guess what—they still

only focus on those two schools. (7/13/11)

According to Mr. Vadala, the star-system was unfair because it simply created a system

of rewards and sanctions; it did nothing to address the students in the schools that were

struggling.

Instead of addressing what Mr. Vadala called "the dysfunctional kids," the district

just measured them. This situation corroborates Darling-Hammond's (2007) commentary

on NCLB—namely, that measurement and a focus on outputs cannot, on its own,

improve schools. Darling-Hammond argues that the system needs to address inputs

rather than instituting a "a one-way accountability system that holds children and

educators to test-based standards they cannot meet while it does *not* hold federal or state

governments to standards that would ensure equal and adequate educational opportunity"

(p. 247). When he asked what the Congress City district was doing for the dysfunctional

kids, Mr. Vadala pointed out that his district was measuring its schools but not engaging

in reforms—or providing the inputs—that would enable schools like his to measure up.

Applying Habermas's (1989) concept of strategic action, we might say that the district

relied on threats and coercion in order to improve the schools, not the reaching of mutual

understanding to determine what would most effectively address the needs of the most at-

risk students.

Although Mr. Sudol was principal of a DFG I high school, he was also criticized

for his building's performance relative to that of others within the district. Mr. Sudol

noted that this criticism often happened at board meetings where parents would question

why one high school was performing better than his:

It's this comparison of little numbers here and there. "Why is it that the school

right next to you in the sending district, their SAT scores are 20 points higher?" or

so on and so forth. That's how picayune they seem to get over it.... And every

time, it's a question that's derogatory toward this building. "Why did Mr. Sudol

not do this?" or "Why is this building always a couple points below that

building?" (7/18/11)

This kind of "picayune" comparison, of course, is made possible by performance

accountability culture, which relies on the publication of quantitative performance

indicators. Without the publication of performance indicators, community members

would not be able to make the kinds of comparisons that Mr. Sudol describes above—

comparisons that may not even be statistically significant or particularly meaningful.

After all, Mr. Sudol noted that the two high schools differ in size and in the

socioeconomic backgrounds of the students: variables that, he said, influence overall

performance.

This study found that it did not matter if the principal believed, in his professional

judgment, that rankings were unfair and unreliable; he still had to engage in time-

consuming discussions and activities that promoted the importance of rankings because

the communities generally valued them. The principals frequently illustrated a tension

between their own professional judgment and the value placed on rankings by their

communities. In addition to the belief that rankings reflected—and in some cases, helped

to perpetuate—the division of socioeconomic classes, principals expressed concern about

the meaning of a ranking. They asked a question similar to that posed by Mr. Sudol:

"What makes a good school?" (7/18/11). The principals noted that the various athletes

whose success had been recognized on the field and in the classroom, the students who had won poetry contests, the teachers who had been recognized by the state or the county for their superior professional work—each of these items cannot be captured in a ranking.

Furthermore, the principals frequently explained that rankings were usually based on the performance of one cohort of students. If a weaker class is the one to get measured in a particular year for a magazine's ranking, the school's rankings can drop precipitously, raising alarmist feelings in the community. At Danforth High School, for example, Mr. Alcindor said that his school recently dropped in one set of rankings "because the class's test scores—it wasn't a really sharp class" (8/4/11). Similarly, Dr. Gold said that his school's rankings had jumped up and down for a few years, but "you know there is very little that we can do to control that, and each class is going to have its own ups and downs" (7/13/11).

The possibility that a school's ranking may change rather sharply within 1 year calls attention to yet another set of problems cited by the principals: that among the various rankings systems that circulate through the public, there are different methodologies and measurement criteria, and even one ranking system can change its criteria from year to year. Mr. Alcindor said that "you don't always have control over all of the criteria in the rankings" (8/4/11). Dr. Gold even noted that his school, which always sends a high percentage of students to 4-year colleges, dropped in a set of rankings because the magazine had slightly adjusted its criteria, applying points in a separate category to schools that sent students to 2-year colleges:

> Their rankings, when they set up some of the criteria was— I thought we lost
>
> points, because we didn't have many kids going to 2-year schools. And I'm

thinking, that's kind of a strange thing to lose points on if so many kids are going

to 4-year colleges. (7/13/11)

Here, a principal who was accustomed to enjoying a place among the most highly-ranked

schools in the state was left to figure out why his school's standing had shifted.

The various methodologies and shifting criteria of the ranking systems reflect

what Ball (2001) took to be one of performance accountability culture's major sources of

power: "...It is the uncertainty and instability of being judged in different ways, by

different means, through different agents" (p. 211). As educators try to cope with a "flow

of changing demands, expectations and indicators that make [them] continually

accountable and constantly recorded...," Ball stated, "it is a recipe for ontological

insecurity" (pp. 211-212). The principals in this study may have believed that rankings

are unreliable and unfair, but they admitted that they could not ignore rankings.

Furthermore, since the ranking criteria themselves are not stable, they differ from one

publication to another, and their common methodology of capturing the performance of

one class of students results in unstable outcomes from year to year, principals must

always be on the alert for changes in their school's standings—changes that communities

will notice and question.

Since rankings and comparisons have the power to keep principals concerned

with their levels of performance as defined and measured by various publications, they

may be considered, collectively, as a technology of surveillance in Foucault's (1995)

notion of postmodern power—what he calls "disciplinary power" (p. 173). According to

Foucault, this kind of power "functions as a calculated but permanent economy" (p. 170)

as it keeps subjects under constant surveillance and accountability. "It is the fact of being

constantly seen, of being able always to be seen," Foucault says, "that maintains the individual in his subjection" (p. 187). School principals are kept in subjection—that is, kept accountable to a specific, externally-created set of judgment criteria—through the continuous publication of data points and ranking lists. Furthermore, just as Foucault (1995) notes, the power is "multiple, automatic, and anonymous" (p. 176). There is not one class of society, one magazine, or one agency of government that is responsible for creating and sustaining school rankings and the public reporting of data that facilitates comparisons between one school and another: a crucial element of performance accountability culture. Rather, they appear everywhere—in the New Jersey School Report Card, in multiple magazines and newspapers, in local systems—and they are valued automatically by the communities and district administrations that the participants in this study discussed.

Applying Foucault's (1995) language, the rankings operate so as to keep high school principals in "a state of conscious and permanent visibility" (p. 201), as in the panopticon, and the criteria of judgment used by the rankings amount to "the universal reign of the normative" (p. 304). Each principal knows that he is under the surveillance of the rankings and data publication regimes, that his school is measured against the criteria that are published and accepted by communities as the normative or expected level of performance. To ignore the rankings, no matter how skeptical a principal's attitude toward their value may be, would be to ignore what is considered normal.

Competing for Student Enrollment and the Treatment of Schooling as Business

The literature on performance accountability has treated schools' competition for student enrollment as a symptom of marketized reforms in education, including the

movement toward school choice programs (Apple, 2000; Ball, 2001; DeMoss, 2002; Dworkin, 2005). As charter schools gain governmental support in New Jersey (Christie, 2011), schools need to compete in an open market for student enrollment in order to maintain adequate levels of local funding. Students who choose to attend a charter school will draw funding away from the traditional public school they would have attended, since the money allocated for their education will be used to fund their enrollment in the selected charter school. Schools also need to compete for students whose academic performance will help the schools achieve targets mandated by federal and state legislation (Lubienski, 2005).

Although the charter school movement is still in its nascent stages in New Jersey, the principals in this study demonstrated that the performance accountability culture has created an increasing need for schools to compete for student enrollment. The principals' responses to questions regarding school choice also demonstrated the inseparability of school choice reforms from a growing phenomenon of treating schooling as a business. Participants' discourse intertwined the concepts of competing for students and commodifying education.

In order to remain competitive and maintain current levels of funding, principals said that they either created new programs to attract students or spent more time promoting their programs through PR so that students and parents in their districts would be dissuaded from pursuing high school education elsewhere. Dr. Valentine of Dobson High School exemplified the strategic attempts made by principals to attract students to their schools. He explained to me that the recent expansion of a school choice program in New Jersey, created by the Interdistrict Public School Choice Act of 2010, allowed

Dobson to become a choice school. This means that students from other districts could apply to attend Dobson High School and, if accepted, could enroll at no cost to the student. As choice schools increase their enrollments, Dr. Valentine said, they receive more per-pupil state aid and other benefits:

> Believe it or not, we are a school of choice. In this county, we applied for that, and we have the space for it. We met all the criteria for doing that. One of the ideas my superintendent has, if we can get more students in here, there are financially some gains, and the students who want to come here under school choice care about education and they can actually help improve the academic performance of the school. Their parents care enough that they are willing to look around for something better for their children. (7/11/11)

According to Dr. Valentine, the Dobson district was creating a new program called High-Tech High in order to attract high-achieving students from other districts. This competitive school-within-a-school would admit only those students whose academic records indicated that they would likely be successful in a highly rigorous program: "Only the top-performing people can get into High-Tech High" (7/11/11). Students from other districts who do not get accepted into this competitive program can attend the general program at Dobson.

Dr. Valentine added that "the *hook* [italics added] with High-Tech High" was that students could earn college credits during their senior year through an agreement with a local college (7/11/11). He also bluntly stated, "You know, the idea is to increase our averages, to bring in the better students. You know, the more studious types of students. So, that's our goal" (7/11/11). Here, Dr. Valentine represents the kind of school that can

possibly benefit from such a school choice program; after all, he may soon be welcoming high-performing students—along with their state-allocated funding—from neighboring districts. The plan at Dobson illustrates what Apple (2000) has called "a crucial shift in emphasis... from what the school does for the student to what the student does for the school" (p. 235). More high-performing students will bring more funding and higher rankings to Dobson.

Nevertheless, like many other principals in this study, Dr. Valentine admitted his concern that struggling schools would be losing their top-performing students as school choice becomes more prevalent. He asked, "What happens to the schools that are being abandoned? What do those schools become?" (7/11/11). Furthermore, his district's plans to develop High-Tech High demonstrate unequivocally that performance accountability culture and the commodification of schooling are behind it. After all, Dobson may enjoy higher rankings and new sources of revenue if the district can attract students to the new program. When Dr. Valentine referred to the college credit opportunity as a "hook" that will attract students, he sounded as if he were trying to sell the school to a new market of consumers—to create higher demand for his product, as it were.

On the other side of the Interdistrict Public School Choice program, Mr. Vadala of Washington Technical High School, a DFG A school, expressed his concern about a neighboring district that had become a choice district within the last year. That district has the potential to draw students away from Washington Technical. Noting that the program was only recently gaining traction, Mr. Vadala said:

I've only had one parent, since I've been here, talk about that. I think part of it is, a lot of them are uneducated about school choice. The individual parent actually went online, researched it, and then came to me and I told her I couldn't help her, and she went to the superintendent and they said, "Absolutely not. You're not going that way." And I don't know what happened to her [the student] because they transferred her out of my building. (7/13/11)

Mr. Vadala believed that the student was placed in one of the higher-performing district high schools so as to prevent her from seeking education outside the Congress City school district. Still, however, he expressed concern that, as Governor Christie spoke more frequently about school choice and charter schools, "we will start hearing more about school choice from our parents" (7/13/11). Furthermore, Mr. Vadala said that as the pressure of performance accountability culture has increased over the last 10 years, his district restructured the high schools into six specialized academies that concentrated the top-performing students in two buildings. "And that's what brought back the kids from the Catholic schools or the private schools," Mr. Vadala said (7/13/11). Essentially, dedicating two academies to gifted and talented programs or other opportunities for highly-motivated students (like the AVID program), the district provided an incentive for the most academically-oriented students to stay in the Congress City system for high school. Although the district became less concerned about students' deciding to leave its own public system, the high schools within the system had to compete with each other, as in an open market, for the enrollment of the highest-performing students. Thus, the symptoms of school choice continued to influence the operation of the schools even

though students were less likely to leave the public system altogether for charter, private, or parochial schools.

The competition among the schools in Congress City, exemplified in part by the local five-star rating system discussed earlier in this chapter, coincided with what Mr. Vadala saw as the development of a "more corporate than educational" climate in the district (7/13/11). As Mr. Vadala put it, "We went from being an educational district to being a business district," illustrated somewhat by its recent partnership with a major global corporation to implement reforms that would increase student outcomes such as test scores and attendance rates (7/13/11). In a frustrated and incredulous tone, Mr. Vadala told me that the district had been increasing its use of business language to describe its work. For example, district administrators took to referring to students as "our product," and to the educational process as "the production line" (7/13/11).

Speaking about the district administration, Mr. Vadala said, "They look at numbers—that's all they care about, is numbers" (7/13/11). Mr. Vadala's response has been largely to try ignoring the district's pressure to have his school compete with Congress City's top two high schools. As a "School in Need of Improvement"—that is, a school that has failed to meet AYP targets under NCLB—Washington Technical High School was not, according to Mr. Vadala, in a position to compete with the two high-performing district high schools. A veteran in the field, Mr. Vadala confidently said:

> I'm more concerned, and I've said this out loud, that I'm more concerned with the
> social/emotional part of a kid. You know, when you're holding me accountable
> for getting to 90% [proficiency], or increasing my test scores—let's say I'm at
> 40% and you want me to get to 55 or 60 the following year—and I'm saving kids'

lives? And we are. In a district like this? I'm doing a good job. And you can do

whatever you want to me. Withhold my increment. I know what I'm doing and I

know that we have kids that we have saved because they are not a product.

Because they are kids. Because they aren't a number. (7/13/11)

When Mr. Vadala referred to "saving kids' lives," he was speaking partly of the success

he has had in preventing students from dropping out, and in helping students address

individual issues—sometimes home-related—that impeded their abilities to graduate

from high school. So far, Mr. Vadala has been able to avoid sanctions made specifically

against him—for example, the withholding of his annual increment (raise in salary).

Nevertheless, his frustration with the business ethic in his district, which includes the

pressure to compete with other schools, illustrates his inability to ignore the business

discourse entirely. During the interview, Mr. Vadala even censored himself a few times

as he heard himself using the corporate discourse: "I'm going to do what's right in

making sure we service our kids— I hate to use the word 'service' because that sounds

like corporate, too— In making sure our kids are properly prepared" (7/13/11).

Only one of the nine principals in this study expressed little or no concern about

school choice or charter schools. At his DFG I school, Mr. Alcindor said the residents of

his community would see no reason to pull their students from such a high-performing

public high school, except to avoid the intensity of its academic competition or its high

enrollment. The other principals, however, spoke of their efforts to persuade parents to

send their children to the local public high school. In some cases, parents were drawn to

county magnet schools designed for the highest-performing students. In other cases,

parents were considering private or parochial schools because they were convinced that their children would benefit from their successful athletic programs.

Overall, the principals expressed frustration toward programs that drew some of their best students or crucial funding away from their schools. Dr. Lynch said the "Academy" in his county "does enough damage" (7/18/11). Dr. Lindley spoke with admiration of a specific superintendent's efforts to lobby against a county magnet program for the most academically-gifted students. According to Dr. Lindley, his school and "all of the other great schools were being picked apart" by the magnet school (7/12/11). Dr. Gold, principal of Paul Township High School, spoke of a recent proposal to open a charter school in a nearby town—a phenomenon he never expected in such an affluent area. Dr. Gold's chief concern was that Paul would lose a significant amount of money from its annual budget even if 20 students chose the charter school over Paul. Having lost more than $1 million in state aid over the last 2 years and struggling to pass its annual budget as taxpayers weathered a major economic recession, Paul would have trouble withstanding such a blow, according to Dr. Gold.

When asked about the strategies they used to dissuade families from sending their children to parochial, private, or magnet schools, the principals tended to refer to their "open-house nights" for prospective incoming 9th graders and their efforts to reach out to specific parents who were thinking about sending their children to other high schools. Of particular note is that the "open house nights" were used primarily for PR purposes. Dr. Krug said the following about the parents of 8th graders:

> We bring them here and we showcase the school, showcase our curriculum and
> everything else like that. So I think it does two things. I tell them what's going to

be here to help justify the reason why you're paying taxes to the school, or to help convince you to stay here. (7/20/11)

Similarly, Mr. Deutsch said that at his 8th grade open house,

We'll have everybody come in, show them all the good things that we're doing here, we have them meet coaches, we have them— We show them what we can deliver and we have to offer them. You know, some of the kids that we're losing now— We lose some kids to the academies— Each year it gets less and less, but if you look at our sciences, most people leave for the sciences in the academies. Our sciences are tremendous. We had our Chemistry Olympics team last year, not this past year, but 2 years ago, was the number 1 in the state. Our AP Bio scores—our teacher just had 25 or 26 kids get a [score of] 3 or higher with ten 5s. It's tremendous results. So, you can have anything you want here at Tenney High School. (7/14/11)

Here, Dr. Krug and Mr. Deutsch demonstrated that their open-house nights for incoming 9th graders were geared toward convincing the attendees that their schools offer high-quality programs. The emphasis was to "showcase"—not simply to provide information or to give parents an orientation in navigating the curriculum and programs.

Indeed, the PR focus, the selling of the school, became even clearer when Mr. Deutsch provided the following rendition of his usual speech to students who are considering a county magnet program: "…we got so much more for you to learn, and so much more to offer to you, that you'll be missing out on the Tenney High School experience" (7/14/11). Using the language of selling (e.g., "so much more to offer you"), Mr. Deutsch appropriated the commodification, or consumer model, of education.

Likewise, when Dr. Krug spoke of the purpose of his "open house," he acknowledged that the parents of his prospective 9th graders viewed education through a consumer's lens: "They didn't believe they were getting their value for their money here" (7/20/11).

Overall, the principals in this study demonstrated that they viewed marketing not simply as a responsibility among their many other duties; rather, it was integral to their positions and crucial for survival. The construction and maintenance of an attractive image; the struggle to contend for, or to maintain, high rankings; the strategizing required to compete for student enrollment; the general treatment of schooling as a business— these were all symptoms of the marketized environment that is a critical element of performance accountability culture.

Steering at a Distance

The title of this subsection comes from Ball's (1994, p. 54) concept of neoliberal governments' or governmental agencies' application of control over schools and districts through policies that do not intervene directly in schools, but measure schools' outcomes, formulate the goals or the types of goals that are considered legitimate, and issue rewards and sanctions based on school performance. While agencies of government may not appear to be controlling schools on a day-to-day basis, their creation of mandates and goals or guidelines from a distance requires schools to alter programs in order to remain in compliance with the State. Sometimes, a large district can regulate and control its multiple high schools in this way as well. Anderson (2005) provided commentary on this concept:

> Many defend this approach as a sophisticated social engineering model that exerts pressure from above while providing limited flexibility to meet local needs. It

succeeds, they argue, in better aligning 'loosely coupled systems' so that top-

down, research-based innovations can be more successfully implemented.

Teachers and administrators experience more than benign pressure, however,

since a focus on testing and scripted curricula limit their professional autonomy

drastically, and in many cases, quite literally reduce teaching to a scripted

performance. (p. 198)

Examples of "steering at a distance" (Ball, 1994, p. 54) in the current climate of

performance accountability in New Jersey would be the use of mandated testing

outcomes and the development of new core standards with which schools must realign

their curricula. Anderson's concern with the development of "scripted performance"

results from the pressure on schools to change their curricula so that test scores improve

and the district remains in compliance with state (and in some cases, national) standards.

This study found that a recent phenomenon of increased bureaucratic control, of

steering at a distance, has limited principals' autonomy and influenced their work on a

daily basis. A more centralized, bureaucratic control over public education has been

achieved through mandated improvement of test scores and other achievement indicators,

new state auditing and reporting procedures, and a movement toward standardization and

consistency. Interviews of principals and school districts' mission, vision, and goal

statements demonstrated this kind of control.

Mandated Improvement

Mission, vision, and goal statements reflected an emphasis on quantitative

indicators of schools' academic success. The level of academic success, in turn, reflected

the school districts' achievement according to externally-developed criteria. For

example, Congress City listed "boosting student performance on state tests" as one of the five district "priorities" (public document). The only other academic priority was a more general reference to "creating excellence in academics" (public document). The Fullerton school system noted that "all district curricula needs to be revised to be aligned with the revised NJ Core curriculum content Standards [*sic*] released by the NJ Department of education" (public document). Northwood listed "alignment with the current version of the NJCCCS [New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards]" as a goal for every discipline and then proceeded to outline the necessary changes for each subject so that this goal could be fulfilled (public document). Furthermore, each objective at Northwood included "evaluation criteria," which listed a date by which the goal must be accomplished and the type of data or documentation that would indicate successful completion (public document). Tenney's commitment to "promoting academic growth consistent with the New Jersey core curriculum content standards" demonstrates that its definition of success accords with the State's definition (public document). Tenney also emphasized data analysis as part of its mission: "The district monitors performance data for the effective management of student achievement and district goals" (public document). Indeed, almost every district's published mission, vision, and goal statement included emphasis on data-driven decision-making and data analysis for evaluation of outcomes.

Interviews of the principals corroborated the prevalence of a movement toward using data from state tests and standardized tests to formulate school initiatives or evaluate school performance. At Tenney High School, achieving AYP was a chief concern, causing Mr. Deutsch to focus the school's efforts on students who had to take

the HSPA: "We put heavy focus here on the HSPA, ok? When I say 'heavy focus,' our junior class is very important to us" (7/14/11). In fact, after Mr. Deutsch and his leadership team developed a HSPA boot camp to be held during spring break, he visited every junior English classroom to pitch the program, resulting in approximately one third of the class attending the sessions. Teachers were paid $25 per hour during that week to work with students who decided "to come in and get brushed up" before the test (7/14/11). Similarly, Dr. Valentine at Dobson High School spoke of initiating a program "mostly targeted at the 11th graders" for HSPA improvement, involving a partnership with a state university (7/11/11). Dr. Valentine's concern with HSPA scores was especially urgent because his school did not achieve AYP among its special education student sub-group. Indeed, when I asked Dr. Valentine what initiatives his school was currently planning, the raising of test scores was the first one he listed and the one he spoke about the most.

Even at DFG I and J schools, where the communities are affluent and academic performance is generally high, the need to score well on tests drove many curricular decisions and influenced the day-to-day work of the principals. At Arundel High School, Mr. Sudol spoke of requiring the math and English departments to incorporate instruction that would help students achieve higher scores on the HSPA and the SATs. In English, vocabulary lessons and essay-writing instruction were geared partly toward achieving success on the SATs. "And the same thing in the math department," Mr. Sudol said, "whether you call it a 'Do-Now' or something else, there is something related to the SATs" every week (7/18/11).

At Paul High School, Dr. Gold lamented the math department's month-long discussion of how to respond to uncharacteristically low scores on the state's End-of-Course (EOC) Algebra test. Of particular concern for Dr. Gold was that the students who would have to repeat Algebra I because of their failure on the state exam would have to "take Geometry and move ahead for SAT purposes, and double-up on that Algebra I" (7/13/11). In other words, the school was reluctant to keep students from advancing to geometry in their sophomore year, knowing that they would need this subject to perform well on the SATs. But, at the same time, Dr. Gold questioned the wisdom of having students who struggled in math taking two math courses—both Algebra I and Geometry—at the same time. Dr. Gold also questioned the value, more generally, of administering the HSPA at Paul, one of the highest-performing schools in the state, when only a dozen students typically fell below proficiency on this exam: "When we run our HSPA for 3 days, we bring the rest of our school in at 10:00—I don't know if you do the same thing—so, we are disrupting the whole school for 3 days for a test to tell us what?" (7/13/11). It was clear throughout our interview that Dr. Gold had little faith in the state testing regime, but it was also clear that the tests and their outcomes colonized much of his time and the curricular discussions of his faculty.

State Audits

While testing holds districts and schools accountable for students' academic performance, the state of New Jersey also conducts a more general auditing process to evaluate the quality of its school districts. This process, known as the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC), was implemented as a 3-year cycle for the first time in 2009 and audited each school district's performance in the following

areas: operations; instruction and program; governance; fiscal management; and personnel (NJDOE, n.d.-b). When I asked principals about the origins of their schools' initiatives, it was typical for them to cite NJQSAC as well as state testing, demonstrating that the state's auditing process can also enable it to steer school operations at a distance. Most of the principals, for example, indicated that they conducted instructional walkthroughs on a regular basis; that is, they visited classrooms in small groups of administrators and collected data on what they observed in the classrooms. When I asked them to explain the impetus behind the walkthrough initiative—since it was so commonly cited in my conversations with the principals—they tended to refer to NJQSAC, which requires administrators to conduct them. As Dr. Lindley of Pleasant Valley High School told me, "Walkthroughs is not a goal; it's a state requirement. If you go into NJQSAC, it's in the evaluation section. Walkthroughs must occur, and there must be documented records of those walkthroughs, so that is a requirement of NJQSAC" (7/12/11). Only one principal, Dr. Krug, said that he conducted walkthroughs because he believed it was a valuable way to get a sense of how instruction looked in the classroom at any given moment. Nevertheless, Dr. Krug lamented the way his district and NJQSAC formalized his walkthroughs.

Although every principal indicated that he valued the time he spent in classrooms, many of them spoke disapprovingly of the formalization of their classroom visits through NJQSAC regulations. According to Dr. Valentine at Dobson High School, a committee for NJQSAC visited his school and told him that he and his administrative team needed to document all of their walkthroughs and maintain organized records of them. He believed that this requirement was more onerous than helpful:

...once you do that, the walkthrough takes on a new— It takes on a formal—

It's not informal anymore, and because of that it's a tremendous amount of

paperwork—it's a tremendous amount of work if you are going to try to really

make it a true walkthrough and pop in all over the place. (7/11/11)

Here, Dr. Valentine demonstrated how a state requirement that he visit classrooms

ironically made it more difficult to visit classrooms as often as he would like. Dr. Krug

had a similar complaint when he said that his formal data collection from walkthroughs

devoured so much of his time, adding unnecessary work to his visits in classrooms—

something that he believed to be a crucial part of his job:

Great, what are we doing with this data collection? What is it telling me that I do

not know? And that's the problem that we have right now. But, he [the

superintendent] holds us accountable in the sense that he puts it in an evaluation

and it's almost like a punitive tool against us [the administrators]. If I'm not

doing my allotted 10 per week. Does it show me trends that I could share with

staff? Yeah, but I think any good intuitive principal knows a lot of the stuff to

begin with. Doesn't really need quantifiable data to move things. (7/20/11)

Again, a state auditing process required the principal to do something that he would

ordinarily do, that he wanted to do, but placed formal requirements on him that colonized

his time and prevented him from relying on his professional intuition and judgment.

A similar phenomenon was caused by NJQSAC in Paul, though not in the area of

walkthroughs. Here, Dr. Gold found himself and his faculty spending an inordinate

amount of time revising their curriculum documents. He pointed out to me that his

school's test scores are as high as those of any other school in the state, but the

curriculum documents for his school "weren't prepared the way NJQSAC wanted them" (7/13/11). Thus, over the course of the previous year, Paul High School teachers had spent professional days and some department meetings standardizing the format of their curricula in all subject areas. After Dr. Gold noted that the district had chosen a model of curriculum development and writing called "Understanding by Design," I asked him if the curriculum writing process turned out to be a valuable experience nevertheless. He responded,

> That's a really good question on that. If your goal is to produce a document that meets, you know, the standards, and looks good, it's been valuable. Has it made an impact on the actual teaching in the classroom? I don't know. And I would say that with a lot of curriculum writing. It has generated some good conversations, although I like to think those conversations happen anyway. So, I have mixed reviews on that. Whether valuable to whom? (7/13/11)

Dr. Gold also mentioned that in order to complete this process, teachers had to be pulled out of classrooms on certain days and substitutes had to be hired.

The principals' discussions of their compliance with state audits illustrated Power's (1997) concepts of decoupling and colonization (p. 13). Dr. Gold takes part in decoupling by making sure that the NJQSAC auditing process is separated from the core functioning of the school; it takes place on professional days and through teacher pull-outs. Although NJQSAC requires that curriculum be written in a certain way, Dr. Gold is not convinced that it actually impacts the way material is taught and learned at Paul High School. The process of curriculum writing is further decoupled at Paul as the teachers write curriculum outside of their normal functions in their job. Here, teachers are pulled

out of classrooms on certain assigned dates to fulfill state mandates. Indeed, when asked how Paul High School accomplished the monumental task of preparing for NJQSAC, Dr. Gold said, "we had isolated people" doing the job (7/13/11). He was clear about his intention to buffer the organization from the audit process, an attempt to subvert the process and render it less powerful.

Yet it cannot be said that the audit process was completely powerless at Paul High School. After all, the need to allocate resources to fulfill the mandates suggests that the process was not innocuous. To some extent, the audit process colonizes the time of the organization. In explaining the way walkthroughs have been remodeled according to NJQSAC regulations, Dr. Krug and Dr. Valentine illustrate how audits do not just check organizations; they change the organizations they are checking. It is not enough that walkthroughs are done; they have to be documented and performed in a certain way. They have to be "auditable" (Power, 1997, p. 99), even if the state's preferred way is less effective than the principal's way.

Moving Toward, and Documenting, Standardization and Consistency

Dr. Gold's cynical comment regarding the goal of producing "a document that...looks good" brings to mind Ball's (2001) claim that in performative culture, "Increasingly, public sector institutions are required to construct a variety of textual accounts of [themselves] in the form of development plans, strategic documents, sets of objectives etc. (as are individuals)" (p. 220). This phenomenon proved true in my searches for the district vision, mission, and goal statements. In these searches, I found a wealth of documents advertising each district's work, and while the ancillary documents were not officially part of the data collection for this study, it is worth mentioning their

prominence on district websites. According to Ball, "symbolism is as important as substance here" because "such texts symbolise [*sic*] and stand for the corporate consensus of the institution," and sometimes the "exercises" of producing the documents can become a method of "manufacturing consensus" (2001, p. 220).

When Dr. Gold questioned the value of producing Paul's curricular documents in a standardized form, he seemed to suggest that it might have been an empty exercise: perhaps purely symbolic. And, while he did note that the exercise broached some good conversations about curriculum, he believed that the teachers in his school were having substantial conversations about pedagogy anyway. Applying Ball's (2001) framework here, the value may have been mostly symbolic, in which case performative culture can be said to have cost the district a great deal of time and resources in requiring it to provide a written account of itself. Here, we also see the value that performative culture placed on standardization and consistency, but when Dr. Gold questioned whether the standardization of curriculum actually impacted the classroom, he implied that the mere façade of standardization was sufficient for performative culture's demands. No one ever checked to ensure that the written curriculum was the taught curriculum.

If schools and districts are fabricating their adherence to many of the demands of performativity, they are still spending time and resources doing so, demonstrating Ball's (2001) idea that while fabrication may look like "resistance" to the power of performativity, it is also "capitulation" in the sense that one cannot fabricate without some loss (p. 217). In my interviews of the principals, I found the "cynical compliance" that Ball (2001) believed to be rather common among public sector professionals in the early twenty-first century (p. 222). As performance accountability culture asserts its

pressure on schools to become more standardized and to produce documents that prove

their compliance, principals complete the work, but they can do so in somewhat

fabricated ways.

At Fullerton High School, Dr. Lynch spoke at length about an initiative to

standardize literacy instruction after his district received a Comprehensive School

Reform Grant from the state in the amount of almost $500,000. Since Fullerton is a small

school that uses a team structure—each grade level, except for 12th grade, has one

teacher for each subject—it was able to develop interdisciplinary literacy teams for each

grade. These teachers worked in a collaborative model to align their literacy instruction

with each other and with state standards and exams, because they had struggled, and at

times failed, to achieve AYP. Indeed, the grant came with many requirements and

provided a goal-setting and accountability model that his school had to follow very

closely. When I asked Dr. Lynch how he was held accountable for this work, he said that

the state required a great deal of reporting, but he implied that the reporting was not

particularly important to him: "We had to provide yearly reports and evaluative reports

and summaries and things like that. Just a lot of putting words on paper to make it all—

in the format that they want to see it" (7/18/11).

Similarly, when Dr. Lynch told me that the state began requiring that teachers

work in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), he claimed that his school had

already been using a collaborative model—though under the name of literacy teams

(7/18/11). I then asked Dr. Lynch directly if the new PLC requirement changed the

substance of what the teachers were doing, or simply changed the way it was reported to

the state, and he said:

…we continue to do what we have been doing, and we report to the state— what they want to hear. Some people get all bogged down—like, "Oh God, we have to do another thing." Well, from my perspective is, it wasn't just another thing, it's just part of what we should have been doing anyway, it's part of what we have been doing, so let's not fret about it. (7/18/11)

Indeed, Dr. Lynch was especially blunt about his cynical compliance with state demands. His staff continued to do what they had been doing before the PLC requirement, and they just told the state "what they want[ed] to hear" (7/18/11). While his calm and laissez-faire attitude toward state reporting was anomalous among the participants—most of them found it stressful and time-consuming—it typified the cynicism that I encountered throughout my interviews.

The movement toward standardization and consistency was manifested also in each principal's efforts to align curricula with the newest state standards. Dr. Krug of Northwood High School exemplified this initiative not only through rewriting curriculum during professional days and department meetings—which, he admitted, his teachers strongly resisted—but also through implementing a standard format for daily lesson plans, pacing guides, and common midterms and final exams.

At Dobson High School, the standardization movement was manifested in a county-wide science curriculum and pacing guide that was aligned with the new state Core Curriculum Content Standards. As Dr. Valentine put it, the new curriculum "goes hand-in-hand with what the state wants, to make sure we are all doing it the same way" (7/11/11). When asked about complying with bureaucratic initiatives like this, Dr.

Valentine claimed that it was time-consuming and pulled him away from students and from being more visible in his management of the building. Crucially, he noted,

> ...I know the state's intention is to show you how you can improve, and what these other schools are doing—and that's fine. But, the dynamics of this school might not be the same as the dynamics of [name of affluent district]. Each school has its own setting, and its own demands and shortcomings. (7/11/11)

In much the same way that Dr. Valentine lamented the loss of his school's individual autonomy, Mr. Vadala expressed frustration toward what he called "managed management" and "managed instruction" at Washington Technical (7/13/11). Having worked in the Congress City district for his entire 31-year career, he looked back favorably on a time when he had autonomy. Now, he said, "...the creativity that you used to have is being squashed" with pacing guides and central office's general intolerance toward any attempt to question an initiative: "That's probably the biggest change. There is no thinking, there is no— They give you something, you have to implement it" (7/13/11). At one point within the last 2 years, after Mr. Vadala and a colleague travelled to San Diego to observe the implementation of problem-based learning (PBL) in a public high school, they returned to Congress City excited to begin planning and piloting it at Washington Technical. But, when they sought approval from the district to begin working with this progressive instructional model, Mr. Vadala was told that the pacing guide in the high school curriculum would not provide enough time for PBL. He noted that the teachers at Washington felt constantly "pressed down" (7/13/11). They were afraid to allow extra time in class to pursue a certain topic or activity because they had to follow the pacing guide strictly. In Mr. Vadala's opinion, the

district's commitment to standardization and consistency "makes it harder for…a principal to get things done or change because the teachers are afraid to change" (7/13/11). At Washington Technical, I saw how a principal's pursuit of a new instructional model was rendered pointless by his district's performance accountability demands.

Although one of my goals was to find out how principals perceived the culture of performance accountability, I generally did not have to ask them explicitly about their feelings and perceptions. My interview guide included questions about feelings, beliefs, and perceptions, but the participants readily spoke about them—as if it was difficult *not* to express them. Overall, I encountered a deep cynicism toward the bureaucratic "steering at a distance" of performance accountability culture (Ball, 1994, p. 54). In my field notes, I frequently wrote that I left the interviews "disenchanted" or "feeling generally down" because of the cynicism and grim outlook that I encountered (field notes, 7/12/11; 7/20/11). Like Dr. Gold, who found the production of new curriculum documents to comply with NJQSAC's requirements virtually pointless, the principals felt a loss of meaning in their work. This is not to say that the principals felt their work was completely meaningless—in fact, a few of them spoke at length about the intrinsic rewards of their jobs; rather, the principals found that they had to spend much of their time tending to meaningless tasks.

Both Dr. Lindley and Dr. Lynch of Pleasant Valley High School and Fullerton High School, respectively, spoke of the ever-changing testing regime in the state of New Jersey. An example of steering at a distance, the testing regime can cause schools to revise their curricula and focus their instruction and energy on certain preferred topics or

grade levels—as already shown in this report of findings. Having seen the state change

the requirements of the HSPA every few years and then announce the exam's imminent

phase-out, and having watched the state experiment with subject tests like the EOC

Algebra Test and Biology Competency Test (BCT) only to shift its direction shortly after,

Dr. Lynch said that the state "can't figure this out, and they won't" (7/18/11).

Dr. Lindley admitted that when his students took the EOC Algebra test or the

BCT, he did not worry at all about whether they would score well enough to graduate,

because "the odds are, it will be gone before it is actually implemented" as a graduation

requirement (7/12/11). He made a similar comment about NJQSAC, noting that it was

created by a former Commissioner of Education, Lucille Davy, and since she is no longer

in that position, her auditing system will probably disappear soon. Of all the policies, Dr.

Lindley said,

> So, you know, it's politics. As politicians come and go, and as commissioners
>
> come and go— They are all political jobs—they bring in what they think is right
>
> and so any policy and procedure, unless it is something really good, it usually
>
> stays in place for 3 to 6 years and then it is gone. (7/12/11)

This cynical commentary was especially jarring since Dr. Lindley pointed out that one of

his most serious responsibilities was to make sure his school was compliant with

NJQSAC. Claiming that his job was "more of a paperwork position" while "it used to be

a master teacher position," Dr. Lindley pointed to an entire wall of shelves in his office

holding portfolios of documents for NJQSAC (7/12/11). And while it was clear that

NJQSAC demanded much of his time, his comments also made it clear that NJQSAC

was an ephemeral auditing system in his opinion. Dr. Lindley's commitment to it,

though, was demonstrated when he said, "I take that one extra seriously because I don't want to be the reason why our district doesn't pass NJQSAC" (7/12/11).

Although Mr. Alcindor of Danforth High School made the most positive comments about the rewards of the position of high school principal, he demonstrated as much cynicism as the other participants when the subject of bureaucratic demands came up. When I asked Mr. Alcindor how he has approached the realignment of Danforth's curricula with the new state Core Curriculum Standards, he claimed that he was not very interested in such work. Since the students at Danforth performed well on assessments, he said, the curriculum must already be aligned well with the new standards. But, when I probed him further to tell me how the curriculum documents get updated with the new standards—a requirement of the state—Mr. Alcindor said, "I'm more concerned about the quality of work that teachers are having kids do. And making sure that it is meaningful work" (8/4/11). Put differently, one might say that Mr. Alcindor relies on his own professional judgment of what is meaningful work. At one point, he said, "There is no 'standards police.' People know that. So, they just put down a standard— They're like, 'okay' [he makes a motion to mimic the random and thoughtless assignment of a standard]—and no one really checks it" (Mr. Alcindor, 8/4/11; field notes, 8/4/11). In his description of the various kinds of bureaucracy that he must deal with—including the management of bullying "24/7," the planning and reporting of lessons for Constitution Day, the alignment of standards, the sifting through teacher certification regulations—Mr. Alcindor used the words "absurd," "silly," and "meaningless" (8/4/11).

Mr. Vadala reached the height of his own cynicism when he told me that he did not reflect at all on the annual evaluation of his work that an assistant superintendent, his

direct supervisor, recently sent to him. His evaluation was solely about the way he implemented the district's standardized goals, not his own. Noting that the central office administrators evaluated him, but they were rarely in his building and did not know the students and their needs, Mr. Vadala touched upon the loss of meaning that can be typical in bureaucracies that govern at a distance. Of his annual formal evaluation, which was e-mailed to him, Mr. Vadala said,

> I'm going to be truthful: I would print it, sign it, and just send it in. I didn't care
> what it said—I knew what I did. I have a lot of integrity, and I work hard.
> Whatever she put in there, I don't care what it said. She could have said I was the
> worst principal. I'm signing it because I know what I did. You know, and so it
> didn't bother me that I didn't want to have a conference. I'll just be wasting my
> time because if I don't like a point in there, it's still staying. And I'm just wasting
> my time. (7/13/11)

Mr. Vadala told me that he could have had a conference with his immediate supervisor about his evaluation if he had requested one, but his comments showed that he had no interest in such a meeting. Given his feeling that the bureaucratic operations around him were meaningless and frustrating, one might say that Mr. Vadala is fortunate to be able to find meaning in the work he does every day—work that is not related to bureaucratic demands and processes. It is likely that his 31-year tenure in the district has given him the confidence to rely mostly on his self-evaluation and ignore the absurdities of bureaucracy in ways that might be impossible for a newer principal.

The findings of this study demonstrate that a movement toward centralized management, in which goals are initiated and evaluated by an agency operating at a

distance from the schools and their students and educators, caused principals to feel a loss of autonomy. Moreover, the principals developed cynical attitudes toward the agencies that controlled their work—whether this was the state or the local district's central office. Bureaucratization appeared in the external development of a school's goals; in audit systems that not only checked an organization, but also required it to change fundamentally; and in a new ethic of standardization, which must constantly be documented.

Nourishing the Lifeworld vs. Managing the System

During my interviews, I tried to get the participants to discuss their personal definitions of their core purposes as principals. I was particularly interested in the way their personal missions as building leaders compared and contrasted with the realistic requirements of their positions within performance accountability culture. In order to broach this topic, I asked the principals to reflect on the reasons why they originally entered the field of education. In some cases, a brief follow-up interview by phone was necessary in order to elicit more robust information, perhaps because the initial interview, so laden with discussions of accountability systems and cynical attitudes toward them, made it difficult for participants to think about their original goals as educators and leaders. In most of the initial interviews, the principals' explanations of their reasons for entering education were anemic compared to the follow-up conversations.

Whether I elicited this information from an initial or follow-up interview, I found a clear pattern: principals entered the field of education because someone in their own educational history—a teacher, a coach—helped them recognize their potential and indirectly inspired them to have a similar effect on others. Mr. Alcindor told me, for

example, that he had two high school teachers who took a personal interest in his success: they "were relentless in pushing me to attend college, though my high school guidance counselor told me I was really not college material and could make a good living at a factory in town" (8/22/11). For Mr. Deutsch, the motivation came from a caring teacher as well:

> I wanted to become an educator because of the influence of one of my physical education teachers and coaches. He inspired me to be my best and cared about me as a person. He made a major impact on my life and I wanted to coach and teach because of him. (8/22/11)

The participants looked back on their educational roots and remembered specific teachers who cared about them personally. Reflecting on the positive effects of some teacher-student relationships, Mr. Vadala said he "saw," as an athlete from elementary school through high school, "the impact a teacher or coach can have on kids of any age in the classroom and on the athletic fields" (8/20/11).

Each participant had served as a high school teacher for part of his career. When asked why they pursued principalships, the participants typically spoke of the wider scope of impact they could have in a leadership position. Dr. Krug noted that he "can make changes on a wholesale level and affect many—teachers *and* students" (8/21/11). Similarly, Dr. Valentine said that "The changes and decisions as an administrator not only impact a single classroom, but the entire school and occasionally the district. The principal job enables you to be involved with *all* the ongoings of the school" (8/19/11). Indeed, the participants wanted to expand the range of their educational impact.

In seeking an answer to the question of how the realities of a principal's job in the age of performance accountability culture compared and contrasted with the principals' own sense of their core purposes as educators, I found that principals struggled to remain connected with students and day-to-day classroom life. Although depersonalization of schools and the threat of becoming disconnected from students loomed large over the principals in the age of accountability, the interviews revealed variation in the way the participants coped with these threats.

Six principals in this study claimed that accountability requirements, in one way or another, made it difficult for them to remain as connected to students as they felt they needed to be as principals. Having served as a principal for 17 years, Dr. Lindley noted that in the past,

> you did a lot of observations, a lot of walkthroughs. Now there's a lot of state
> criteria, a lot of reports to fill out, requirements for NJQSAC, a lot of components
> for the budgets because of all the changes in the budgets— It's primarily a
> paperwork position. (7/12/11)

According to Dr. Lindley, various state auditing requirements and the budgetary problems related to the economic recession have managed to keep him out of the classroom. Elaborating on the budgetary issues, Dr. Lindley said he was frustrated by new feelings of job insecurity for everyone in education, a reality that has led to decreased job satisfaction. "There used to be always a job for you, you wouldn't make any money, but you enjoyed what you did, you got to spend time with kids—and it's not that way anymore," Dr. Lindley said (7/12/11). He added that much of the time he spent

with staff was consumed with discussions of what programs could be cut in order to meet budget caps.

Paperwork and e-mail also emerged as common distracters for principals. When I asked Dr. Lynch what I would be likely to see him doing if I shadowed him on any given day, his first response was, "Unfortunately, sitting at my computer. You know, that's really my office now. And so the e-mail communications and all that—that would be one activity that you would see a lot of" (7/18/11). In general, principals said that e-mail was the medium through which they received many concerns and complaints from central office administrators, board members, and parents. Responding to these complaints directly took up a large portion of a principal's day, frequently preventing him or her from visiting classrooms. Dr. Krug, for example, found e-mail to be a constant form of accountability. When I asked him what tasks occupied him the most, he responded:

> Honestly, every day, the e-mails. If I get one phone call a day, or two phone calls, that's probably about average. It's the 75 e-mails that just kills you. And everybody wants an answer immediately. And it could be a board member, or whatever. And each e-mail, it's not just a quick answer. I have to go talk to this person, this person, this person, and that person, and get back and figure this all out. So each e-mail can be very lengthy.... So, you are answering to the public, so you still want to be kind and courteous, but you also have to try to find the balance of what's going on. Each situation could take days before you get a real answer. (7/20/11)

Dr. Krug said that "everybody is brave when they send an e-mail" and that they would rather write to him than come speak to him, "face-to-face" (7/20/11). Furthermore, he

noted that many of the e-mails come late at night, and since people expect rapid responses to their inquiries or complaints, the e-mails take up a large portion of his time on the following school day.

When asked what he would be doing instead of responding to e-mails if he had the choice, Dr. Krug said he would be in classrooms much more. Dr. Krug spoke with admiration about a particular math teacher who often tries to pull him into his classroom, challenging him to solve problems on the blackboard in front of the students. Calling this kind of activity "great stuff," Dr. Krug said, "I love interacting and seeing the kids that way, but it's a rarity as opposed to me doing it every single day for an hour or two" (7/20/11). According to Dr. Krug, this kind of classroom visit not only created healthy interactions between him and the students as they evaluated his math and helped him solve problems, but it also created more occasions to speak with teachers about how instruction might be improved.

When I asked Dr. Lynch what he would be doing if he could remove himself from the e-mail and reports that he must fill out on the computer, his response was also typical of the other participants. He spoke of his wish to be more involved in the planning of improved instruction: "What can I do to make this work in classrooms better? Things like that" (7/18/11). Thus, principals believed that accountability, in the form of paperwork and e-mail communication, disconnected them from students and from important collegial conversations about pedagogy.

Performance accountability culture, which requires consistent reporting and rapid responses to inquiries from the community, caused most of the participants to feel disconnected from the students in their buildings. This phenomenon was particularly

striking because each principal spoke about the importance of developing strong relationships with their students. They also claimed that they entered the field of education because of their own positive relationships with educators in their formative years. At Washington Technical, Mr. Vadala said that he felt like he had a significant impact on students only when he had developed meaningful relationships with them. The distractions of reports and paperwork, he said, threatened to pull him away from developing such relationships. Mr. Vadala told me that after he sat down at length with a struggling student and had a conference, or a series of conferences, with the student's parent, he "realized why this made a difference" (7/13/11). After he successfully worked toward solutions to a struggling student's problems, Mr. Vadala said, the student would tend to tell other students that Mr. Vadala was extremely helpful: the student would "[go] out and talk to other kids and say, 'you know, this guy [the Principal] talked to me, and we're working through something.' And all of a sudden, you got a revolving door" (7/13/11). According to Mr. Vadala, the development of one productive student relationship would beget a series of such relationships.

Unfortunately, however, the Congress City district was more interested in raising statistical indicators such as test scores than in supporting what Mr. Vadala believed to be necessary for student success. Speaking of central office administrators, Mr. Vadala said, "They look at numbers. That's all they care about, is numbers" (7/13/11). He told me that he felt vindicated at certain times, as when his school's salutatorian, in her graduation speech last June, thanked Mr. Vadala for "working with us and really getting the building back to where it should have been" (7/13/11). This was a rewarding moment for Mr. Vadala, who said that sometimes, "you don't know what kind of impact you had"

(7/13/11). Mr. Vadala said he was glad that the superintendent was in the audience to hear this.

Speaking about his required paperwork, Mr. Vadala told me that he recently wrote a 30-page end-of-year report for his school—a document that he suspected would never be read: "I'm just sitting there, like, 'wow—who's going to read this, though? The superintendent's not going to read it. It's 30 pages. Why would he look at it?' And he's not!" (7/13/11). After I asked Mr. Vadala to explain the purpose of this report, he said in an exasperated tone, "I don't know! The idea is, what went on in your building. So, someone may be reading it. But, they know what went on in your building all year, because when something happens, you have to send it up anyway" (7/13/11). Here, Mr. Vadala illustrates how the writing of reports can feel like meaningless and repetitive work—a distraction from the work he finds most rewarding and consequential. It was typical for principals in this study to claim ignorance when I asked them about the purpose of many reports, whether they were for the state or the local district.

Although most of the principals spoke about performance accountability culture's tendency to cause, or at least threaten to cause, a disconnection between them and the students in their buildings, three principals cited their abilities to cope with this threat in ways that limited its impact. Mr. Deutsch, Mr. Sudol, and Mr. Alcindor acknowledged the threats of disconnection and depersonalization, but they distinguished themselves from the other participants by speaking about their ability to create and maintain strong relationships with students despite the demands of performativity.

Throughout our interview, Mr. Deutsch noted that he placed a premium on relationships with students and meeting their needs. His comments matched the sign on

the bulletin board behind his desk: "Children Come First" (field notes, 7/14/11). Early in our conversation, Mr. Deutsch told me that if "you show these kids that you care about them, you show them that you love them, and that you want the best for them, they'll do anything for you" (7/14/11). In context, Mr. Deutsch meant that the students would put greater effort into their work if they knew that teachers, or the Principal, cared about their performance. Frequently, Mr. Deutsch would check the student data system to locate students who were struggling academically. After finding such students, Mr. Deutsch would begin a dialogue with their teachers and then reach out to parents to figure out the source of the students' problems in school.

In one case, after seeing that the parent of a particular struggling student was not attending a parent conference evening, Mr. Deutsch decided to act "in loco parentis" by joining the student for a series of conferences with his teachers (7/14/11). For reasons unbeknownst to Mr. Deutsch, this student, Marco, had been following a friend of his and the friend's mother through their conference schedule when Mr. Deutsch happened upon them. Of this experience, Mr. Deutsch said,

> So now, I've done it with Marco, I did it with a kid Nick— You start walking kids
> around at parent conferences, the teachers know that I've taken an interest in the
> kid, and they're not gonna be able to slack off and not help the kid. So, I enjoy
> doing that. Kids love it because sometimes they don't get support from anybody
> else.... (7/14/11)

Mr. Deutsch also pointed to an inconspicuous area on one wall in his office, where he had taped the class schedules of about a dozen struggling students. Still hanging on the wall since the end of the previous school year, these schedules reminded Mr. Deutsch of the

extra attention and support that certain students needed in order to be successful at

Tenney High School.

Mr. Sudol also spoke about the need to personalize his school and build

relationships with students. Sometimes, just knowing students by name and interacting

with them, Mr. Sudol said, "makes for a better building tone" (7/18/11). "And I think

that's huge," Mr. Sudol added, "because when they walk in here they have to feel

comfortable that I care as much about them, or my staff feels that they are as important,

as the next student" (7/18/11). Using the student data system in much the same way as

Mr. Deutsch did, Mr. Sudol said he frequently checked on students' grades—especially

those of athletes whose grades tended to drop during sport seasons. In one recent case,

Mr. Sudol told me, he called the principal of a student's middle school to get help in

figuring out why the student would get As and Bs in all of his subjects but Cs and Ds on

midterm and final exams. This personal conversation ultimately led to the realization that

the student suffered from test anxiety. Noting that chronic absences had been a problem

at Arundel High School, Mr. Sudol also told me that he was able to improve attendance

in his building significantly by identifying the chronic absentees on the student data

system and holding conferences with parents about their children's attendance problems.

These conferences sometimes resulted in a series of meetings and long-term relationships

with the students and the parents.

Mr. Alcindor spoke about the importance of personalizing Danforth High School,

which he feared would become "a mass education" operation under performance

accountability culture (8/4/11). He was particularly proud of his efforts to make

Danforth, a school with 1,700 students, "feel very small" so that "students don't feel like

they are anonymous" (8/4/11). According to Mr. Alcindor, he has been able to

personalize Danforth High School by paying particularly close attention to freshmen. In

the summer, each incoming 9th grader is required to send Mr. Alcindor a letter

introducing himself/herself with a picture attached. He told me that he asks the students

to "talk about their goals and their dreams and what they hope will happen in high

school" so that he can become acquainted with them individually (8/4/11). When the

students graduate 4 years later, they receive a copy of their original letter as a memento,

along with a new, personalized letter from the principal, congratulating them on their

individual achievements. Furthermore, Mr. Alcindor said that he writes a personal note

on each freshman's report card twice a year—sometimes congratulating the students on

their progress, sometimes requesting a conference with the student and parent to discuss

underachievement.

Although Mr. Alcindor disapproved of much of the state testing regime and

thought that the NJASK "is not the best test in the world," he claimed that "it has some

great predictive validity" (8/4/11). Thus, after studying the scores of incoming freshmen

and reading a writing sample that he assigns each 9th grader to prepare every September,

Mr. Alcindor said he has been able to identify students who were likely to struggle at

Danforth and were most in need of the remedial support offered by certain courses (e.g., a

strategic reading course offered alongside the regular English course). Elaborating on

what he does to keep himself connected with the day-to-day academic world of Danforth

High School, Mr. Alcindor said:

> So, we really now have the parents in and have that conversation about what we
>
> need to do. It gives me a connection with the parents and with the child. So it's

those kinds of things—we do a multitude of things. You know, I'll participate in

classroom discussions. I'll look at what kids are reading in a particular class and I

will read that same novel and come in and join the discussion. So, they know that

I am interested in what they're doing, and the teachers as well. (8/4/11)

Furthermore, Mr. Alcindor blocks off one-third of his schedule every day for classroom

visitations—both formal and informal. Spending so much time in classrooms enabled

Mr. Alcindor to get to know the teachers, the curriculum, and the strengths and

weaknesses of both. With respect to the curriculum, he said, "You have to be out, you

have to see it and feel it, and sometimes participate in it to really understand it. So that

means you have to do some of that other administrivia stuff outside of the school day"

(8/4/11).

Acting on his interests in what students are doing in their classes, Mr. Alcindor

said he recently sought the opinions of students, teachers, and parents, regarding a

required research course for 9th graders that he suspected was ineffective and unbearably

boring. After a year of studying this course and various stakeholders' evaluations of it,

Mr. Alcindor was able to discontinue the course and lead the integration of research skills

back into the English and social studies curricula. He also said that he was working on

improving students' classroom presentations throughout the building—the entire culture

of what was expected when a student delivered a presentation during class time. Overall,

Mr. Alcindor said that his chief concern was that students were doing "meaningful work"

at Danforth High School. Much less concerned about bureaucratic demands such as

complying with the newest standards, Mr. Alcindor admitted, without any regret, that

requirements such as standards alignment were "not on the forefront of a teacher's mind every day" (8/4/11).

It is evident that Mr. Deutsch, Mr. Sudol, and Mr. Alcindor were able to cope with bureaucratic demands in ways that prevented them from losing touch with students. Perhaps they were more talented than the other participants in the area of time management. Perhaps they were simply less cynical toward the accountability movement and the new requirements it was placing on schools and their jobs as principals. It is also possible that their organizational structures were designed to keep the principal's bureaucratic paperwork at a minimum. Whatever the reason, the question of *how* certain principals are able to stay immersed in the social world of the school, despite the demands of performance accountability culture, falls outside the limits of this study and may be a fruitful topic for further research. I wrote in my field notes after leaving these principals' offices that I felt "uplifted" and "inspired" by their discussions of the work of a high school principal and their ability to cope with bureaucratic demands (field notes, 7/14/11; 7/18/11; 8/4/11).

While Mr. Vadala was able to share some anecdotes that illustrated the positive impact of his relationships with students, it was clear throughout his interview that his maintenance of such relationships was a constant struggle because of the demands of the Congress City Central Office. After all, he was the principal who referred to the notion of "managed management" while describing his district's tendency to block every instructional initiative that did not follow the district-wide pacing guide for curriculum (7/13/11). Mr. Vadala was also clear about his teachers' low morale and stunted creativity, the result of being "pressed down" by the bureaucratic school system

(7/13/11). He and five other principals in this study felt some level of disconnection from the classroom, from instructional leadership, and from the students in general. Appropriating Habermas's (1989) terminology, we might say that these six principals demonstrate how the demands of performance accountability culture can endanger the health of the lifeworld of the principal and his/her school (p. 155).

While applying Habermas's theory of lifeworld and system to the topic of school leadership, Sergiovanni (2000) claimed that effective schools are healthy communities in which the lifeworld determines the qualities and functions of the system. The lifeworld of a school includes "leaders and their purposes, followers and their needs, and the unique traditions, rituals, and norms that define a school's culture" (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. ix). The system, on the other hand, includes "the management designs and protocols, strategic and tactical actions, policies and procedures, and efficiency and accountability assurances" (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. ix). Although a school or a district cannot function well without appropriate systems in place, sometimes the system becomes so powerful that it leads to "pathology" in the lifeworld, resulting in people's loss of freedom and a sense that their work has no meaning (White, 1995, p. 8).

When Dr. Lindley cynically says that his job is "more of a paperwork position" while "it used to be a master teacher position," and that he spends the majority of his time ensuring that his school remains in compliance with NJQSAC, he exemplifies a loss of meaning. When Dr. Lynch and Dr. Krug lament their inability to visit classrooms and effect instructional change because they are stuck at the computer answering e-mails and writing accountability reports, they exemplify the loss of meaning *and* freedom. And while Mr. Vadala may have believed in pursuing meaningful relationships with students

and encouraging his teaching staff to use progressive teaching models such as problem-based learning, his district's pacing guide illustrated most clearly the power of the system. In this case, an accountability-based, standardized manual for instruction became the force that prevented the principal from encouraging—indeed, allowing—his teachers to be creative. For Mr. Vadala, Habermas's (1989) own bleak injunction proved true: "the rationalization of the lifeworld makes possible a heightening of systemic complexity, which becomes so hypertrophied that it unleashes system imperatives that burst the capacity of the lifeworld they instrumentalize" (p. 155). A pacing guide may have been created to increase consistency among teachers; it may have had the laudable goal of ensuring that students have a chance to learn all the material delineated in the curriculum. And yet, the pacing guide became so massive and strong—so "hypertrophied"—that it impeded the principal's and teachers' abilities to provide students with what they believed, in their professional judgment, to be necessary.

Although this study found variation in the principals' abilities to remain connected with students and instruction, each principal had to battle the distractions of managerial tasks associated with performance accountability. The tension between nourishing the lifeworld of the school and managing the system was always present, but some principals reported greater success in coping with bureaucratic demands and remaining connected to what they believed to be the core purposes of their principalships. Those who successfully prevented the system from colonizing the lifeworld seemed to do so *in spite of* the system; that is, the policy environment in which these principals worked did not facilitate interaction between building principals and everyday classroom life.

Summary

In this chapter I reported the findings of this study in order to answer the overarching research question, How has the performance accountability culture in education influenced the job of the principal in public high schools in the state of New Jersey? I presented the findings of the interviews and document analyses, which revealed the salience of three major aspects of performance accountability culture in the work of the high school principals: the marketization of public schools; the centralization and bureaucratization of the control of public schools; and the challenge of remaining connected to students and daily classroom life while fulfilling the demands of performance accountability in the role of principal. Throughout my description of the findings, I used the concepts of performativity, audit society, lifeworld and system, and disciplinary power in order to show how the experiences of the principals in this study could be illuminated through several frameworks of postmodern and critical theory. In Chapter V, I will provide a summary of the findings in relation to the research questions, and a discussion that further relates the findings to previous research and the theoretical frameworks.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

This study was guided by the following research question and subquestions:

How has the performance accountability culture in education influenced the job of the

principal in public high schools in the state of New Jersey?

What initiatives associated with performance accountability culture are principals

currently pursuing?

How do principals cope with the demands of performance accountability culture

related to test scores, school rankings, and other quantifiable outcomes of education?

What are the perceptions of principals toward performance accountability culture?

What is the relationship between the demands of performance accountability culture

and what principals believe to be the core responsibilities of their position?

In this chapter, I will summarize the findings of the study as they relate to these research

questions. Then, I will discuss the relationship between the findings and previous

research on the topic of performance accountability, making additional connections to the

theoretical framework. Finally, I will conclude this chapter with recommendations for

further research, policy, and practice.

Summary of Findings

Analysis of interview transcripts and documents revealed that performance

accountability culture appeared in a variety of forms, each of which had its own influence

on the principals' work. The most salient elements of performance accountability culture

were the marketization of public schools, an increase in centralized or bureaucratic

control of school districts, and a tension between a principal's need to fulfill the mandates of accountability culture and his desire to maintain a connection to students and day-to-day classroom life.

Because of a movement toward the marketization of public schools, principals identified public relations (PR)/impression management as one of the most significant responsibilities of their jobs. According to the principals, PR was necessary in order to counteract negative perceptions of their schools, prevent criticism from stakeholders, garner community support, and maintain their schools' transparency to the wider community. Since the publication of test scores in newspapers and state report cards has become a critical element of performance accountability culture, principals found that it was necessary to promote their schools and manage impressions in order to prevent harsh criticisms of their performance and to reassure the public that their tax dollars were not being wasted. Sometimes these criticisms would appear on local blogs as well, stimulating a cycle of commentary on the work of the high school. Principals used a variety of forums for PR, including open-house nights, press releases, promotional videos, posters displayed in the community, and attempts to be covered by local newspapers. These findings helped to answer the subquestion, "What initiatives associated with performance accountability culture are principals currently pursuing?" In addition to the interview transcripts, school districts' vision, mission, and goal statements revealed that improvement of the perception of the public schools through PR mechanisms was often an explicit district and school initiative.

Within the theme of marketization, I also found that the principals needed to pay attention to school ranking systems even if, in their professional judgment, they found

these systems to be unreliable and unfair. The communities where each principal worked

generally valued school rankings, resulting in the principals' devotion of time to discuss

rankings and address their schools' performance relative to other schools. Some

principals took part in using the rhetoric of competition associated with rankings,

demonstrating the pressure exerted upon them to make sure their schools performed well

in the standings. Overall, however, the interviews demonstrated a tension between the

principals' own professional beliefs and the value placed on rankings by their

communities. Thus, with respect to the subquestion, What are the perceptions of

principals toward performance accountability culture?, the findings demonstrated that

the principals found the rankings of schools to be unfair and unreliable, but they were

resigned to the necessity of paying attention to them. It was clear that a principal could

not simply ignore school rankings.

The marketization of public schools in performance accountability culture also

required most of the principals to compete for the enrollment of students. While charter

schools did not appear as a salient concern among the principals in this study, the

principals did express their need to remain competitive and maintain current levels of

funding so that students would not choose to attend magnet schools or public choice

schools outside the district. Promotion of programs—and in one case, the creation of a

new school-within-a-school—was necessary in order to attract students to the local public

high school, revealing a movement toward the commodification of public education.

Furthermore, principals noted a pattern of treating schooling as a business through

discourse and practices—additional evidence of commodification. For example,

principals devoted energy to making sure that parents would believe they were getting

"value for their money" (Dr. Krug, 7/20/11). Discussion of this topic addressed the question, What initiatives associated with performance accountability are principals currently pursuing? It also helped to answer the question of principals' perceptions of performance accountability, as they generally expressed frustration toward choice programs that drew some of their highest-performing students away from their schools.

The second major theme of the findings, an increase in centralized or bureaucratic control of school districts, revealed the participants' loss of autonomy. Bureaucratization appeared in a variety of forms that influenced the principals' daily work and development of school initiatives: mandated improvement of test scores and other achievement indicators, state auditing and reporting processes, and the movement toward standardization and consistency. Principals either expressed that test scores were a chief concern at their schools, or they struggled with plans to reform their programs in response to the results of state-mandated tests. They also reported that the major state auditing process, NJQSAC, either determined and revised their schools' initiatives or colonized their time with paperwork. Finally, a general movement toward standardization and consistency resulted in the revision of curricula to meet new standards, the rewriting of curriculum documents to fulfill new format requirements, the development of rigid curriculum pacing guides, or the adoption of county-wide curricula.

With respect to the question of principals' perceptions of these elements of performance accountability culture, the interviews revealed a deep cynicism, a feeling that bureaucratic demands were devoid of meaning. Principals complied cynically with state and district demands, and in some cases, admitted openly to fabricating their compliance, thereby answering the second subquestion: How do principals cope with the

demands of performance accountability culture? Finding little meaning in many bureaucratic demands, the principals sometimes expressed frustration about their limited ability to create their own initiatives. The principals also expressed little or no confidence in the state's—and sometimes the local district's—ability to improve public education from a distance, mostly because of its creation of ephemeral reforms and its ignorance of the realistic needs of individual students.

The third and final theme of the findings revealed the principals' struggles to remain connected with students and daily classroom life while attempting to fulfill accountability mandates. The principals' discussion of their own reasons for entering the field of education revealed a chasm between what they believed to be the core purposes of their principalships and what performance accountability culture was continuously requiring them to do. For six of the principals, accountability in the form of paperwork and e-mail communications disconnected them from students and from conversations with teachers about pedagogy. This finding provided an answer to the fourth subquestion, What is the relationship between the demands of performance accountability culture and what principals believe to be the core responsibilities of their position? For six of the principals, performance accountability culture was a distraction from the work they believed they should have been doing. Furthermore, with respect to the question of perceptions, this finding revealed more frustration and cynicism. The principals found much of their paperwork to be meaningless and expressed that it kept them out of classrooms.

Nevertheless, three principals in this study did not believe that the bureaucratic demands of their positions prevented them from developing meaningful relationships

with students. With respect to the subquestion of how the participants coped with the bureaucratic demands of performance accountability, this study found that some principals claimed to have successfully avoided the potentially negative effects of such demands. Two of the principals spoke at length about their attention to specific students who were struggling through high school, and one principal described his multi-faceted effort to personalize his school. While these principals did express cynical attitudes toward much of their required paperwork and reporting, they managed to compartmentalize this aspect of their jobs in order to pursue what they believed they should be doing as principals.

Discussion

This study began with a brief description of how accountability in education evolved from nineteenth-century systems that were designed to allow only the highest-achieving students to advance through school to late-twentieth-century models of holding schools accountable for students' performance (Good & Teller, 1973; Graham, 2005; Hogan, 1989; Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001; Ravitch, 2002). In order to place the current system of performance accountability culture in its historical context, I explained how, in the 1970s, educational accountability became more concerned with schools' outputs (e.g., test scores) than with their inputs (e.g., qualifications of the teachers in a given school). As the American public saw educational spending increase precipitously between the 1970s and the 1990s while American students failed to show high achievement on tests such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the public and their elected representatives became concerned with holding schools accountable for student performance (Ladd, 1996). The human capital framework of discussing education—that

is, the notion that education serves to improve the country's economic standing in the world—became the dominant discourse of educational accountability, especially as Americans began to think that students in the United States would not be able to compete with their international peers (Adler-Kassner & Harrington, 2010). Thus, educational reform legislation in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries began to focus on developing rigorous state and national curriculum standards, mandated state testing for accountability, and federal incentives to create systems of performance pay for educators and teacher evaluation systems that are tied to quantitative measures of student performance. The accountability system of the early twenty-first century can be characterized, in general, as a system of rewards and sanctions for schools and educators based on students' performance. This is the context in which the participants of the study were working.

With respect to the first major theme that emerged from the qualitative coding process, the marketization of public schools, the findings of this study confirmed what earlier literature (Ball, 2001; Niesz, 2010; Smyth, 2001) had found: performance accountability culture can create an environment of competition that leads to principals' concern with impression management, the need to focus on school rankings, attempts to attract high-performing students to the local public high school, and a general treatment of education as a commodity. Ball (2001) claimed that in the environment of performance accountability, where rewards and sanctions for schools are based on measurable outputs such as test scores and a school's standing in magazine rankings, educators must deal with a whole new set of concerns:

We now operate within a baffling array of figures, performance indicators, comparisons and competitions—in such a way that the contentments of stability are increasingly elusive, purposes are contradictory, motivations blurred and self worth slippery. Constant doubts about which judgements [*sic*] may be in play at any point mean that any and all comparisons have to be attended to. What is produced is a state of conscious and permanent visibility (or visibilities) at the intersection of government, organisation [*sic*] and self-formation. (p. 212)

Consistent with this theoretical commentary, the principals in this study noted that they had to pay attention to rankings and comparisons, even though they did not believe in their reliability or fairness, and they were often frustrated by the continuous fluctuation of the methodologies used to create the rankings. Such fluctuations caused some of the principals to feel insecure about where their schools would end up in the next publication of standings. Indeed, the interviews reveal a "baffling array" (Ball, 2001, p. 212) of judgments with which principals have to be concerned: magazine rankings, published test scores, commentaries on local blogs, local systems of comparisons among district high schools, and the opinions of the parents of prospective students—parents who may decide to send their children out of the district if they are unimpressed by the local high school.

Foucault's (1995) concept of disciplinary power through surveillance can be a fruitful model for understanding how ranking systems and publications of schools' outputs can, in effect, police the schools on an uninterrupted basis. Each principal in this study knew that his school's performance was always being watched and measured against that of others. The principal and his school are always under surveillance—either by a government agency demanding AYP, an independent magazine posting scores, the

publication of the latest N.J. School Report Card—and this surveillance is perpetuated on blog discussions, in threats to vote down the annual district budget, at board meetings, in cycles of e-mail inquiries, in probing questions from the district administration, and in the required production of detailed reports. Even as the principals in this study criticize the notion of ranking schools, they admit that they cannot ignore the rankings; they are always subjected to it. As Foucault (1995) argued, "It is the fact of constantly being seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection" (p. 187). The work of the principals and the schools in this study was constantly publicized and compared with that of others, keeping them in subjection with respect to whatever indicators were important in a given moment. Crucially, these indicators were not decided by principals and teachers; they were determined externally and required educators to manage their activities in reference to them.

The external formulation of criteria against which schools and educators are judged creates a significant problem for school administrators who would, ideally, work to fulfill the standards created by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), a steering committee within the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA). The six standards developed by ISLLC, after all, form the basis of the exam that all prospective principals must pass in order to become licensed in the state of New Jersey to work as a school principal (Educational Testing Service, 2011). Of the six standards for school leadership, five of them explicitly mention collaboration among all stakeholders as a critical element of decision-making. Standard 1 calls for leaders to "*collaboratively* develop and implement a *shared* vision and mission"—one that is "supported by *all stakeholders*"; Standard 2 emphasizes "a culture

of *collaboration, trust*, learning, and high expectations" in school communities; Standard 3 notes that school leaders should "develop the capacity for *distributed leadership*"; Standard 4 claims that the ideal "education leader promotes the success of every student by *collaborating* with faculty and community members, responding to *diverse community interests and needs*; Standard 5 places responsibility on education leaders to "safeguard the values of *democracy, equity, and diversity*" (ISLLC, 2008; pp. 14-15; emphasis added). In a culture of performance accountability where school ranking regimes, school choice, public reporting of outcomes, and constant public surveillance can determine many of a principal's behaviors through disciplinary power, we must raise the question: how can a principal fulfill the democratic and collaborative expectations of the ISLLC Standards when the accountability system has already determined the outcomes that schools are mandated to achieve? Standard 2 even calls for school leaders to "develop assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress" (ISLLC, 2008), but the findings of this study demonstrate that accountability systems have already been developed outside the school building. This external accountability, supported by legislation and enhanced by the lay public and media (e.g., through magazine rankings) threatens to make internal accountability systems redundant and meaningless.

Since the subject of disciplinary power is always the object of the public's gaze, it is not surprising that the subject attempts to control the *way* in which he is seen. Thus, principals in this study were clear in their assertion that PR/impression management was among the most significant responsibilities of their jobs. Whether it was used to showcase a school in the free market of school choice, or for "garnering votes for the budget" (Dr. Lindley, 7/12/11), PR was the principal's attempt to manage his school's

image, corroborating Ball's (2001) theory that, in performative culture, "…schools have become much more attentive to the need to carefully organise [*sic*] the ways in which they present themselves to their current and potential parents" (p. 218). Ball (2001) mentioned the same forums used by the principals in this study for PR purposes: "promotional publications, school events, school productions, open evenings, websites and local press coverage" (p. 218). The potential problem with such an emphasis on PR, however, is that it becomes difficult to distinguish between a school's marketing and a school's sincere description of itself. To apply the concepts of Habermas (1989), we can say that principals' efforts in the area of PR/impression management are examples of strategic action because their purpose is to "[bring] about a desired behavioral response" in their audience (Chambers, 1995, p. 237). This kind of action is different from communicative action, which aims for "mutual" and "genuine understanding" between participants (Chambers, 1995, p. 237). According to Niesz (2010), only communicative action among stakeholders can bring about substantive changes in a school. Strategic calculations of impression management, however, only affect the surface.

None of the ISLLC Standards demands that an educational leader manage the impression of his school or develop effective marketing for its programs. Such strategic action, in fact, would contradict the ISLLC Standards' emphasis on collaboration among all stakeholders. The very first of the ISLLC Standards notes that education leaders should "promote organizational learning" through the collection and analysis of data (ISLLC, 2008)—a clear example of communicative action, an attempt among stakeholders to interpret a set of circumstances and make a democratic decision based on those circumstances. Furthermore, Standard 2 places a premium on a culture of "trust"

(ISLLC, 2008). If school leaders are attempting to manage the impressions of their schools—that is, acting strategically to control the perceptions of others—then it is difficult, if not impossible, to establish and maintain an environment of trust.

The second major theme of the findings, an increase in centralized and bureaucratized control of schools, revealed principals' loss of autonomy and their cynical attitudes toward such control. This finding is consistent with the work of Leithwood et al. (2002), who found that governmental control strategies can prove ineffective because they do not elicit the emotional commitment of teachers. It is also consistent with the work of Reed et al., (2001), who demonstrated that in high-stakes testing culture, "[principals] are being forced to operate in ways that are counter to what they know to be best practices" (Reed et al., 2001, p. 21). This dissertation, however, moves beyond the discussion of high-stakes testing culture, including not only mandated improvements in test scores, but also auditing/reporting procedures and the movement toward standardization and consistency.

The results of this study showed that mandated improvement of test scores and state auditing processes like NJQSAC colonized the time of the participating principals. All schools and principals demonstrated a commitment to ongoing improvement of test scores, demonstrating the influence of state mandates on official district goals. In some cases, auditing processes like NJQSAC created new initiatives for a school, such as the rewriting of curriculum; in other cases, it required that ongoing school initiatives (e.g., the use of instructional walkthroughs) be revised in order to comply with the audit. Nevertheless, NJQSAC's influence on the work of principals resulted in cynical compliance or fabrication.

The principals' attitudes toward, and methods of coping with, state auditing, illustrate Power's (1997) idea that auditing can colonize the time of an organization's employees in such a way that it ceases merely to check the organization; rather, it costs the organization valuable resources, even as it fabricates its compliance or tries to subvert the process by conducting audits in isolated areas. When Dr. Gold noted that the curriculum rewriting required by NJQSAC probably had little effect on classroom teaching—even though it was time-consuming and costly—he illustrated Power's (1997) point that, while auditing can demand that an organization follow certain accepted procedures, the product demanded by the audit "has little to do with accuracy or even representational faithfulness"; rather, it "reflects a certain legitimized style of technical elaboration" (p. 99). Thus, if NJQSAC demands that curriculum be written in a standardized way, its concern is not necessarily with how curriculum appears in the classroom; its concern is with the mere ritual of writing curriculum, the production of a document that looks legitimate to the public. As Dr. Gold said cynically about the process, "If your goal is to produce a document that meets, you know, the standards, and looks good, it's been valuable" (7/13/11). Again, the environment of trust that the ISSLC Standards ask school leaders to "nurture" (ISSLC, 2008) is contradicted by the strategic action of fabrication.

The movement toward standardization and consistency—at the state and district levels—also met with cynical attitudes from the participants. With respect to standards and tests, which are central to accountability reforms but always changing, the principals tended to say that the state "can't figure this out" (Dr. Lynch, 7/18/11). Furthermore, as they commented on various examples of standardization (e.g., a county-wide science

curriculum), the principals were concerned that the state was not aware of the "dynamics"

and needs of individual districts (Dr. Valentine, 7/11/11). Similarly, one principal noted

that his district administrators' demands for consistency among all high schools, through

a curriculum pacing guide, illustrated their ignorance of the needs of the students in his

building (Mr. Vadala, 7/13/11). This picture of bureaucracy as unresponsive to

individual needs reflects Habermas's (1989) point that bureaucratic systems can become

so powerful that they can colonize and ruin the lifeworlds that they are intended to

support. In its drive for standardization and consistency, bureaucracy "penetrates deep

into the teaching and learning process…. The compulsion toward litigation-proof

certainty of grades and the over-regulation of the curriculum lead to such phenomena as

depersonalization, inhibition of innovation, breakdown of responsibility, immobility, and

so forth" (Habermas, 1989, pp. 371-372). Mr. Vadala illustrated this concept when he

said that the drive for consistency made him and his teachers "afraid to change"

(7/13/11). And while Mr. Alcindor claimed that he was able to cope with bureaucracy

successfully, his chief goal of "personalizing" what he referred to as a "mass education

system" (Mr. Alcindor, 8/4/11) calls attention to the possible dangers of a massive

bureaucracy that "[steers] at a distance" (Ball, 1994, p. 54). In their cynical discussion of

bureaucratic policies, the principals lamented their limited power—a direct contradiction

to ISLLC Standard 6, which notes that education leaders should "act to influence local,

district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning" (ISLLC, 2008, p. 15).

The principals in this study were the recipients of decisions. If anything, they worked on

what might be called damage control, attempting to personalize their schools *in spite of*

the wider education policy context. School leaders cannot be empowered if they are the mere recipients of bureaucratic decisions.

The final theme that emerged from the data analysis, the challenge of remaining connected to students and classroom life while managing the demands of the performance accountability system, illustrates the tension between what Habermas (1989) might call the lifeworld of schools and their systems. Although elements of the system, such as accountability procedures and requirements, are meant to benefit the lifeworld—for example, they may be designed to ensure that more students learn at higher levels—sometimes they can become so unwieldy and powerful that they can colonize the lifeworld and cause its depletion (Sergiovanni, 2000).

The chief concern among six principals in this study was the accountability system's tendency to disconnect them from their students and day-to-day classroom life. Consumed by accountability in the form of paperwork and e-mail inquiries, these principals claimed that they had little time to visit classrooms on an informal basis. In what appeared to be the most severe case of disconnection from the lifeworld, a principal with 17 years in administration said that his job was now "a paperwork position" while "it used to be a master teacher position" (Dr. Lindley, 7/12/11). In a less extreme, but still illustrative case, a principal said that dropping into classrooms and interacting with students was "a rarity" because of the requirements of performance accountability, which included answering e-mail inquiries and preparing board reports on what each subject area was doing to improve performance since the last disappointing ranking (Dr. Krug, 7/20/11). Just finding the time to arrange and meet with the district-wide committees that

were charged with producing these reports of progress took valuable time away from this principal's immersion in the lifeworld of his building (Dr. Krug, 7/20/11).

The principals who felt disconnected from the lifeworld of their schools exemplify how, in the words of Habermas (1989), performance accountability "unleashes system imperatives that burst the capacity of the lifeworld they instrumentalize" (p. 155). These imperatives can include the pursuit of positive PR, measuring up to neighboring schools in rankings and other systems of comparison, and the constant production of detailed reports of a school's progress. Of course, one of the intentions of the board's request for formal, bi-annual reports of each subject area's efforts to improve students' test scores at Northwood High School may be to incentivize instructional reforms that will result in deeper learning. But, when such demands separate the principal from day-to-day learning activities, they can become counterproductive. Furthermore, the time spent reporting on improvements can be spent on designing and implementing the improvements. As Mr. Sudol at Arundel High School said, "Sometimes it makes us do a lot more work on the side to try to prove what we have already demonstrated" (7/18/11). Here, Mr. Sudol was talking about the need to justify his school's exclusion from a recent set of national rankings. He illustrates the way his time for instructional leadership can be colonized by the demands of the system—in this case, the system of ranking.

Although the findings of this study demonstrated the tension between a principal's ability to nourish the school's lifeworld and his need to manage the accountability system, three principals claimed that accountability mandates did not result in their disconnection from students. In fact, these principals spoke about the time they spent assisting individual students and working toward greater personalization

throughout the school. It is not possible to tell from this study alone *why* these principals were able to stay immersed in the social world of the school and remain connected in meaningful ways to students. These three principals may have been simply more efficient in their daily work, or they may have had a more positive attitude toward performance accountability, enabling them to avoid feeling consumed by certain mandates. Indeed, as bureaucratic control of public education becomes more pervasive, the coping mechanisms of principals may be the determining factor in their successful balance of lifeworld and system.

Recommendations for Future Research

As this dissertation has shown, performance accountability culture runs deep, influencing the participants' work on a day-to-day basis. The marketization of public schools, the centralized and bureaucratic control of schools, and the tension between nourishing the lifeworld and the system of schools appear to be powerful elements of this culture, especially because they are exemplified in the work of principals from schools in various District Factor Groups. These themes were prevalent in I and J schools as well as in A and B schools.

Because the legislative and policy environment continues to move rapidly in the direction of greater performance accountability (CCSSI, 2010; Sparks, 2011), more research is necessary to maintain an updated account of how accountability reforms influence the work of school principals. At the present time of writing, principals have yet to experience the formative and summative exams that are being developed by national consortia to measure students' growth from year to year. The high school principals in this study have also yet to experience the new educator evaluation systems

that the New Jersey Department of Education will require by the 2012-13 school year—evaluations that tie educator effectiveness to student achievement (NJDOE, 2011). Once the new models for measuring students' growth and educators' effectiveness are implemented, research will be needed on the way these models influence the work of high school principals. When teacher and principal evaluations are tied directly to students' performance, it will be necessary to find out how the relationships between principals and teachers are influenced by the new evaluation system. What influence will this new model have on communicative action and democratic process in the development of school initiatives? How will principals and teachers perceive this new model? How will they cope with it?

The results of this study demonstrated that one form of the marketization of public schools, the implementation of school choice through the development of charter schools, was still in its nascent stages for the communities of the participating principals. Nevertheless, the principals in this study had to compete for students against county magnet schools and nearby public choice schools. As the movement toward charter schools gains more traction and suburban, as well as urban, principals must address the competition engendered by charter schools, further research should be done on the way traditional public schools respond to the competition. What kinds of PR and marketing strategies will schools—even high-performing schools in affluent districts—now have to implement in order to maintain adequate funding and attract competitive students? How will the further commodification of education and the need to market public schools influence the work of principals? This dissertation found that the principals of I and J schools were generally shielded from the need to sell their schools to prospective

students. Their PR strategies were limited to counteracting negative perceptions of their schools and preventing attacks from scrutinizing parents and blog contributors. But, as these principals see charter schools open in nearby suburbs—which Dr. Gold cited as a possibility near his affluent district (7/13/11)—how will they be affected? Will they need to engage in even more PR and image-building?

Since the design of this study was delimited to interviews of principals and analyses of district vision, mission, and goal statements, further research would enhance the findings of this dissertation by expanding its reach. Interviews of teachers, for example, would enable the researcher to glean their perceptions of the behavior of their principals in response to performance accountability. This study relied on the principals' self-reporting of their methods of coping with the accountability culture. From the perspective of teachers, how do the principals cope with this culture? How does the culture influence the principals' relationships with the teachers they supervise? Such research would contribute to a deeper and more rounded picture of the influence of performance accountability on the work of high school principals—a picture that the time constraints of this study could not allow.

An additional possibility for expanding the reach of this study concerns the gender of the participants. Although male and female principals were eligible to participate in this study, the interview subjects were all male. A future study might purposefully select male and female participants in order to discover what relationship, if any, exists between the gender of the principal and the way performance accountability culture influences his/her leadership style and behaviors. Such a study would also

necessitate a review of literature on the relationship between gender and school leadership.

As I searched district websites for their vision, mission, and goal statements, I found a wealth of materials advertising the schools and their current initiatives. Indeed, the websites themselves were a form of PR and impression management, suggesting that a semiotic analysis of multiple school districts' websites would prove fruitful in the study of performance accountability culture. This type of study would enrich our understanding of the discourse used by schools to describe their work. Does this discourse corroborate or disconfirm the notion of the commodification of public education? As performance accountability culture evolves, what purposes and interests—both explicit and implicit—do district websites serve?

Furthermore, since three of the principals in this study reported their ability to cope successfully with the bureaucratic demands of their jobs, research is necessary on *how* certain principals are able to balance the demands of performance accountability with their need to be immersed in the lifeworlds of their schools. This type of research could influence the work of principals through its discovery of practices at the district, school, and personal levels that enable principals to comply with bureaucratic demands without disconnecting themselves from students and day-to-day classroom life. As performance accountability continues to evolve, high school principals will need strategies to prevent the system from colonizing the lifeworld. As Habermas (1989) put it, schools and other institutions need to be protected from "falling prey to the systemic imperatives of economic and administrative subsystems growing with dynamics of their own" (p. 373). This belief may be widely accepted, and this dissertation illustrated the

way nine principals battled daily with the imperatives of the system—sometimes in vain, but sometimes with success. With respect to those who claimed success, the important question, now, is How?

Recommendations for Policy

As system imperatives pull principals away from the lifeworld of their schools, educational policymakers need to consider ways in which principals might be empowered to spend more time focusing on instruction and the needs of their students. Accountability legislation such as No Child Left Behind and programs such as Race to the Top are designed, ostensibly, to achieve the worthy goal of raising the level of all students' learning. Even the public reporting of school performance, which enables ranking systems to proliferate, was legislated in order to create transparency and incentivize the improvement of academic performance in all schools (Hanley, 1989; "Jersey will send home report cards on schools," 1989). Nevertheless, unanticipated consequences, which include principals' exorbitant focus on impression management, the production of reports to fulfill bureaucratic demands, and the fabrication of compliance with mandates, result in cynical attitudes and, worse, a principal's inability to spend adequate time with students and on matters of instructional leadership.

According to ISLLC Standard 6, "An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context" (ISLLC, 2008, p. 15). Moreover, school leaders are expected to "influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning" (ISLLC, 2008, p. 15). It is clear that the standards created by the NPBEA, of which the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a member, deem advocacy

for educational policy matters a professional responsibility of school leaders. Such an expectation, coupled with evidence in research that accountability policies have undermined principals' abilities to function as instructional leaders, raises the question of why school leaders have not been influencing policymakers to design accountability systems that honor schools' and districts' local needs and values.

Buying into a culture that has commodified education, principals are spending time on managing the images of their schools, and making adjustments to programs and operations that will result in quantifiable results for the schools' success in the open market. Such adjustments include spending valuable resources standardizing their curricula in order to demonstrate compliance with state and national demands. And yet principals' cynical attitudes toward state education policies demonstrate that they comply with mandates begrudgingly. If school leaders carried out the charge of ISLLC Standard 6, they would create opportunities to voice deep concerns with the movement toward standardization and accountability regulations, which place little value on outcomes that cannot be quantified and leave little, if any, room for school leaders to develop their own goals with teachers and communities.

In his warning that American public education is moving away from developing creative individuals in the name of producing high test scores, Zhao (2009) argued that

The quality of a person is difficult to describe in specific terms, but generally it is the total package of knowledge, ability, attitudes, perspectives, moral values, and ethical standards. It is what the person can do in real life instead of scores received or years spent in school. This measure is unfortunately not always quantifiable, but it is more important because it is more relevant to a person's

well-being and what that person can contribute to society. (p. 72)

Zhao claims that while Americans have been concerned with the achievement gap

between American students and their peers in other countries—especially those in Asia—

as measured by international exams, they would do well to focus on the "creativity gap"

between the United States and East Asian countries, a gap that has historically favored

the United States. According to Zhao (2009), the creativity of people in the United States

has been well documented: "By all accounts, the United States has been the world leader

in scientific innovations for most of modern times. These innovations have powered

economic growth not only at home but also elsewhere in the world" (p. 91). Should the

movement toward standardization, bureaucratization, and obsession with external and

quantifiable indicators of success continue, Zhao (2009) predicted, the United States will

leave little room for its students to develop their creativity and "individual differences"—

the very qualities that have kept the United States economically powerful (p. 94).

If American school leaders believe that the creativity of their students is crucial to

their future success, then they must approach policymakers with a more powerful voice

that reveals the contradictions between current accountability reforms and the ability of

schools and their leaders to nurture the individual talents of their students. School leaders

should take President Obama at his word when he says, "We need to out-innovate, out-

educate and out-build the rest of the world" (Obama, 2011). Policymakers need to hear

from school leaders that such an audacious set of goals cannot be accomplished through

standardization and bureaucratic accountability regulations that colonize a principal's

valuable time and autonomy. As this dissertation has shown, there is a wealth of research

documenting the unanticipated consequences of performance accountability on the work

of schools. More specifically, this study has provided qualitative data substantiating such consequences on the work of high school principals. The availablity of such research must be used by the professional organizations of principals to advocate for accountability systems that will not colonize the lifeworld of schools and their leaders. Organizations such as the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association and the National Association of Secondary School Principals should increase the intensity of their advocacy so that the voices of practicing principals—those who are directly familiar with the influence of performance accountability on their work—are not limited to local cynicism. A more productive resistance on the part of principals would involve organized, thoroughly researched, and direct involvement in the development of accountability systems that honor local needs. Only then will principals be able to live up to President Obama's charge.

Recommendations for Practice

Laine (2011) offers the following pithy commentary on the subject of school leadership: "Put a good leader into a bad system, and the bad system will win almost every time." Laine's observation calls attention to the need for systemic reform—not just for highly-qualified or better-trained leaders. As school leaders carry out the charge of ISLLC Standard 6, advocating for accountability reforms that do not impede creativity and principals' abilities to serve as instructional leaders, they need to work with their local districts to create organizational structures that facilitate their re-immersion into everyday classroom life. The participants in this study wanted to spend more time observing and participating in classrooms, meeting with teachers to discuss and plan effective instructional practices, and building productive personal relationships with the

students in their buildings. Unfortunately, however, the multifarious demands of performance accountability culture—the demands of managing the system—have prevented principals from nourishing the lifeworld of their schools.

Recognizing the ever-growing conflict between management of the system and nourishment of the lifeworld, The Wallace Foundation sponsored a study called the School Administration Manager (SAM) Project. As the Wallace Foundation (as cited in Turnbull, et al., 2009) described it, this study "addresses the issue that the press of management responsibilities deprives the school of a valuable instructional-leadership resource: the principal's time" (p. i). In order to make principals more available for instructional leadership, Wallace "focused on helping principals delegate time-consuming management responsibilities and increase their interactions with teachers, students, and decision-making groups in the building" (Wallace, 2009, p. i). Sometimes principals delegated managerial tasks to a newly-hired employee designated for these duties: a school administration manager (SAM); in other cases, tasks were redistributed among existing employees so that the principal could focus on academic leadership. Managerial tasks might include office/desk work, building and facilities management, addressing transportation issues, supervision of students in common areas such as cafeterias, and managing non-instructional staff. On the other hand, academic leadership tasks included formal and informal observations of instruction, office work that related to instruction, and direct work with students. The results of this study showed that the 75 participating principals who devoted a full year to the project were able to spend an average of 58 additional minutes per day on instructional leadership. The mixed-methods study designed by the Wallace Foundation—including interviews and surveys of staff

members, focus groups, and structured observations of principals' time allocation before and after the project—found that the additional 58 minutes of time, amounting to almost 5 hours per week, was statistically significant.

The SAM project acknowledges that the current educational climate requires principals to complete many tasks that are not related to instruction, even as principals are tasked with the enormous responsibility of improving their schools' academic performance on a continual basis. The dissonance between the way principals actually spend their time and the way they believe they *should* be spending their time suggests that authentic reform will require systemic changes like those attempted in the SAM project. If a school principal is going to be a master teacher and instructional leader, then he/she must work with the local district to allocate tasks and time so as to increase the principal's interaction with everyday classroom life and push back against the colonizing power of bureaucratic managerial tasks. Furthermore, if school leaders are to carry out the charge of Standard 6, the expectation that they influence policy, they should be advocating for a change in everyday working conditions that will set them free to focus on the lifeworld of school and the communicative action that nourishes it.

* * *

The late principal who hired me for my first high school teaching job taught me that his core mission was to be the chief instructional leader in the building. When he shared with me this explanation of the principal's fundamental responsibility, I understood for the first time that the title of the highest-ranking administrator of the school was really shorthand for principal educator. In fact, this was the term he proudly used whenever he described his position. It is the recommendation of this study that

organizational structures be designed so that principals can be principal educators. This goal can be accomplished only if principals advocate, both locally and nationally, for systemic changes that will prevent the performance accountability culture from colonizing authentic educational leadership.

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Appendix:

Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this research project. I am here to learn about your experiences working within the performance accountability culture in public education. For the purpose of this study, performance accountability is defined as any reform agenda that emphasizes surveillance and measurable outcomes in education and includes consequences for students, educators, and schools when they do not achieve levels of expected or mandated performance. Since performance accountability in public education has evolved significantly since the 1980s, and especially over the course of the last decade, I am here to learn about the way this culture impacts your work as a school leader today. Over the course of this interview, I will ask you questions about the role of accountability in your job, the way you cope with or address accountability mandates, your perceptions and opinions toward the performance accountability culture, and the overall impact of the accountability culture on the way you function in your job. I am not here to alter your perceptions or opinions in any way or to pass judgment on you; rather, my goal is to truly understand your experiences, actions, and perceptions. If at any time you feel uncomfortable with the interview, you may excuse yourself from the interview and decide not to participate in this study. Do you have any questions about the procedures? OK, let's begin.

1. As principal of this high school, what do you take pride in?

2. What are the current initiatives of the school district?

3. What school initiatives are you currently working on?

4. How do the initiatives of this school get determined?

5. How do initiatives get prioritized?

6. How is your work as principal formally evaluated or judged?

7. How are you evaluated informally?

8. How do you hold the teaching staff accountable for their work?

9. In discussions about public education, accountability for performance has become a prevalent topic since the early 1980s, and especially over the course of the last decade. How has the performance accountability movement affected your school, if at all?

10. How do you deal with the demands of performance accountability?

11. In what ways, if any, has your job changed since you initially assumed the position of principal?

12. In your opinion, what is the mission of your job?

13. How is your professional mission affected by the performance accountability movement?

14. What role does public relations (PR) play in your job as principal?

15. What do you do to garner community support for your school's initiatives?

16. How do rating systems, such as the bi-annual *New Jersey Monthly* high school ranking, influence what you do as a principal?

17. What do you think about public rankings of high schools?

18. What role does state-mandated testing play in your job as principal?

19. How do new school choice programs, such as the opening of charter schools, affect your work as principal of this high school, if at all?

20. What do you think of school choice?

21. How have you addressed the mandates of the newly released curriculum standards?

22. What is your opinion of the new standards?

23. What kinds of bureaucratic demands do you have to deal with as principal?

24. In what ways do bureaucratic demands affect your work as principal?

25. How do bureaucratic mandates affect your school?

26. What two or three types of activities make up most of your work on any given day?

27. In your opinion, how has your leadership style been affected by the demands of performance accountability?

28. How would you describe your relationship with the teaching staff of your school?

29. What effect has the performance accountability culture had on your relationship with staff members?

30. How do you get teachers to buy into the performance accountability culture?

31. Principals frequently claim that much of their time is consumed by the writing or production of reports. What kinds of reports do you spend time producing?

32. How do you feel about the production of such reports?

33. What have we missed in this interview that you would like to add?

Demographic Information

Number of years as high school principal

Number of years in the field of education