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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, EMBODIED HOPE IN AN URBAN ELEMNTARY SCHOOL: STORIES OF VETERAN EDUCATORS, by MARTHA K. DONOVAN, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education and Human Development, Georgia State University.

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EMBODIED HOPE IN AN URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: STORIES OF VETER-AN EDUCATORS

by

MARTHA K. DONOVAN

Under the Direction of Dr. Jennifer Esposito and Dr. Richard D. Lakes

ABSTRACT

Neoliberal education policies ignore the intersections of place and race when it comes to accountability at urban schools. The result is schools serving marginalized communities of color often are labeled failures because they do not meet the numerical thresholds established by the state. This ethnographic study examined the ways seven veteran educators shared their educational knowledge with students, parents, and the community as a form of cultural subterfuge, acknowledging state accountability goals but working to improve the community as a whole. The study took place at Clement, an urban elementary school, during the 2016-2017 school year. The research involved 12-20 hours a week of participant observation coupled with 3 interviews per participant. Data sources included field notes from each day of observations, interview transcripts, and visual and auditory material recorded during observations. The study investigated how seven educators navigated and negotiated the constraints of accountability policies while helping to create a site of hope by incorporating pedagogical practices with community outreach. Methodologically driven by the principles of desire-based research (Tuck, 2009) and critical race

theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998), the study found that veteran educators were policy adapters and cultural responders. Policy adapters are educators who, over the course of sustained careers, maintain their own pedagogical beliefs while striving to meet policy demands, especially related to accountability and testing. Cultural responders are educators who nurture Black children to reach their highest potential while honoring their cultural backgrounds and assets. In this study, educators were policy adapters and cultural responders who reached out to the community as well as into themselves to create hope and provide children with an education that enriched their lives.

INDEX WORDS: Urban schools, accountability policy, critical race theory, ethnography

EMBODIED HOPE IN AN URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: STORIES OF VETERAN EDUCATORS

by

MARTHA K. DONOVAN

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in

Educational Policy Studies

in

the College of Education and Human Development

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DEDICATION

For E and S, and their moms

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1. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Segregated Schools

"I have become interested in how social research might provide a context for social change by challenging structural divisions of social class, race and gender" (Ball, 1992, p. 1). With this statement, Ball outlines a process whereby critical social theory and emancipatory methodology might be integrated, laying the groundwork for how ethnographic research can be used to interrogate oppressive structures and contribute to social change. Many other authors, particularly since the 1980s when ethnographers began to question the notion of objective truth, have constructed approaches to ethnography that confront the colonizing effects of research, honor the cultural traditions and practices of the communities in which the research takes place, and interrogate the social positions of the participants and the researcher in order to construct layered and complex depictions of cultural spaces (Nencel, 2014; Behar, 1996; Erickson, 2011; Skeggs, 2008; Cooley, 2013). It is through such a process, one that provides a pathway deliberately designed to be ethical and just, that research can function to portray lives that deserve a better and closer look. This is research for social change, and this dissertation attempts to belong within this lineage.

This ethnographic study of veteran teachers took place in one of the municipal sites in the United States of America with large populations of underrepresented Black citizens and people of color who are separated from large populations of privileged, White, and middle class residents by ZIP codes and test-based measures of school achievement (Au, 2009; Sharkey, 2013). I am a White female researcher who spent between 12 and 20 hours a week in Clement Elementary School (hereafter, Clement)[1] during the 2016-2017 school year. My journey to Clement in-

---

[1] All names are pseudonyms.

cluded (ironically) driving over several sets of train tracks, which are the folkloric American boundaries between so-called good and bad neighborhoods (Coates, 2017). At Clement, I spent time observing and participating in classrooms, as tutor and community volunteer, with teachers whose careers spanned 15 to 42 years each and who had dedicated those years to elementary teaching, mostly in schools situated in neighborhoods like Clement's. I selected this population of teachers because they had all witnessed changes in education and social welfare policies over the decades. I was interested in their perceptions of how their teaching had evolved in the context of policy changes over time (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). I wanted to understand their teaching and the social forces that influenced both their teaching and the communities in which they taught.

In this neighborhood, large numbers of Black citizens lived amongst boarded-up houses, and some resided in run-down housing with increased fire risk. Students reported that police did not protect them, and high concentrations of violence were inversely complemented by a dearth of grocery stores, banks, and medical offices. These are frequently reported characteristics of concentrated urban poverty (Erickson, Reid, Nelson, O'Shaughnessy, & Berube, 2008). Such research usually also references so-called failing schools and includes poor educational outcomes among the qualities one should expect to find in such a neighborhood. However, this research, which is about a school in such a community (and which does not define it in terms of failure), seeks to address the *presence* of public schools and their teachers as possible mediating factors within neighborhoods facing economic challenge. Therefore, this ethnography of teachers in one urban school sets itself in the tradition of counter story of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Cook & Dixson, 2013; Farmer-Hinton, Lewis, Patton, & Rivers, 2013). The teachers who participated in this study at Clement, most of whom are Black women, knew their

students and their families well; they had dedicated their lives to providing education that improved their students' lives materially, intellectually, culturally, and spiritually AND they worked hard to satisfy policy demands. This research on veteran teachers' knowledge and practice is situated in the material and human context of the school, recognizing it as a cultural institution that plays a self-determined role within the space. It tells the stories of individuals who work within a loving space, in which social policies can intersect to do harm, and strive to make children's lives better. These stories contrast the dominant narratives of failure that emerge from mainstream sources to catalyze an expanded understanding of the realities of schooling in urban neighborhoods (Cook & Dixson, 2012).

The dominant narrative of schooling in neighborhoods facing concentrated poverty includes a notion of lack—lack of opportunity, lack of achievement, lack of access to highly skilled educators. Ladson-Billings (1998) explained, "the dominant group justifies its power with stories, stock explanations, that construct reality in ways that maintain their privilege" (citing Delgado, 1989, p. 14). The story of Clement will show that while educators did struggle to produce test score data that represent what American consumers have learned to perceive as success, the school did provide opportunities and seize upon resources from within the community to fulfill their goals. However, since schools' test scores are now one of the few ways school quality is evaluated, the narrative of the failing school is persistent. Recent policy changes do not make this easier. Now that many teacher evaluation systems incorporate student test data to hold teachers even more accountable for the problem of low student performance (Hill, Kapitula, & Umland, 2011), it may become more difficult to extract schooling in communities of color from the mainstream failure narrative.

The failing school narrative has resulted in a comfortable explanation of the contrast between different neighborhoods. It goes something like this: the residents in all the school zones within one district received the same allocations of taxpayer dollars for their schools, yet some groups succeeded while others failed. The narrative explains that what was given (funding) must have been used properly in the successful settings and improperly in the others. Outsiders inscribe predominantly Black neighborhoods and their schools' teachers with failure due to this perpetual focus on achievement data and its adherence to the other traits of high-poverty neighborhoods. Meanwhile, White middle class and gentrified schools develop a fabricated knowledge that their own choices were correct because, based on the test scores, their educational services are effective.

This is the media's racialized allegory of educational binaries, and it is grossly oversimplified as well as unjust. But here is what is true: the boundaries between neighborhoods are palpable, and these boundaries were forged and are perpetuated by historical policies (Erickson, Reid, Nelson, O'Shaughnessy, & Berube, 2008). This ethnography queried teachers' experiences and educational practices and asked how they dealt with those policies while creating educational experiences they felt children needed in order to improve their lives. This dissertation centers its discussion on the seven women educators, five Black, one White, and one Filipino, who have forged their lives around service to Black children, their families, and their communities. The seven women in this study embodied ways of seeing, knowing, relating, and doing when working with children, parents and families both in-school and in the community--all of which comprised their cultural space. These seven educators were veterans, and their collective cultural knowledge of teaching and schooling is deeply relevant to the future of public education.

Research Questions

Reflecting the principles of "good ethnography" (Spindler & Spindler, 2000, p. 254) the questions posed here are not the same ones I proposed for this project. Spindler and Spindler recommended, "Judgment on what may be significant to study in depth is deferred… [and] the problem may be modified, or even discarded, as field research proceeds" (p. 249). I began this project with a concern about the ways in which teachers' work is evaluated and controlled via accountability policies. During fieldwork, however, the problem facing the teachers and (I believe) underexplored in education literature and popular culture is not just that accountability policies impose controls upon teachers' work, but also that social policies related to public education as well as housing, welfare, and health care do not honor all children equitably across race and socioeconomic class. As of 2016, Black families were 2.5 times more likely to be in poverty than Whites (Jones, Schmitt, and Wilson, 2018), the highest of all racial groups in the United States. Of Black Americans living in poverty, 25% live in the U.S. neighborhoods with the highest concentration of poverty (Jargowsky, 2015).[2] Black U.S. citizens are overrepresented in low-income neighborhoods in cities all over the nation (Erickson, Reid, Nelson, O'Shaughnessy, & Berube, 2008). We live in a state of what Kozol (2005) termed *apartheid schooling*. This Afrikaans term translates simply into English; it means separateness. Since traditional school boundaries are drawn along neighborhood lines, and since the majority of American public schools are still neighborhood schools, the racial separateness of schools mirrors the racial separateness of neighborhoods. This is often referred to as *de facto* segregation, as if laws and policies have no

---

[2] When I searched for data on poverty and concentrated poverty in the U.S., I found that the most accessible statistical research was generated in think tanks and non-profit organizations. I tried to find at least two sources with similar, recent results for each statistical question I asked.

role in ensuring these realities, which would then qualify them as *de jure*. But policies and laws construct the conditions of U.S. residential zones. These conditions are by design. Deener (2017) stated, “Powerful actors are described as making strategic choices about infrastructural projects that advantage some local groups over others” (p. 1288). All the ways that social and economic policies help to create neighborhoods also help to create schools. All the ways that income affects access to services that improve quality of life impacted the school children in this study. Many students had experience with issues like food insecurity and neighborhood violence. However, schools are not treated in policy discourse or action as if these truths exist. Schools are segregated by race and income based upon ZIP codes and neighborhood zones. School achievement, therefore, directly reflects the complementary policies that produced the neighborhoods that populate the schools. While the larger community, including politicians and policy makers, the media, middle class news consumers, and even the central offices of school systems and school boards, focuses on achievement test results to determine school and teacher quality, the teachers within schools such as Clement “navigate and negotiate” (Dr. Clementine, personal interview, June 15, 2017) all these competing forces, trying to produce the data everyone else is looking for, but beyond this, trying to help children reach their highest potential as students and as citizens[3].

The following questions guided this research related to teaching in a racially and economically segregated community:

- How did veteran teachers in one predominantly Black, low-income school “navigate and negotiate” the constraints of educational accountability policies while striving to provide education that enriched their students?

---

[3] Dr. Clementine (pseudonym), was the principal of Clement Elementary school and a participant in this study.

- How did Clement Elementary School function as a multipurpose site of hope aiming to improve its surrounding community?

Significance of the Study

This ethnography focused on seven educators. I was interested in how these educators fit within the broad construct of "the teacher" in the United States, how this construct resonated in mainstream ideology, and how the participants in this ethnography understood their own teaching within their particular context. The construct of the teacher in twenty-first century U.S. education is often articulated in terms of hyperbole. The teacher is the gift that makes a difference in the life of a child, or she is the cause of the persistent failure of schools in the United States to raise the nation's competitive economic profile. Policy reforms at the national, state, and local level contribute to the formation of the teacher by increasing privatization and chartering of public schools and forcing the adoption of teacher evaluations based on students' standardized test results. States' opposition to collective bargaining for public employees impacts how teachers organize around their work and advocate for themselves.

The seven participants were U.S. teachers, but they did not represent the typical U.S. teacher today. The composite public school teacher is 76% female and (NCES, 2013a) and she is 82% white (Ahmad & Boser, 2014). It is estimated that 50% of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Garcia, Slate, & Delgado, 2009; Ingersoll, 2012), so approximately half of this composite U.S. teacher must continuously regenerate. Possible reasons for this high attrition rate include low job satisfaction, low wages, and excess pressure to ensure student success as defined by standardized test scores (Dunn, 2014; Thibodeaux, Labat, Lee, & Labat, 2015). Thus, half or more of this mostly white, female teacher may be feeling disheartened,

struggling financially, and worrying about her students' test scores. This teacher may also be concerned with her rank, as she is now evaluated using a statistical formula meant to determine the value she adds to her students' educational experience.

Of the participants in this study, 100% were women, 71% were Black, and 100% had over five years of teaching experience. Black teachers in the United States have had a significantly different experience than White teachers, and these distinctions must be made clear. For one, a great many African American families whose descendants arrived in the United States prior to the 1960s were affected by histories of slavery and du jure segregation. The Black teachers in this study all shared stories of parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents who had known the civil rights movement and segregation, and for some, when they went back, slavery. No White American teacher can share this legacy, and this forms an important layer of historical and experiential difference. Additionally, within the last 40 to 50 years, Black teachers who chose to work in schools in low-income Black neighborhoods shared the same threat, which was that when neighborhood schools are closed for under-performance or under-enrollment, Black teachers often lose their jobs (Rizga, 2016). For example, massive school closures in Chicago from 2004 to 2012 affected low-income African American and Latinx schools almost without exception along with "experienced Black teachers who [knew] the communit[ies] and families well" (Gutstein & Lipman, 2013, p. 6). During the year of this study, the threat of closure loomed over Clement as Dr. Clementine, the principal, frequently reminded teachers at faculty meetings. Despite this threat of job loss, Ingersoll, Merrill, and Stuckey (2014) reported that "minority teachers are two to three times more likely than white teachers to work in such hard-to-staff schools serving high-poverty, high-minority, and urban communities" (p. 18). This was

apparent at Clement. There were only three White educators working there full-time among a faculty and staff of approximately 60 people.

Nevertheless, it is at precisely such schools as Clement where teachers are targeted for being least effective, usually in the name of low performance and failure. A sensational court case, *Vergara v. California* in June 2014, decided that California's teacher tenure laws, which made it difficult to dismiss a teacher rated "grossly ineffective," were unconstitutional. *Vergara* was the case featured on the November 3, 2014 cover of *Time* magazine, which featured a cover photo of an apple with a gavel hovering over it, ready to strike. The headline declared "Rotten Apples: It's Nearly Impossible to Fire a Bad Teacher. Some tech millionaires may have found a way to change that" (Edwards, 2014).

Vergara, the plaintiff, represented a composite of nine children whose were backed financially by Students Matter, a non-profit education advocacy group founded by Silicon Valley entrepreneur Dr. David Welch (Students Matter, 2016). The case challenged five of the tenure statutes in the California Education Code. The court ruled that because California's tenured teachers could remain employed even when determined to be "grossly ineffective," and because such teachers so disproportionately populated California's low-income, racially segregated schools, that the teacher dismissal statutes violated the plaintiffs' right to equal protection. The ruling declared the statutes unconstitutional and attempted to pave the way for the erosion of teacher tenure in California.

Vergara was positioned as a civil rights case. The decision text by Superior Court Judge Rolf Treu began with a quotation from *Brown v. Board* (1954) and ended with the claim that because weak dismissal statutes disproportionately impacted high poverty students of color, the statutes violated low-income students of color's constitutional right to an equal education (*Ver-*

gara v. California, 2014). In sum, the decision explained that all students deserve high-quality teachers, and in the words of *Brown*, educational opportunity is “a right which must be available to all on equal terms.” (cited in *Vergara,* p. 1). Therefore, because the vast numbers of grossly ineffective teachers who populate low-income schools can never be dismissed, the civil rights of children attending these schools are in constant violation.

The case painted a picture of large numbers of educators causing low-income children of color to languish in seas of pedagogical ineptitude. Obviously this image starkly contrasts Gutstein and Lipman’s (2013) description of urban school teachers as “experienced Black teachers who know the communit[ies] and families well” (p. 6). However, what was shown to be true was that in California, educators receiving low ratings were often pushed out of their schools and transferred, often to schools serving populations of low-income students of color, which are generally harder to staff. *Vergara* lost on appeal in April 2016 when the court ruled that the shifting of low-rated teachers to low-income schools was not a consequence of the law, but rather the poor practices within school districts (Medina & Rich, 2016).

In between the original *Vergara* decision and its appeal, education writers and researchers analyzed the plaintiffs’ arguments. One of the problems several researchers revealed was that the plaintiff’s lawyers could not really show what they were defining as “grossly ineffective.” This failing teacher was meant to be based upon teachers’ value-added measures (VAM). VAM is among the many contested policies affecting public school teachers in the United States. It is the attachment of students’ standardized test scores to teacher evaluations and in more and more cases, their salaries. VAM is based on a statistical concept, value-added modeling, characterized by statistical calculations of students’ test scores compared to prior years, with any gains equated with “value” added by the current year classroom teacher. If students’ growth exceeds that of the

previous year, the gain is attributed to the current year teacher's value-add. Likewise, if students' scores remain flat or fall, this indicates less value in the current teacher (see DeMitchell, DeMitchell, & Gagnon, 2012). Use of VAM was required in former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's Race-to-the-Top (RT3) grants and is one of a long trajectory of policy moves that have sought to control and standardize the work of teachers, couched in the rhetoric of school reform and improvement. These include the standardization of curricula, mandatory textbooks, "scope and sequence" schedules standardized by school districts, and, of course, high-stakes tests.[4]

Vergara promised to create pathways to eliminate grossly ineffective teachers, like those who had taught the plaintiffs, but there was no hard evidence that such teachers had taught these pupils. Welner (2014) and Glass (2014) argued the case was actually an attack on unions couched in the name of civil rights. Conservative reformers praised the *Vergara* decision as a "win for all children in California public schools" (Rhee, 2014, para. 1), because the case affirmed their claim that poor teaching is at the heart of why schools remain unequal. Others argued that dismantling tenure laws is meant to weaken teachers themselves. Tenure protects teachers' jobs so they cannot be dismissed arbitrarily. Kahlenberg (2015) explained that tenure laws "shift to the employer the burden to prove [a teacher's] termination is justified," (p. 7). Undoing tenure laws means making individual teachers take on the burden of proof if a dismissal decision is unjust. Whether *Vergara* was meant to weaken unions or individual teachers, it placed teachers at further disadvantage in the face of debates about educational equity in the United States.

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[4] A great deal of research has been conducted on these distinct topics. The following are singular representatives of studies in each area, which will be convered in-depth in the Chapter 2: for a critique of standardization see Au (2011); for textbooks, Gutstein (2013); for intensification of scope, see Valli & Buese (2007); and high-stakes tests see Hursh (2007).

During the trial, Dr. David Berliner was called as an expert witness, and during his testimony, he estimated that as many as 1-3% of California's teachers could be "grossly ineffective," which would mean such teachers number between 3000 and 8000 teachers. The judge used this estimate to make the point that 8000 poor teachers were far too many to be serving California's students. Within two days, Dr. Berliner's testimony was unpacked on several education blogs (Weissmann, 2014; Ravitch, 2014; Resseger, 2014; Antonucci, 2014; Holloway, 2014). It was clarified that Berliner was *guessing* that 1-3% of California's teachers "might" be grossly ineffective (Resseger, 2014). Berliner claimed he was misquoted and Holloway speculated that the misuse of this testimony would help the appeal. In fact, the case did lose on appeal, as is stated above. However, what is relevant for this ethnography is that none of these details matter much when it comes to headlines that construct deficit discourse about teachers' work. Judicial decisions such as *Vergara* foment deficit beliefs about teachers and their particular function in U.S. society, catalyzing support for more policies that serve to control or discipline the teacher, and garner public support for the dismantling of job protections like tenure. The teacher is generalized in the public sphere as incompetent or likely to do more harm than good. Deficit discourse, such as the *Time* cover where the category "teachers" is represented by the image of a rotten apple being disciplined by the judge's gavel, is used to justify policies that seek to control teacher behavior and reduce teacher autonomy, job security, and/or bargaining power.

There were more details that showed *Vergara* to ultimately be a very weak case, and yet, as stated, *Time* did not account for these weaknesses in its cover image. For example, the defense proved that there was no alignment between the plaintiffs' teachers and purportedly low VAM scores (Ravitch, 2014, June 11). Further, several of the plaintiffs actually attended schools at which teachers were already exempt from tenure laws, such as charter schools, so though these

students reported unacceptable and unjust behaviors on the part of their teachers, these were not even teachers who were even protected under tenure laws, and whose firing should have been easy. Tenure laws, it seems, were not really the problem in this case. The real issue might have been that urban charter schools, exempt from teacher tenure laws, disproportionately hire cruel and incapable teachers.

However, for this dissertation, *Vergara* illustrates how deficit discourses about teachers are created and disseminated in the media. The participants in this ethnography expressed awareness of how outsiders stigmatized them and their students as will be shown in Chapter 4. The participants grappled not just with the challenges of educating children and with "being held accountable for a set of standards [they] had no say in" (Dr. Wright, personal interview, June 14, 2017), but also with the burden of stigmatization and with how outsiders perceived their students' test scores. They worked hard to help the students improve. They understood how to create relationships with their students, how to generate classroom communities, and how to hone in on concepts they felt were important. They were educated, and they were lifelong learners. All had done some graduate work, three had doctoral degrees and one was pursuing her doctorate during the study. Still, questions in education research have arisen about the value of this experience, based on quantitative studies measuring teachers' years of experience with student gains. Some researchers have found teachers' experience essential for achievement (Papay & Kraft, 2015), yet others have suggested the relationship between experience and achievement plateaus after 4 to 5 years on the job (Rice, 2013).

Ingersoll, Merrill, and Stuckey (2014) found that the contemporary teaching force in recent years has become increasingly younger and greener, with high numbers of teachers leaving in the first five years. They framed this as a problem, citing research showing that experienced

teachers make a difference in terms of both achievement tests as well as holistic factors such as student behavior, cultural backgrounds, and cultivating community relationships. However, Rice (2010) used New York City data and determined that student gains aligned with teachers' early years on the job; in other words, these did not continue to improve over time. Rice referred to this as teacher productivity; a teacher's ability to produce a high-scoring student seemed to diminish with years of experience. Rice's research could be used to argue that teachers who earn higher salaries based on years of experience do not provide a return on investment. Still, researchers frame teacher retention positively. Ben-Peretz and McCulloch (2011), for example, looked at the age make-up of the teacher workforce globally, inspired by the OECD's (2005) report, *Teachers Matter.* Ben-Peretz and McCulloch took the view that since many nations face issues related to teacher attrition and lack of experience, it was important to focus on the stories and contributions of experienced (veteran) teachers in order to promote teacher retention.

Critical studies on experienced teachers resist attempts to frame teaching experience as lacking value in terms of quantitative productivity. Researchers have pushed back against the notion that technology might render the teacher obsolete (Godsey, 2015). They have promoted old-fashioned face-to-face teaching experience and have opposed the economic claim that since experienced teachers are expensive, administrators should hire newly minted teachers. Ladd (2013) summarized several of these arguments; for example, she argued that teacher turnover is actually more expensive and more disruptive than retaining experienced teachers.

Researchers have asked if teachers have monetary value, if they are worth the cost of their salaries. They have also wondered if teachers have relational value, if they can do a better job than a machine to communicate subject knowledge to students. Teachers matter, the OECD (2005) argued, as they are the "most significant and costly resource in schools" (p. 1). Also, ex-

plained the OECD, "improving the efficiency and equity of schooling demands, in large measure, on ensuring that competent people want to work as teachers, that their teaching is of high quality, and that all students have access to high quality teaching" (p. 1). This passage explains that teachers matter because they are lynchpins in the school improvement process, a process whereby both efficiency and equity can be improved, presumably simultaneously. Good teachers matter because they will make the system run more smoothly. The more of them there are, the closer the system will get to equity. Here, competence and quality are testable traits. The OECD is interested in economic gain.

The discursive argument that teachers matter perpetuated by OECD-style thinking centers teachers as essential human capital resources that must be better cultivated to promote systemic efficiency and accountability. In this formula, teachers matter because if they better they are, the more the system will improve. Notably, here, the system is off the hook and investigations of the accepted formulas for achievement are not required. This study is committed to thinking corporally and affectively instead of corporately or calculably. It declines to perceive teachers as calculable human capital and students as future capital. It refuses to see resources in economic terms. In this neoliberal age, education is understood as a metaphor for potential economic prosperity, ostensibly available for all, but, as Ambrosio (2013) pointed out

> Neoliberal accountability practices systematically undermine the hopes and dreams, and lower the expectations and aspirations of many public school students, especially those who have been underserved by the school system. (p. 331)

This study examines teachers who navigate and negotiate these policy consequences while trying to build students' lives.

The policy context of a school within a neighborhood of concentrated poverty, with local legacies of *du jure* racial segregation and unequal opportunity and the constant threat of state takeover will figure centrally in this study. I will situate the research in its place by attending to the realities of that place (Robertson, 2010). The spatial turn in research has "usefully refocused attention on micro-level spatial practices, and brought theories of space into productive relation with studies of pedagogy and materialities" (Taylor, 2013, p. 690). Additionally, I will draw from the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, policy studies, and critical race theory. My methodological framework as an ethnographer draws from anti-racist and feminist methodologies to guide my inquiry into conceptualizations of these veteran teacher in these segregated neoliberal times.

Purpose

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) characterized the present period of educational policy as dominated by a neoliberal paradigm in which governments have become increasingly unwilling to fund social services like education and have turned instead to market solutions. Maguire (2010), articulating the "Sociology of the Global Teacher," describes a series of interrelated local, national, and global factors that hinge around the construction of a "global teacher," one who is

> at once a 'professional classroom manager, an expert providing "high quality" client services in "more for less" times.' The reconstructed teacher is produced out of sets of recipes for action, systemic rules, technologies of performance and routine classroom actions that are designed (by others) to 'deliver' quality and 'assure' high standards. (Maguire, 2010, citing McWilliams, 2008, p. 62)

This "entrepreneurial manager" (Maguire, p. 62) is the ideal neoliberal teacher who must prepare students for the national and global marketplaces. Teacher educators and colleges of ed-

ucation must conform to this orientation, producing teachers on the supply side capable of meeting workplace demands. Old policies such as tenure, reminiscent of Keynesian days, no longer make sense in a teaching market driven by competition and accountability. Determinations of success or failure are made using statistical methods like VAM, or perhaps, as in the case of *Vergara,* by the misuse of the words of educational experts, words that once retracted do not have to be replaced. This is the world in which teachers do their work. And though these policy machinations and discursive constructions shape the daily lives of teachers, the testimonies of actual working teachers in such discussions are surprisingly rare. Teachers' voices are mostly missing from this discussion of teacher quality, both in the academic literature as well as in the public and political spheres.

Traditional policy analysis within this landscape is concerned largely with the investigation of the effectiveness of a policy as parallel to its economic efficiency. In the United States, since the passage of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) in 2001, federal education policy discounts all research except for "scientifically based research" (SBR) (St. Pierre, 2006 & 2014). Education policy must be grounded in scientific evidence and likewise so must analyses of these same policies to demonstrate their effectiveness. Such an approach all but ensures that schools in isolated, low-income neighborhoods will perpetually register as failing. It does not take into account the human consequences of globalization and de-industrialization, and the "calculated shrinking of ameliorative public programs and services under the guise of creating a more efficient government" (Daniels, 2007). SBR has shown that student achievement test scores vary along racial and socioeconomic lines. SBR has shown that test outcomes correlate strongly with parent background and socioeconomic status (Baker & Johnston, 2010). However, SBR merely illustrates the gaps; it does not offer solutions for these persistent gaps, and the gaps endure along with so-

cial inequities that seem to assure the gaps. This ethnography of twenty-first century veteran teachers aims to offer counterstories through first-person narratives, testimonies, and observations of how teachers negotiate these policies and pressures. The educators in this study were solution seekers who believed in their children and the school community; they taught in ways that reflected their beliefs and led to learning, which I observed. SBR seems not to be able to show such practices, but ethnography, through its "thick description" (Anderson, 1989, p. 1), can.

Parker (2008) described an educational "crisis story" (p. 198) in which the most recent period of documented failure in U.S. schools began with the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* and continues to the present day. Public officials have created, borrowed, and selected an array of policy solutions to attempt to fix schools within U.S. communities. Policies are enacted within communities as educators attempt to carry them out. Policies are also racialized and affect Black communities inequitably. Mainstream educational policy discourses suggest that teachers form the core of pervasive failure. Mathesz (2014) pointed out that this is not new; teachers have been blamed for the failure of American students to compete internationally since the launch of Sputnik in the 1950s.

Teachers are conceived as auditable commodities, as entrepreneurial managers, as part of a supply needed to meet educational demand. When the figure of the teacher emerges in politics, it is as a component of an industry, an industry characterized by a blend of private and public interests and governed by the same principles governing the economic market, such as 'efficiency' (Apple, 1993/2014). This industry was compared to Eisenhower's military-industrial complex and called the "education industrial complex" as early as 1994, according to Desai (2015). This conception of teachers absents humanity and centers them as commodities within the education industrial complex. When teacher "flesh" is represented metaphorically, it is rotten, as in the

Time article from 2014 (Edwards). Black teachers are more likely than White teachers to be represented in such negative ways. Yet, in segregated schools serving students of color, teachers are more likely to match the racial identities of their students (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004). Such teachers are more vulnerable to the judgments and labels that have become common in discussions of education. This is no surprise. The point of government policy is not to honor humanity but to organize and regulate public expenditures. The absence of a human conception of teaching contributes to a neoliberal education policy heavily weighted to remove dollars to create the most economically efficient system. In communities in which the connection between government services and human need is strongest, for example, in a low-income urban neighborhood, increased government intervention for public services correlates with increased surveillance. Title I schools must be extra-accountable for the additional dollars they receive.

Conventional policy research claims teachers matter because they ought to make the system function better. This study argues that we need to look at teachers *as* cultural workers, as substantive, agentic, corporeal, and embodied knowers and experiencers of educational work. And more specifically, this study argues that Black teachers matter in ways that are crucial, life-affirming, and under-acknowledged in larger policy discourse. Black teachers' knowledge and experience are counter-stories to the dominant constructions of teaching and teachers.

Were teachers *generally* understood as valuable and effective, educational policies would structure teachers as independent professionals educated to make autonomous decisions believed to benefit children. Schooling would be a trusted and revered component of American civic discourse. Were *Black teachers* in *Black communities* understood as valuable and effective and best equipped to make educational decisions for the children they serve, schools like Clement would

been seen for the ways in which they flourish, and the innate gifts their students bring would be visible within and beyond their communities.

An important frame for this ethnography is to move it away from what Tuck (2009) called "damage-centered research" (p. 409) and to construct it on a desire-based model. Damage-centered research identifies the problems—the damage—affecting disenfranchised communities. "Pain and loss are documented in order to obtain particular political or material gains" (p. 413). Such research intends to hold those in power accountable for the damage. However, Tuck outlines several problems with such an approach. One, for those indigenous to such communities, such research can have the "long-term repercussions of *thinking of ourselves as broken*" (p. 409, emphasis in original). Two, researchers might think that documenting damage will lead to the realization on the part of power brokers that policies are not working, this outcome rarely comes to fruition. Tuck recommends, as the antidote to damage-centered research, a "desire-based framework" (p. 416). A desire-based framework calls upon depathologizing analyses. While it acknowledges and accounts for loss and despair, it also accounts for "the hope, the visions, the wisdom of lived lives and communities" (p. 417). This framework accompanies an epistemological shift away from binaries such as "broken/fixed" and makes it possible to exist along a continuum within uneven social structures. Desire, Tuck stated, "is an assemblage of experiences, ideas, and ideologies, both subversive and dominant, [and it] necessarily complicates our understanding of human agency, complicity, and resistance" (p. 420). This ethnography will not reproduce the damage-centered story of educational crisis usually assigned to schools like Clement.

Overview

The next chapter offers a literature review analyzing the history of the discourse of the U.S. teacher. This literature aids me in my reading of mediated messages about contemporary problems of the teaching profession and top-down policies that aim to "fix" schools. I follow this with a review of the literature on low-income schools and the political economy of concentrated poverty. In Chapter 3 I outline my ethnographic methods and analytical framework. Chapters 4 and 5 offer the findings and discussion of the field study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study investigated a school setting that was subject to high levels of surveillance based on test scores and structural and historical biases (Monahan & Torres, 2010). The school served children who were growing up in a neighborhood stigmatized for its racial and economic conditions. The veteran educators who participated in the study, many of whom identified as scholar-educators, were keenly aware of the ways in which their school, its students, and the neighborhood were judged. As a White woman researcher, I represented what many educators in such schools see as the problem—judgmental White eyes that might contribute to negative interpretations of the school, the children, and its teachers, projecting "a (negative and fixed) misidentity onto the Other to construct a (positive and fixed) misidentity of the self" (de Oliveira Andreotti, 2014, p. 386). For this review of literature on teachers and U.S. urban schools, I looked for ways the research site and the participants were represented. I became conscious of how the literature attended to or overlooked the intersecting histories of racial, gender, and socioeconomic oppression as realities of U.S. life. An intersectional approach was of central importance to this review, because, as Crenshaw (1991) envisioned it, intersectionality aims to transcend identity politics, which tends to elide the differences within people from a single identity group. Intersectionality endeavors to acknowledge and interpret the differences within and across groups so that the multidimensionality of experience can be better understood. As I read sociological, anthropological, and case studies of U.S. teachers, I found that similar assumptions of sameness—U.S. teachers as their own ambiguous, White, middle-class group—created a limiting norm. As I pointed out in chapter 1, the participants in this ethnography did not fit the norm for the U.S. teacher, and they understood this. They understood their positions as teachers of mar-

ginalized Black children and the heightened scrutiny policies like test-based accountability placed them under (Monahan & Torres).

Participants also grappled with ways in which power structures from which they were largely excluded pushed in on the work they were trying to do. Collins (2000) theorized an intersectional framework as an approach to responding to power. Power, Collins wrote, can be approached as "an intangible entity that circulates within a particular matrix of domination and to which individuals stand in varying relationships" (p. 274). One of the problems in educational policy is the marginalization of schools with weak test scores and the assumption that such schools fail due to generalized character flaws found within the identities of the students and their teachers. For example, the common, yet false trope that children come from a "culture of poverty" in which education is not valued (Lofton & Davis, 2015) contributes to the problems of staffing at majority Black and low-income schools and has led to the acceptance of programs like Teach for America (Pitzer, 2014). Unfortunately, embedded in the dominant ideology is the belief that the members of the marginalized society, or in this case, the researcher, bear the burden to prove that the scores do not tell the whole story. Critical race methodology (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) pairs with intersectionality in order to aid this project, because it foregrounds race and racism and "challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color" (p. 24). Critical race methodology shares some common characteristics with critical theory; for example, they both see "schools as a battleground in the struggle for power and the exercise of authority" (Delpit, 1995, p. 16). However, critical race methodology sets race in a central position so that research can adequately examine the "special historical, social, economic, and political role that race plays in the United States" (p. 16).

Thus, I situate this chapter in the context of several diverse threads in educational literature drawing from the fields of sociology, anthropology, and philosophy. As explained, I analyze the literature from an intersectional and critical race methodological perspective (Crenshaw, 1991; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The first section discusses literature about the U.S. teacher as a social archetype. Figured in much of this research as White, U.S.-born, and female, my review aims to balance this hegemonic approach with a balance of studies on Black teachers. I present a portrayal of the U.S. teacher that acknowledges the diversity of experiences that are contingent upon race. I also review literature examining the impacts of neoliberalism on how teachers relate to their work. My participants understood and contended with neoliberal policies and expectations that framed students as economic beings and placed the responsibility for children-as-resources on teachers.

The second section addresses the notion of culture. Ethnography is by definition the written study of culture, but what culture means and how culture has been used as a trope in educational literature, particularly in discussions of poverty and race in education, varies significantly (Blot, 1985). In this section, I discuss the question of culture and situate it for this study. I also review literature that addresses questions of how Black culture interacts with educational traditions and how pedagogy can respond to the cultural needs of Black children to improve relationships and achievement within schools.

The third section reviews literature on accountability. This includes an overview of Foucault's (1997) concept of power-knowledge and how hegemonic knowledge takes hold in society. It explains the ascendance of testing as a common-sense approach to judging school quality and it links testing, racism, and eugenics through historical details. It examines how teachers came to accept testing as necessary to their work despite their common disagreement in its value,

and it explains the transition in recent years to the use of students' test results to 'test' teachers' added value, and discusses research that shows how schools and teachers in low-income neighborhoods almost always come up short.

In the fourth section I show how disparate social policies coalesce to influence urban communities. I review well-known texts like Wilson's (1996) *When Work Disappears* along with texts inspired by and responding to that famous study. In this section, I present studies that challenge the traditional idea of school as an intervention or solution to the problems facing people on the margins. Rather than a linear cause and effect model, I turn to the idea of nexus and review work that show how issues of welfare, housing policy, social reform, and prison policies are inextricably woven with U.S. educational policies. This section introduces an emerging thread I found: a small number of studies calling for an intersectional approach to studies of social policies.

The final section offers a transition from literature review to methodology through a review of literature on standpoint epistemology. Current political discourse and policy decisions aim to reduce teachers to tools of procedure. In this ethnography teachers shared their knowledge with their students and with me. In my findings and discussion I explore the messy problem of teachers' knowledge in the face of dehumanizing policy trends demanding enactment. This selection of literature on educators and standpoint epistemology helps to ground this narration. Thus, this review covers teachers as a variety of types of subjects: sociological and anthropological subjects, tools of policy, and adaptive knowers driven by love.

Conceiving the U.S. Teacher

For her chapter in the book *Images of Schoolteachers in America,* Joseph (2001), wrote:

> How do I portray 100 years of teaching without creating a voluminous mosaic? How do I bring in the perspectives of schoolteachers whose voices are silent in histories written by others? How do I represent the image of a teacher consonant with demographic reality and yet include the teachers who do not fit the dominant image? And finally, how do I deal with the contradictions inherent in these images? (p. 3)

Teachers, as figures in U.S. society, are made in part by the education policies they are bound to enact. This is a reciprocal and ongoing reality of teachers and teaching. To look at studies of teachers at any time in U.S. history is to look at social trends and hierarchies. Among sociological analyses of teaching in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, I found three interesting threads. (1) Teaching was feminized at the turn of the twentieth century (Biklen, 1995; Perlmann & Margo, 2001; and deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). (2) Unionization of teaching provided both new job securities, such as improved pay and tenure, but it also brought new public opinion problems that have at times shifted to public beliefs (Lortie, 1975 & Goldstein, 2014). (3) The intensification of accountability in the early twenty-first century changed teaching, but accountability was not new (Lortie, 1975 & Wirth, 1983). These studies show that teachers are predominantly women; that they are laborers who struggle to stabilize their earnings, work conditions, and benefits; and that they are concerned about test results more now than at any prior point in history.

However, in much of this sample of literature, there is a problem. As I suggested above, these studies do reveal trends and hierarchies that dominate U.S. social experience. Women have historically been relegated to so-called feminine labor (Apple, 1986; Goldstein, 2014), but they have fought for higher wages and greater respect for their work (Ozga & Lawn, 1988). In recent years testing has taken a serious toll on teachers' energy and esteem (Barrett, 2009). All of this is

true, yet much research ignores the factor of race and its influence on social experience. We exist in a social caste system that has always led to distinct and largely separate life experiences for Black and White members of society, and the same is true for teachers. Though there are exceptions (Biklen, 1995; Grosvenor, Lawn, & Rousmaniere, 1999; Nieto, 2005; Goldstein, 2014), much of this sample of literature on teacher, including seminal sociological texts, does not recognize this fact. Researchers, often African American themselves, have produced a body of literature about the experiences of African American teachers (Foster, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009; Ware, 2006; Loder-Jackson, 2012; Lewis, 2016).

I attempt to reconcile this by integrating these separate-seeming bodies of literature on the formation of the U.S. teacher. As I discuss the conditions teachers have faced in their work, I draw from literature that accurately describes conditions that differ based on racialized experiences. What follows is a discussion of literature on the three threads concerning the U.S. teacher: the feminization of the labor force, unionization, and the intensification of accountability. For teachers of color, the discussion includes the factors of endemic and systemic racism that further influence their work.

The feminized teaching force

From the middle of the nineteenth century, with the expansion of universal schooling and the end of slavery resulted in the demand for more teachers throughout the growing United States, teaching became increasingly populated by women (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). There is some indication that this process was similar for both White and Black teachers, for of course when schools became available for both White and Black students, the vast majority of these schools were segregated (Goldstein, 2014; Biklen, 1995). The relative percentage of White women teachers reached its peak in the 1920s when over 90 percent of elementary schoolteach-

ers serving white children were women (Perlmann & Margo, 2001). Now, while the ratio of women to men in public school teaching has declined somewhat, it still remains a line of work dominated by women. The National Center for Education Statistics (2013a) reported that in "2011-12, some 76 percent of public school teachers were female" (para. 9).

As noted above, many sources detail the gender shift in U.S. teaching, but often this is an exercise in quantification, not an examination of the gendered conditions that affect U.S. work. For example Perlmann and Margo (2001) conducted a quantitative history of women in teaching. They analyzed differences in populations of U.S. female teachers across different regions through the twentieth century to ask why different regions increased their populations of women teachers at different rates. They concluded more women entered the teaching force due to demand; as demand increased (education expanded), supply (of men) decreased (they took other jobs). As women caught on to the potential of teaching employment, supply increased. At the same time, compensation decreased.

This pattern was specific to the White population at the turn of the twentieth century. Black schools struggled to receive public funding; for example Goldstein (2014) documented that districts spent three times more on White children than on Black children. There was never a time when men dominated teaching in Black schools, nor was there a time when salaries decreased because women took over the profession. There was political advocacy for higher wages in both racial groups, but inequities in pay were pervasive until schools were desegregated. Yet, while desegregation eventually led to the end of the two separate school systems, and pay structures were applied to all workers, no fairness was achieved. Literature documenting school desegregation exposes the mass-firings of Black teachers and administrators in the late 1960s and

early 1970s, when school integration frequently meant closings of historically Black schools (Buck, 2010).

This shows that the feminization of the teaching force and wage discrimination are connected both for White and Black populations of teachers. It demonstrates that teaching for women has consistently been precarious employment, but more so for Black teachers. Likewise, educational experiences offered to women have affected the educations women become able to offer. deMarrais and LeCompte (1999) explain that White women had historically had access to significantly less education than men, which suggests that when women began to take teaching jobs in the mid-nineteenth century, many would have had the equivalent of only a primary school or maybe some secondary education. After emancipation, some Black teachers such as the well-known Charlotte Forten had been educated in northern schools and traveled south to participate in the education of newly freed slaves (Goldstein, 2014). As schools for free African Americans rapidly emerged after the Civil War, they were taught by a combination of Black and White women from both the North and South (Butchart, 2007). But educational opportunities were strictly divided by race and class, with wealthier members of society receiving a classical education and the White working class receiving “an education oriented to social control—sufficient literacy to understand the laws and contracts that governed their public life and labor and the doctrines of the Church” (deMarrais and LeCompte, p. 156). Two sets of normal schools developed to train White and Black women teachers emerged separately through the nineteenth century (Lortie, 1975; Fairclough, 2000). The teaching profession has historically received low regard, due to teachers’ low compensation and educational attainment. Today, both teacher compensation and the value of teachers’ educational attainment are debated and contested in state legisla-

tures. For teachers, gender, race, educational attainment, and salary have always been interconnected.

Organizing for protection: unions and associations

Teaching today is not a highly desirable occupation, particularly if the desirability of an occupation is based on its average wage. But to this point, the average wage of teachers is significantly higher and more stable now than it was a hundred years ago, thanks in part to the "combativeness" and "militancy" (Lortie, 1975, pp. 19, 222) of teachers who organized and fought for their right to bargain collectively. The topic of union involvement in education is controversial and complex and central to this study, whether a state allows unions with bargaining power or merely teachers' associations whose power is barely perceptible (Winkler, Scull, & Zeehandelaar, 2012).

Unions accomplish goals that not only aid teachers but U.S. workers in general. Kahlenberg (2015) wrote that unions have fought for school integration and they are part of the larger union fight for "collective bargaining for workers and a higher minimum wage, which together probably constitutes the nation's most well documented link between stresses induced by poverty and lower academic achievement" (p. 11). In other words, arguments in favor of unions should go beyond the topic of fairness in pay and address the larger ecosystem of poverty, wealth, and work in the United States.

Teachers' labor unions have not always managed issues of social justice or dealt with race in liberatory ways. The well-documented story of AFT leader Albert Shanker and his role in the community control struggle in New York City is a case in point. In the mid-1960s, the Ocean Hill-Brownsville community in Brooklyn, New York decided that since the New York City public school system was not meeting the desegregation mandate of *Brown v. Board* (1954), then

they would organize for community control of their schools. The community control movement did not last long, in part because when the leaders of the demonstration districts fired some teachers they perceived as unsupportive of the reforms and harboring racist values, the union organized a strike of all the New York City union teachers which lasted for much of the fall of 1968 (Stulberg, 2015). Though this experiment ended the following summer when the state ordered the New York schools to be broken up into 30 smaller districts across the city, this case points to one reason why people concerned with racial equity might be suspicious of unions, but also why black communities, conscious of the ways in which community control efforts were shut down by union resistance, might believe that unions do not represent their best interests. Stulberg argued that the Ocean Hill-Brownsville case is illustrative of a relentless history of disinvestment in education for African Americans, in this case on the part of the White-dominated teachers' union.

My home state of Georgia presents a case of racial divisiveness in teachers' organizations. The history of the oldest teacher association, now called the Georgia Association of Educators (GAE), reveals racialized tension and white supremacy. Though Georgia's "right to work" statue forbidding collective bargaining was passed in 1947 (Sturgis, 2011), there were two separate teachers' associations that provided limited advocacy and support for teachers throughout the state. The Black association was called the Georgia Teachers and Education Association and the White association was the Georgia Education Association, with direct ties to the National Education Association (NEA). Interestingly, despite its poor understanding of racial concerns over segregated schools in the Ocean Hill- Brownsville strike, teachers' unions had taken a strong stance on desegregation efforts within the unions. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) started expelling locals that refused to desegregate right after the *Brown v. Board* decision

in 1954 (AFT, 2015). The NEA followed a decade later, in 1964, at which point they forbade any segregation in any of their affiliates (GAE, 2016).

The Georgia association members took five years to fulfill this mandate, having to apply for an extension in 1966. The process was not completed until 1969. When the merger of the Georgia Teachers and Education Association and Georgia Education Association was finalized in 1969, Dr. H. E. Tate, the former executive secretary of the Black association, lost the presidency of the new association to the former executive of the White association, Dr. Carl V. Hodges. In response, Tate told *Jet Magazine*, "I'm not a poor loser—in fact, I think I'm a pretty good loser. But, in terms of seniority and experience, I do have more of everything on paper than my counterpart" (Words of the week, 1970, p. 34). The point here is not to debate the relative merits of the two candidates for the new executive of the new association. The point is that the mandate to create a desegregated teachers' association in Georgia was fulfilled, and today it bears the name Georgia Association of Educators (GAE). However, in this merger Georgia's Black teachers lost a leader, similar to the way that desegregation mandates often eliminated Black schools, principals, and teachers that were central to communities.

Teachers' unions may be perceived very differently depending on which lineage, Black or White, one is referring to. Likewise, teachers' associations in states with no political bargaining power still have cultural histories that include evidence of racial discrimination. What matters, then, about the role of unions and associations in framing teacher work, is that they have led to improvements in overall working conditions while simultaneously reflecting the power dynamics and political imbalances of White supremacy that have characterized U.S. society for centuries. Unions have led to increases and stabilizations in teachers' pay along with job protections such as tenure and retirement benefits. But along the way they have not played a strong role

in undoing racism or its legacies because, to quote one of Bell's (1980) central premises of critical race theory, "true equality for Blacks [would] require the surrender of racism-granted privileges for Whites" (p. 523). This concept of interest convergence means that White organizations have striven to protect the interests of White people. Teachers' unions and organizations seem to be no exception.

Within this messy history of teachers' unions, there have been gains made for teachers in general. And with gains came increased scrutiny. If teachers were going to get more, they had to prove they had earned it. Gains for teachers as workers seem to have ignited increased suspicion, even among supposedly sympathetic scholars. For example, the University of Chicago Press (2002) considers Lortie's (1975) sociological study *School-teacher: A sociological study* to be "the best social portrait of the profession since Willard Waller's classic [*The Sociology of Teaching*]." Yet Lortie's resentment for teachers' bargaining power is evident:

> It seems highly probable that teacher militancy in the intervening years belied their image as victims of a penurious public. Some have claimed that teacher victories in collective bargaining signal a "new dignity" for members of the occupation—they are more than likely right. Little emphasis has been placed, however, on the usual consequences of increases in rights; they frequently imply greater responsibility. For teachers, I believe that greater responsibility takes the form of reduced exemption from public review; the clamor for teacher "accountability" has risen since teachers have become militant in their relationship with school boards. (p. 222)

Lortie suggests here that teachers' commitments to unions, which he referred to as militancy, arose at the expense of responsibility. He states teachers claimed victimhood while they were actually fighting for pay, and when they won what they fought for, they failed to deliver the

requisite improvements their winnings would suggest they owed. Lortie's text on teachers reveals his belief that militant, organized teachers were seeking a reprieve from hard work or a handout with no payback in kind. Lortie's text seems to lay the groundwork for an accountability discourse that assumes teachers will not earn what they are paid.

Neoliberal teachers and accountability failures

Some scholars argue that the origins of accountability policies predate the union activism of the 1960s and are found in the rise of Taylorism, the application of the principles of scientific management to the management of society (Feldmann, 2005). By analyzing all aspects of educational practice like the production of goods on an assembly line, school systems would be able to model effective business practices and eliminate waste. According to Au (2009) "Standardized testing played a prominent role in this process, largely because it proved to be the perfect technology for the efficient categorizing, sorting, and ranking of human populations" (p. 34). Such testing, which had its origins in the I.Q. testing used to categorize Army recruits according to perceived heritable traits, and later taken up by eugenicists to bolster arguments against "race mixing" (Au, p. 35), was adapted for use not only to hold teachers accountable for their instructional effectiveness but also to assess teacher recruits' innate abilities. Assessment data has been used to evaluate the talent and ability of the teaching force relative to that of people in other careers. Teachers usually come up short, and this furthers the perception of their weakness and failure.

In 2007, the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) published a report entitled *Tough Choices or Tough Times* recommending a near-complete overhaul of the education system in the United States in order to stop the "long slow decline" (p. 4) of the U.S.'s position on the international education rankings and start preparing Americans for the globalized

economy of the future. One of the major problems, said the report, was that "we recruit a disproportionate share of our teachers from among the less able of high school students who go to college" (p. 9). Their point is that with teacher recruitment as is, drawing teachers from the bottom third of the high school classes, we produce a teaching work force that is not smart enough to accomplish the goal of raising America's workforce up. This argument reifies the notion that the high school ranking system truthfully determines the intelligence and capacity of its students.

In their discussion of the issue of teacher supply, Perlmann and Margo (2001) claimed that in the latter half of the twentieth century, when career options for women opened up, it became harder for the education sector to find a supply of "the 'best and brightest' women" (p. 6) to fill open teacher positions. Because there are more occupational choices for women, the population of working women is more dispersed than it would have been in the 1920s. The NCEE's (2007) *Tough Choices* report contradicted their assertion that America's teaching force is overwhelmingly weak, "Many of our teachers are superb, but we have for a long time gotten better teachers then [sic] we deserved because of the limited opportunities for women and minorities in our workforce" (p. 12). Perlmann and Margo argued the teaching force is less smart now because during the 1960s and 1970s, when civil rights and feminist activists fought for more opportunity, we lost a fraction of the smartest teacher recruits. The NCEE claims that opportunity is still limited, so many smart women and people of color still have no choice but to go into teaching. Both arguments acknowledge, and in some ways implicate, both patriarchy and conservative resistance to activism for the perceived weaknesses in the teaching labor force.

Lankford, Loeb, McEachin, Miller, and Wyckoff (2014) argued that to improve the esteem of the teaching profession, teachers must be more qualified. Two of the measures used to calculate such qualification are the prestige of a teacher's undergraduate education and her SAT

scores. When more graduates of prestigious institutions choose teaching as a career, it is used as an indicator in the improvement in the prestige of the career. And as this is a fluid and interactive process, when the prestige of the career improves, more graduates from selective institutions choose it. But there is no way to confirm a direct correlation between the process by which teachers' academic qualifications change and the prestige of the career itself. Lankford, Loeb, McEachin, Miller, and Wyckoff found that in 2009 a "greater interest in teaching" (p. 4) emerged in the data. Yet in their analysis they do not deal with the possibility that this increase in interest in teaching in 2009 might have had less to do with improvement in the prestige of teaching, and more to do with the economic crash of that same year and its effect on employment opportunity. Nevertheless, the point remains that some critics find the women dominating the teaching profession are not the 'best and brightest,' according to conventional measurements of achievement such as high school rank, college entrance exams, and university prestige.

To understand this, it is necessary to return to my earlier explanation of the origins of the feminized teaching labor force. When women began to fill open teacher positions, the majority of them had little education themselves. The desirable students would have tended to be white, wealthy, and male. So at what point, exactly, were the conditions of the teaching occupation constructed to attract the mythical best and brightest to it? According to deMarrais and LeCompte (1999), the barriers preventing White women from participating in higher education have only been reduced for about a century. And while normal schools for the training of Black teachers emerged as early as 1862 (Fairclough, 2000), barriers preventing Black women from participating in higher education, it can be argued, have never been fully lifted (Wallace, Moore, & Curtis, 2014).

This relationship between the historical lack of access to education and the quality of women's teaching credentials is rarely represented in literature on teachers, with Biklen (1995) presenting an exception. The implication, given how this is typically articulated, is that teaching attracts a less-intelligent set, and that if we had more high-scoring and cognitively competent teachers, the profession would be verifiably improved. Kunter, et al. (2013) called this the "Bright Person Hypothesis" (p. 806), and found that cognitive ability is not a chief indicator of educators' success. Goldstein (2014) also noted, "there is little evidence that better students make better teachers" (p. 9). The fact that teaching was not a career that has historically demanded a high level of training (Allen, 2011) should receive more attention in this debate about teachers' personal academic abilities and expectations of their students' performance. Especially since some states are now considering the use of research that claims more education does not yield better test scores to rationalize flat compensation packages that do not reward teachers for educational attainment (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005).

In common discourse, teaching lacks prestige because of teachers' lower-than-average SAT scores and unimpressive college degrees. Speaking to the latter fact, though, Lortie (1975) suggested that we should link the practice of state certification of teachers to state colleges of education. In other words, when states assumed the practice of certifying teachers at the turn of the twentieth century, they also developed state colleges of education in which to train them. Such colleges, Lortie pointed out, are "not noted for their high selectivity" (p. 18). But they are noted for their abilities to attract large numbers of students from within their given state, and as they are subsidized by states' tax funds, Lortie also suggested, "tax funds were more readily available to train teachers than to pay them higher salaries" (p. 18). Lortie took his analysis one helpful step further, when it comes to explaining the entrenched idea of teachers' mediocrity, by

noting that once the normal school was subsumed by the large state university for teachers' training, it became "one of the most widely accessible types of vocational preparation conducted at the college level" (p. 19). Here, not only is teaching shown to be in some ways controlled by states' educational structures, but it is also ultimately a job that requires little more than vocational training, as opposed to classical liberal arts education or scientific education. This perception of what teacher training is contributes to the esteem of the occupation overall, which reports like the NCEE's (2007) *Tough Times* fail to recognize.

With this broad overview of sociological literature on the U.S. teaching force, I aim to demonstrate four interconnected points. First, the teaching labor force's feminization at the end of the nineteenth century is bound together with concerns such as discrimination in pay across gender and race. Historically states did not think women needed to be paid what men were paid as they were more virtuous and generous and would be willing to work for less (Goldstein, 2014). When Black women joined the paid teaching force, they were often paid far less what their white counterparts were paid, if they were paid at all (Fairclough, 2000). The notion that women were graciously willing to receive less compensation is belied by their advocacy for higher wages, both among Black and White teachers. Fairclough documented that through cooperation with the NAACP, Black teachers associations began to fight for equal pay in the 1940s. Goldstein wrote that by aligning themselves with White, male-dominated labor unions, White teachers' demands for higher wages grew louder.

Second, teachers' attainment of higher and more equitable wages both across races and genders is linked to increased scrutiny and intensifications of test-based accountability. The advent of scientific management, courtesy of Frederick Taylor and applied to education by John Franklin Bobbitt, laid the groundwork for today's applications of the principles of efficiency in

manufacturing to the field of education. From this early twentieth century conception of schools as “plants” (Feldmann, 2005, p. 45) or factories, the lists of objectives and curriculum standards now normalized in public schools were born. Just as factory production was most efficient when divided into small, gradual units, so too would education be more efficient if knowledge was produced in small, measurable units. Standardized tests were to be used to “measure teachers’ effectiveness” (Au, 2008, p. 506). Au pointed out that the educational bureaucracies of today and systems of standardized testing are “in many ways the progeny of the educational engineers associated with scientific management and schooling in the early 1900s in the USA” (p. 507). Members of the bureaucracies, whom Au calls “contemporary agents of the new middle class associated with discursive resources in the field of education” (p. 507) place their trust in techno-rationality and believe it can fix educational problems. Test-based accountability, a central facet of scientific management of educational services, has steadily ratcheted up since the mid-1960s. Why the increase in the use of scientific measurement in the midst of the civil rights, feminist, and labor movements? Au (2009) implied that union activity had some impact on these increases as early as the 1920s:

> In part due to the make-up of school boards, in part due to the implementation of mass schooling in the United States, and in part due to a particularly heated struggle between capital and labor, scientific management and social efficiency in education became the dominant model. (p. 34).

Lortie (1975) directly implicated union victories in the increased expectations and “growing movement… toward ‘accountability’” (p. 223). He prophesied the backlash of school boards and state boards of education against “teacher power” (p. 223). He did not anticipate the statisti-

cal invention of VAM, however, nor did he imagine that the counter-assertions of power, which have surely come to pass, would affect both union and nonunion teachers alike.

The struggle for power over U.S. schools is centered in and on teachers, both when they have advocated for increased power and when they have lost this power due to backlash. This conflict continues to be gendered and raced. It also affixes along socioeconomic lines. Teachers in this study are situated in a history of schooling that shifted from *de jure* to *de facto* segregation based on race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. The participants had spent most of their careers working in schools separated by race and class factors. In the next section, I will delve into the question of culture—within, outside, and across segregated school communities. From this discussion of culture, I will move to the topics of how policy functions to shape and control culture and teachers' ways of knowing, as they are situated within all these intersecting threads.

The Mosaic of Culture

The question of culture is central to this study, but it is not simply a matter of defining the culture of the school or the teacher participants, for in fact, multiple cultural perspectives existed within the space. It was not a question of what the culture was, but rather of what the intersection of all the cultures created. For this reason, ethnography, which draws upon the anthropological principle of studying the way of life of a people (Blot, 1985, p. 32) and includes such factors as "ecological settings, language and communication, social organization...., economy..., political organization..., belief system, folklore..., change, and so on" (Ogbu, 1981, p. 5), enabled a rich exploration of the research setting. However, there are numerous other tropes involving the concept of culture that informed the setting, some of which the teachers helped to perpetuate, some which they resisted.

Anthropological inquiry demands the systematic observation and analysis of the details of a place and its people. From there, the disciplined anthropologist will construct a narrative that sheds light on the cultural elements of the setting. This is somewhat contingent on how the researcher chooses to position him or herself in relation to the research setting, known as the researcher's status as "etic" versus the "emic" insider (Wolcott, 2008). However, such an endeavor is greatly complicated in this study, for so many notions of culture have already been determined about so many aspects of the study. For example, consider the participants in this study. A body of literature exists that describes how exemplary African American teachers possess common traits drawn from culture and that "there are unique and culturally specific teaching styles that contribute to the academic success of African American children and other children of color" (Ware, 2006, p. 428). Yet, others have claimed that in low-income communities, poverty, violence, and illegal drugs supposedly produce a "culture of poverty" (Lewis, 1966) Some researchers have made vigorous commitments to proving this culture exists while others argue that this is racialized and racist and helps to perpetuate the cycles of poverty in which so many families find themselves stuck (Ehrenreich, 2012; Buras, 2014).

To anthropologists, culture is under examination; it is presumed to be fluid and discoverable. In this ethnographic study of urban teachers, these more fixed tropes of culture compete with the anthropological assignment. In my previous section, I pointed out that the trope of the teacher in much mainstream sociological literature presupposes a teacher as a White woman, and I aimed to show that there is a broader way to read the U.S. teacher that incorporates the disparate historical experiences of White and Black teachers.[5]. In order to get there, it is helpful to con-

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[5] Men comprise approximately 23% of the teaching force (Loewus, 2017) in the U.S. Black men comprise even less, just 2% (Hanford, 2017). Nevertheless, the exclusion of men in this research yields a less-than-complete portrait of the total teaching force, and I am aware of this omission.

sider the historical research on the roles teachers played in segregated schools in the Jim Crow era. To examine what veteran teachers in segregated urban spaces know about teaching today, research on historically segregated schools is an important contextual starting place. From the discussion of the role of schools and teachers during the Jim Crow era, I transition to a discussion of contemporary views on culturally responsive pedagogy as educator praxis for Black children and, competing against this praxis, the culture of poverty trope.

Strong Black schools then and now?

For this subsection, I (very partially) summarize a body of literature whose mission is to offer a counterstory to the typical deficit narrative about segregated Black schools of the Jim Crow era. This literature, developed at the end of the 20th century, offers another look at schools that were typically seen as under-resourced and abject and shows the rich interconnections between students, families, teachers, and principals that resulted in schools that functioned as influential community centers in which students were encouraged to reach their highest potential (Siddle-Walker, 1996).

This body of literature documented an unexplored reality of segregated schools in the Jim Crow South, that such schools were often powerful forces within Black communities, employing educators who

> increased literacy rates, decreased dropout rates, and increased college attendance….. Despite limited resources, they created caring school climates that inspired generations of Black children to achieve academically and to assume their places as full participants in the American dream. (Siddle-Walker, 2015)

Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2002) documented a form of womanist caring she found in contemporary African American women teachers. She explored the maternal forms of caring

demonstrated by Marva Collins and Corla "Momma Hawk" Hawkins, both Chicago teachers who established their own schools in the latter part of the 20th century to offer alternatives for poor children who were not being served by traditional public schools. In both the cases analyzed, Beauboeuf-Lafontant found that the maternal, mother-child relationship cultivated between the educators and her students were "central to their resistance to domination, both patriarchal and racial" (p. 76). Interestingly, though the qualities of the Black women teachers described in Beauboeuf-Lafontant's research are not that dissimilar to those in Siddle-Walker's research, the school conditions varied considerably. Siddle-Walker's research addresses schools that were fixtures in communities. Later work on Black teachers post-Brown seems to focus on teachers as individual change-makers within systems. There is less a sense of a whole, community entity that comes together to act on behalf of children. That is, this sense from both of these researchers that the education of Black children had a social justice mission seems to be missing from current research on schools in Black communities.

As mentioned previously, the process of desegregation, which largely occurred after 1970, resulted in widespread firings of Black educators, including principals and teachers (Buck, 2010). When school systems merged their separate school systems, they often closed Black schools and found covert ways to legally suspend the contracts of Black teachers (Oakley, Stowell, & Logan, 2009). These changes in the Black teaching force under desegregation have been linked to the current issue already detailed in this paper, the racial disparity of the teaching force. Oakley, Stowell, and Logan (2009) pointed out that while the population of Black teachers declined in the South after desegregation efforts, there was a slight increase in the North. However, that increase was not enough to result in racial balance in the teaching force nationwide, and the disparity continues to this day.

The process of desegregating schools meant that community schools serving Black children were dismantled, leaving many Black educators unemployed and Black children experiencing a secondary integration, in which they occupied school spaces with White children, but were kept separate (Mungo, 2013). Today, not much has changed. School closures in Black neighborhoods still occur, often in the name of efficiency or progress (Rizga, 2016; Lipman, 2014) displacing Black teachers and causing children to lose their neighborhood schools.

It appears, then that at the present time, two competing trends continue. Black teachers are documented as carrying on a legacy of educating Black students in particularly culturally-responsive and sustaining ways (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012). I will explore these pedagogical methods in the next section. But at the same time, though there are resegregated schools in segregated neighborhoods, the legacy of the culturally sustaining Black school seems to have been lost with the failed efforts to desegregate schools in the 1970s.

Today the "community school" has arisen as a model codified by educational philanthropists like the Wallace Foundation (Lubell, 2011). The characteristics of community schools include "principal leadership, coherent curriculum, professional capacity building, student-centered school climate and authentic family and community engagement" (p, vii). The community school as Lubell described bears striking similarities to the segregated Black schools in the south Siddle-Walker (2000) described:

> exemplary teachers and principals who increasingly were well trained and created their own culture of teaching; curricular and extracurricular activities that reinforced the values of the school and community; parental support of school, both in its financial needs and its cultural programs; and school principals who provided the leadership that implemented the vision that parents and teachers held about how to uplift the race. (p. 276)

Siddle-Walker's review of research revealed common characteristics of segregated African American schools sharing characteristics with the community school model aimed at providing research-based guidance for leaders of largely segregated, low performing urban schools serving children of color. They both cited strong principals, rich curriculum, authentic community engagement, and strong and well-trained teachers. These parallels would not be ironic if the connections were recognized. However, the lineage of community schools Lubell acknowledged does not originate in segregated African American communities in the Jim Crow era. Lubell credits the creation of the community school to foundations that established experimental school sites in the urban North. Though the populations of children today's community schools intend to serve are could be recognized as the descendants of those children who were well served within successful community schools in segregated communities, the contributions their elders made, as educators, school principals, and parents who had a voice in the education of their children, seem to be forgotten in mainstream education reform literature.

Culturally responsive pedagogy

Though thoughtful connections in the literature between successful African American community-based schools and the current community school model seem missing from contemporary school improvement literature, one can find strong literature depicting the lineage of the contributions of African American women educators from the mid-20th century to the present. In the 21st century this literature has become strongly linked to research and teaching methodologies that refuse to look at the struggles of African American children in terms of what they lack and focus instead on their strengths. African American children bring cultural strengths to the classroom, and teachers need to pick up on these strengths and capitalize on them (Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009). According to Ladson-Billings, school is culturally asynchronous for many

African American students. They may not see themselves represented in the texts they are asked to read, the histories they are supposed to learn, or the faculty and staff they meet in classrooms, offices, and hallways. The world of school can be overwhelmingly White and fail to even acknowledge the unique factors of African American identity. Ladson-Billings explains, "culturally relevant teaching… [uses] cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right" (p. 20). This philosophy of culture and teaching countermands the assimilationist perspective (see Young, 1996). Culturally relevant teaching does not aim to make Black students fit into mainstream White society; it aims to uplift and educate them. Culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012) is a similar approach seeking to embrace cultural pluralism and cultural equity, developed in the 21st century in response to what Paris saw as potential limits of Ladson-Billings' (1995) original conceptualization of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Delpit (1995) also advocated for approaches to teaching Black children that recognizes their gifts. She identified numerous ways "child-deficit assumptions… lead to teaching less instead of more" (p. 172). Delpit understood that educators frequently misunderstood their students' lives as well as the skills they presented in the decontextualized space of school. She pinpoints teacher education as a space where most teachers begin to learn about statistical correlations between low achievement, low socioeconomic status, and African Americans. She argues that knowledge of students' lives outside of the classroom was essential for teachers to understand how to pinpoint and nurture children's strengths. She found a lot more "teaching down… [and] teaching less" (p. 173) than teaching to the potential of African American children. Delpit demanded that schools take responsibility for transmitting the codes of the "culture of power" (p.

30) to children who are not members of that culture, for "if the parents were members of the culture of power and lived by its rules and codes, then they would transmit those codes to their children" (p. 30). Likewise, Delpit excoriated schools who conflated their acceptance of students' home cultures with actual teaching and who failed to provide students with the tools they needed to function and be successful.

Delpit (1995) and Ladson-Billings (1994/2009) inspired a generation of educators and scholars to develop culturally responsive pedagogy and theory and work towards a more just and relevant education for African American students. A search in EBSCO's database for both authors and the term "culturally relevant" yielded 1,427 results spanning 24 years. While a comprehensive review of all of this literature is not possible here, a brief look at very recent texts provides some insight into how the concept is perceived today. Farinde-Wu, Glover, and Williams (2017) acknowledged an extensive body of literature on culturally responsive teaching, but a void in the examination of the uses of the theories and methods among exceptional, award-winning educators. Their study sought to 'expand the knowledge base of culturally responsive teaching for practitioners who seek to employ this pedagogical technique in their own classrooms" (p. 281). Emdin (2016) also contributed to direct practical knowledge for "White folks who teach in the hood—and the rest of y'all too" (p. 30) by outlining what he called "reality pedagogy" (p. 27). Emdin observed the connection between the experiences of indigenous people and urban youth, so he referred to urban youth as neoindigenous. His vision for transforming urban youth of color involves creating "safe and trusting environments that are respectful of students' culture" (p. 27). Though it mirrors many of the qualities of culturally responsive pedagogy offered by Delpit and Ladson-Billings, Emdin's reality pedagogy includes an element of healing "the soul wounds that teaching practices inflict upon them" (p. 26).

"Culture of poverty"

According to Emdin (2016), conventional public schools pose a threat to neoindigenous youth. An important component of this threat comes from understanding that students in high poverty urban schools are not clustered together in their neighborhoods because of innate deficits; they are clustered in such hoods because of structural racism (Haymes,1995). Yet Lewis's (1966) notorious concept of a "culture of poverty" (p. 21), which was comprised of no less than 70 traits, is now often used to describe the hoods Black youth live in. Functioning in almost direct contrast to culturally responsive education, education designed as an intervention against the so-called culture of poverty tends towards both assimilationist and individualistic styles, demanding that students rise above their dire circumstances and don the knowledge and traits that will transform them into members of mainstream society (Martin & Varner, 2017). An example of a chain of schools matching these characteristics is the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) (Ellison, 2012).

Both concepts, culturally responsive pedagogy and culture of poverty, play roles in urban school settings. The culture of poverty thesis laid the groundwork for a widespread notion that African American individuals living in poverty had only themselves to blame (Foulkes, 2008). This has morphed with neoliberal notions of personal responsibility, privatization, and government disinvestment. Lipman (2009) explained race has been intrinsic to the development of neoliberal policies:

> The cultural politics of race are the ideological soil for racially coded neoliberal ideology of individual responsibility and reduction of "dependency" on the state. This provides a rationale to restructure or eliminate government funded social programs and to develop a culture that normalizes individual responsibility. (p. 220).

In schools, the corollary of responsibility is accountability. Few public school educators can escape the demands of local, state, and national accountability policies and must prepare students for standardized tests and face sanctions depending on the outcomes. These tests have become legitimized as measures of individuals' successes (for teachers and students) and are often used to corroborate deficit beliefs about people from poor neighborhoods (Au, 2016). With testing and test scores so prominent and damaging to the perceptions of students and teachers in poor, Black neighborhoods, culturally responsive educators are considered even more critical to counteracting the damaging effects (Farinde-Wu, Glover, & Williams, 2017).

The Statistically Accountable Teacher

Notions of culture, then, are bound to the current conditions of public education policy. Culturally responsive educators must contradict the messages and the strategies of policy and popular culture that declare young people from poor Black neighborhoods are being raised to perpetuate their own problems (Scott, 2011). This is a steep challenge as it requires educators to defy dominant, racist discourses about poverty and human potential while *remaining engaged and employed as teachers*, which, as explained in chapter 1, a significant number, especially those in African American low-income schools, do not (Kokka, 2016). Part of the problem, according to Au (2016), is that the powerful discourses of school accountability simultaneously deny structural inequities under the guise of neoliberal anti-racism. This communicates a message that testing is necessary to ensure that racist inequities are not being perpetuated and that test results can show policy makers where help is needed (Neill, 2016). The question of how teachers can be participants in the perpetuation of testing discourse while striving to be culturally responsive educators is a complex one, tied to the workings of social power.

Foucault (1997) defined *power-knowledge* as power with knowledge inextricably combined. Power-knowledge is generated through a continuous, relational process, "born out of methods of punishment, supervision and constraint" (p. 29). Power defines what is possible as a body of knowledge through the "real, noncorporeal soul" (p. 29), and this knowledge reproduces power. The "soul" of a political discourse is a discourse we are all already bound by as it is operating always around us. "The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body" (p. 30). This "body" is imprisoned by the soul, which is the operative discourse. In this section, I unpack the ways in which the discourses of testing and accountability determine the relationship of teachers to their work. Testing is a political technology of power-knowledge, creating and perpetuating the souls of American learners. It is used as both control mechanism and disciplinary tool.

The teacher as testing subject

Schooling before standardization in the United States was, nevertheless, characterized by efforts to control children and shape society. As Apple (1980/2004) suggests, schools became "institutions that could preserve the cultural hegemony of an embattled 'native' population" (p. 63), meaning that as the United States became more heterogeneous over the 20th century, schools were used to disseminate and normalize the values and knowledge of the dominant, White colonial culture. As public schooling grew in urban areas in the United States, the concept of "normal" as we know it today also emerged. Davis (2013) explained, "the word 'norm,' in the modern sense, has only been in use since around 1855" (p. 2), which aligns with the strong development of the public school system in the 1850s (Apple 1980/2004). The concept of the norm and the practice of public schooling developed together, and schools became places where, in the

case of the United States, immigrants and people of color could become normed and made in the likeness of the white European.

The concept of the norm derived from the discipline of statistics. French statistician Adolphe Quetelet (1796-1847) developed the concept of the norm as a composite of all of the best qualities of "the average man" (Davis, 2013, p. 2). The average, or norm, was constitutive of greatness, but as it was mathematically derived from the physical characteristics of a white male body, the very concept of a norm is a referent to European patriarchal exclusivity. More ironically, the early statisticians who invented the concept of the norm, which also included the invention of the Gaussian (bell) curve, were, according to Davis, almost all eugenicists who believed that society could be improved by breeding out non-normal bodies. Looping this back to education, U.S. public schooling often served poor, immigrant, and nonwhite students, in other words the non-normal bodies of U.S. society. It is no surprise given the parallel histories of population control within schools, statistical norming, and eugenics, that testing as a ranking and sorting device became commonplace in public schools.

As western societies were increasingly normalized, which is also to say increasingly diversified (the urgency to normalize increased as such societies became more diverse), so too were developments in scientific reasoning increasingly hailed as answers to social problems. The new sciences of education "were a response to the Social Question that gave expression to the hope of rescue that embodied secular and revelatory forms of knowledge" (Popkewitz, 2013, p. 445). The growth of education science became part of America's social rescue narrative. Something was going wrong, and the rational truth of scientific reasoning was going to fix it.

That the practice of standardized testing found its roots among eugenicists has been widely documented (Au, 2009; Hursh, 2008; Jones, 1990). Binet introduced the standardized measure

of intelligence, and then Yerkes developed and administered the Army Alpha and Beta tests in 1917. Galloway (1994) wrote that Yerkes' massive implementation of these tests of so-called innate intelligence united "the eugenics and mental testing movements in an effort to demonstrate that mental defectiveness was primarily hereditary" (p. 252). The belief that heritable intelligence had been proven through the use of these tests was quickly accepted, even though Yerkes also found a strong correlation (.75) between educational attainment and test results. Nonetheless, he chose to understate that finding, claiming the scores were "to some extent influenced by educational acquirement, but in the main the soldier's inborn intelligence and not the accidents of environment determines his mental rating" (Chase, 1977, p. 249, cited in Galloway, 1994, p. 252). Yerkes succeeded in establishing widespread beliefs about heritable differences in intelligence through corruption of statistical data.

Both Au (2009) and Hursh (2008) connect this rise of testing with the imposition of capitalist practices on public schools in the United States during the Progressive Era. Au goes further to state that the use of standardized testing is a technology of capitalist production, an apparatus of the state to ensure control of its subjects. Testing "proved to be a pivotal technical, conceptual, and ideological apparatus in the ascendancy of the application of scientific management and models of capitalist production to education" (p. 39). And, Au adds, "because of the assumed objectivity of standardized tests in measuring individuals, an ideology of equality ultimately masks the aspects of standardization, commodification, control, and surveillance operating through systems of high-stakes, standardized testing" (p. 39). Later in this section, I address this ideology of equality but first I suggest how and why teachers participated in the ascendancy of testing and accountability in U.S. public schools.

Testing ascended in part because teachers administered them as schools, systems, and governments demanded. A number of explanations have been offered for this. Theories of de-skilling and deprofessionalization of teaching proffer that teachers became enmeshed in a corporate structure depleting their autonomy (Ozga & Lawn, 1981). Some theorists suggest that teachers' work was proletarianized and thus subordinate to management (Apple & Jungck, 1990). Apple (1986) pointed out the parallels between the bureaucratization of schooling and the gendered division of labor. Women's subordination (as teachers) to men (who became school managers and administrators) meant they had less agency in their work. Of course, at times both men and women have resisted the controls placed on their jobs, so subordination in work does not guarantee compliance. Apple (1982/2012) explains that though both men and women in subordinate work positions have rebelled, there may be numerous "ideological and economic pressures outside of the workplace that may 'cause' men and women to accept both their work and their social life as pregiven and natural" (p. 114). He claims that teachers do at times close their classroom doors and do what is best (p. 120); however, on the whole, teachers have been compliant in their administration of tests. They have not stunted or slowed the growth of testing in schools.

Teachers do comply with the mandates of their jobs, yet Apple (1982/2012) argues, "the institutions of our society are characterized by *contradiction* as well as by simple reproduction" (p. 123, emphasis in original). At times teachers will comply, even with that which they do not agree, but at other times they demonstrate resistance. Apple attributes this tension to the hidden curriculum of work and school, which ensures workers comply with the mandates of their jobs; despite the contradictions or ideological compromises these structures might impose (what Ball, 2003, called 'values schizophrenia'). Nevertheless, he cites examples of studies (about students) in which researchers found participants resisting in covert ways, such as working the system or

not strictly following the rules. The network of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1997) weaves itself into human social experience.

Au (2009) explained that a discourse of fairness and objectivity accompanied the development and entrenchment of standardized testing. Because tests are fetishized as just measures of pupil achievement and teacher success, their inherent biases and contingencies are masked. The message is that objective tests are fair and that they measure individuals and provide useful data about what those individuals know and can do. However, evidence was available as early as 1945 that standardized tests are biased in favor of white, upper-income students (Galloway, 1994, p. 253).

In their reading of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish (DP)*, Popkewitz & Brennan (1997) explained the invention of the "calculable" person resulting from the emergence of school examination. The calculable person can be marked (graded). The outcome of grading is a "new panoptical gaze of surveillance-plus-judgment" (p. 308). Teachers played a role in establishing this gaze. As the evaluator of her students, she became the gaze-on-the-ground, a representation of the discursive gaze. In this, teachers possess a measure of power in the administration of testing. The formula for teachers' compliance is thus constitutive of all these factors: her subordinate position as worker, her gender, her need for her wages, schooling as ideological state apparatus, a conflation of objectivity with equality, verification of established racial hegemony, and, this last point, the granting of power to the giver of tests. However, in the last two decades, the role of testing in schools has increased. There are not only more of them, but the way in which their scores are used to assess teachers' value has intensified. For some teachers, testing outcomes result in punishment. The effects of this intensification is being broadly explored in education research (Murphy, Saultz, & Aronson, 2016; Lochte & Carter, 2016).

After the election of George W. Bush, a revision of the ESEA of 1965 was unveiled. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is the now-historic piece of legislation that reshaped the role of the federal government in education through its dismantling of education's public structures. Hursh (2007) explained that NCLB represented a neoliberal discourse on the role of education in society, because despite its intense focus on increasing standardized testing to measure gains of marginalized social group, its supports of privatization and market-based solutions were ultimately stronger and in the long run more lasting than any curricular changes. In fact, the general consensus is that under NCLB, educational inequality worsened (p. 504).

Scholars have provided salient critiques of NCLB and its negative effects on equity and achievement in U.S. public education (for example Apple, 1993/2014; Ravitch, 2010; Hursh, 2008; Au, 2009; Giroux & Schmidt, 2004; Au, 2011; Heilig, Cole, & Anguilar, 2010; Granger, 2008; Leyva, 2009; Wun, 2014; Carlson, 2008; Noguera, 2009; Valli, Croninger, Chambliss, Graeber, Buese, 2008). For example, NCLB increased surveillance in classrooms to enforce compliance with mandates (Lipman, 2007). It ossified minority students and low-income schools as deficient (Wun, 2014). It narrowed the curriculum in the interest of increasing test scores (Granger, 2008). But beyond all these consequences, the systemic impact of NCLB, including its sanctioning and facilitation of privatization and its accountability and increased surveillance that seem to have the most future resonance. NCLB was used to justify privatization, it validated corporate control over education, it ensured the separation of desirable from undesirable schooling subjects along racial lines, and it normalized the punishment of noncompliant participants at all levels.

Current accountability policies, such as Race to the Top (RT3), the Common Core, and the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) (2015), NCLB's successor, have been shaped by the in-

tersections of neoliberalism and globalization, conservative restoration, and the demands of the "professional and managerial new middle class" (see Apple, 2006, p. 105). Testing was accepted as a common sense practice to measure students' and schools' progress. The U.S. government stepped in to mediate states' provision of education through practices of commodity exchange (i.e. money for data on student performance). No Child Left Behind represented the increase and intensification of federal intervention under neoliberal ideology. Always at the base of test-oriented policies is the historical origin of testing in racial sorting, with testing grounded in a history of eugenics and an effort to use statistical concepts to "prove" white superiority (Gould, 1996). Global education policy borrowing increased nations' comparisons of themselves with others, and internationally normed assessments (i.e. PISA) became acceptable benchmarks of national education progress. Education policy rhetoric related to work preparedness became rebranded as college and career readiness (Rothman, 2012). Meanwhile, the work landscape in the United States is described as postindustrial, yet still about 70% of the jobs in the United States are held by people without a bachelor's degree (Deil-Amen & DeLuca, 2010). Education policy thought was outsourced to corporations, think tanks, and venture philanthropists (Kovacs & Boyles, 2005). What teachers and students are currently experiencing in schools, RT3 and the Common Core, represent the latest outcomes of all these different forces acting upon education policy in the United States. It is a constantly shifting landscape.

Weaver-Hightower (2008) used the metaphor of policy ecology to provide a way to conceptualize the "complex, interdependent, and intensely political" (p. 154) nature of policy processes. The ecology metaphor allows the policy analyst to incorporate aspects of policy creation that are often overlooked, such as relationships that impact the policy making process: relationships between individuals and organizations, private and public interests, and local-national-

international actors. This ecology of accountability policy has two consistent characteristics. One, it is an imbalanced ecology that enables control over students and teachers to increase. Two, it is an ecology that fails to nurture low-income people of color and instead creates situations that allow for the categorization of white populations as normal and others as abnormal. The teacher has generally been a compliant subject within this ecology, even as neoliberal policies have intensified, through testing mandates, the strictures of teacher work. But these testing mandates have changed yet again in the last two years, and now, more districts than ever are using VAM in their teacher evaluations (Reform Support Network, n.d.); so test scores, which under NCLB were used to rank schools and school districts, are now widely used to evaluate and rank individual teachers, even though causal links between specific sets of test scores and teacher's input are difficult to make (Braun, 2015). Just as school rankings were published in newspapers annually during NCLB, in some places, teachers' VAM ratings are now published as well.

The teacher as tested subject

In her recent book on the U.S. testing obsession, NPR reporter Anya Kamenetz (2015) told the story of the lowest-ranked math teacher in New York City, Carolyn Abbott. Ms. Abbott taught the same group of students over two years. The value-added model predicted the students would score in the 97th percentile on their eighth grade math exam. It was a school for gifted and talented students; they had scored in the 98th percentile the year earlier. However, Ms. Abbott prepared the students not for the 8th grade exam, but rather for a high school level exam. Her students scored in the 89th percentile on the 8th grade exam. Because of the drop, she was ranked as the lowest-performing NYC math teacher, with a percentile ranking of zero (Newsday, 2010). According to *Newsday,* where the scores are published, the percentile rank indicates "how much

value teachers add to student performance" (para. 3). According to the statistical model, Ms. Abbott added no value to her 8th grade students' performance that year.

The opposite tale is told by a study completed by Hill, Kapitula, and Umland (2011). These researchers used a mixed-methods approach and selected twenty-four middle school mathematics teachers in one school district and compared their value-added scores to other measures of quality of teaching they generated via observational protocols and teaching assessments. Using in-depth measures of teachers' content knowledge and teaching practice, the authors of the study were able to look closely at the relationships between carefully culled data on teaching practice and the district's VAM scores. They developed statistical models to control for differences across different schools and to control for student characteristics such as socioeconomic status, academic ability tracking, and language ability.

These researchers found it difficult to uncouple student characteristics from teachers' value-added scores. In other words, they found a correlation between teacher quality and student characteristics; specifically, they found measures of higher quality teaching at wealthier schools indicating unseverable connections between teachers' quality ratings and the socioeconomic status of their students. Berliner (2013) also wrote that scores correlate strongly with students' social class standing. Of their findings, Hill, Kapitula, and Umland (2011) wrote, "it may be difficult to disentangle the effect of teacher quality and student characteristics on teachers' value-added scores" (p. 809). Similarly, they found evidence of correlations between teachers' value-added scores and students with low socioeconomic status, special learning needs, and language needs. High-needs students negatively affected teachers VAM scores.

Hill, Kapitula, and Umland (2011) also compared teachers' VAM scores to their measures of teacher quality. Here, they found 20% of their teachers with low teaching quality

scores had VAM scores high enough to earn them rewards in several school districts. So, while they found that all high-scoring teachers on the quality measures also had high VAM scores, their concern was that teachers with low scores on teacher quality could still earn high enough VAM scores to give the impression that all was well in their classrooms.

Hill, Kapitula, and Umland (2011) premised their study on the notion that "teachers' value-added scores constitute a form of assessment—one with job-related stakes attached—and thus formal inquiry into their validity should test the appropriateness of inferences and actions based on these scores" (p. 799). If teachers are going to receive scores for their teaching, these scores should be transparent and provide knowledge upon which improved practice might be based. However, that is not the case. These scores are being used, like Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) scores were under NCLB, not as measures of progress to aid in constructive decision-making, but rather to generate truth-statements about the failure of urban public schools, in the case of AYP, or the failures of individuals in the teaching occupation, in the case of VAM scores. The *Vergara* case is an example of how the VAM score can be turned into an opportunity to dismantle policies designed to protect teachers from politically borne persecution. VAM scores tell us more about the widespread interest in controlling and managing teachers than they do about the quality of teachers' work.

McLaren (2002), in her analysis of Foucault's *DP,* offers a helpful illustration of how the power-knowledge nexus operates on the individual body and subjects it to methods and techniques of control. The power-knowledge complex turns human bodies into "objects of knowledge" (p. 87) and makes them into "the object(s) and target(s) of power" (p. 87). Methods of control, or disciplines, affect human behavior, movement, gestures, and attitudes, producing docile bodies, bodies "that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (p. 31). VAM

scores do exactly what the theoretical power-knowledge nexus does, they suggest that teachers can be compared and controlled, and then ostensibly made better, via measurement.

Ball (2015) clarifies the discourses that underlie the increased control and management of education subjects via measurement. In his 2015 *Journal of Education Policy* editorial, Ball begins with the declaration, “we are subject to numbers and numbered subjects” (p. 299). Ball incorporates Foucault’s *DP*, reminding us that the calculable student is not a contemporary invention but is rather several centuries old. He also creates an explicit link between neoliberal politics and measurement practices. “Measurement and monitoring… play a particular role within the contemporary relationship between truth and power and the self we call neoliberalism” (p. 299). Teachers’ selves are now firmly encased within these logics.

The hopeful way of looking at it is that VAM scores are unstable, and many find the system dubious. For example, Kamenetz (2015) cited Michael Kirst, the president of California’s Board of Education as saying the tests are not good enough: “I think every state that’s been doing value-added measurements off of cheap closed-end multiple-choice tests is going to have trouble maintaining the validity of their testing systems for use in teacher evaluation,” Kirst said. “Teachers have never felt those assessments were true measures of what they were trying to teach.” (p. 109). Braun (2015) also pointed out the VAM scores “suffer from high variance and low year-to-year stability as well as an undetermined amount of bias” (p. 128). Also, Braun acknowledged that the understanding of the correlation between student achievement and home factors is improving, and this will hopefully influence the nuances of teacher evaluation. Braun noted, “student achievement depends in great measure on factors that are not under the control of the school or the individual teacher… These include family and community environment, adequacy of medical and dental care, and so on” (p. 130). If VAM scores are recognized as improper

measures of teacher evaluation, then this particular phase of the problem may be short-lived. This does not, however, address the overarching problem of how teachers are positioned within schools and society that provokes such urgent and fearful attention to the possibility of their failure, and in schools in areas of concentrated poverty, the assumption of their failure. Assumption of teachers' failures has made methodologies of control like standardized testing and value-added modeling thinkable, but in order to tie this back to technologies of racial control, it is necessary to look at the coalescence of policies that construct areas of concentrated poverty.

Color-coding School Failure

In maps showing locations of schools and their achievement based on test scores, it is common for authors to use color codes to indicate different levels. Red is used for low scores, yellow for average, and green for good. For example, in Finnegan and Holme's (2016) report on segregation and school failure in Milwaukee, a color-coded map shows big patch of red in the middle of Milwaukee, where the highest concentrations of poverty, African American residents, and weak test scores are found. Families for Excellent Schools (2014), a New York City based education foundation, published a map with red dots locating the schools in the lowest 25th percentile in the district, which are clustered in north Manhattan, the south Bronx, and northern Brooklyn. In fact, a popular website (Niche, 2017) sorts data and ranks schools all over the United States, so finding the red all over the nation is relatively easy. Unsurprisingly, race, place, socio-economic status, and school achievement are well aligned.

As these social conditions have been traditionally explored, educational outcomes are seen as an effect of other social factors like race, location, income, housing conditions, and others (Wilson, 1996). This is problematic, however, because a cause and effect relationship conveys the perception that with the right intervention, the outcome will change. Packaged curricula

like Success for All, school choice, standards-based reform, and increased testing, among others, have been used as interventions to the poor neighborhood-school failure problem (Kozol, 2005). Sociological literature on causes of educational failure frequently concludes that neighborhoods, income, living conditions, and the like are the culprits. Education is simultaneously reified as the solution. Educational achievement and attainment are the measurements of neighborhood and locational failure and education is purported to be the solution to this failure. This nonsensical proposition is rarely addressed in practical sociological literature on education, poor neighborhoods, or the potential impact of education on poverty (Anyon & Greene, 2007; Anyon, 2014).

Concentrated poverty and neighborhood schools

Wilson (1996) asserted that the concentrated poverty found in inner-city neighborhoods with low employment had ushered in a new era of urban poverty, with a new set of characteristics. He stated that historical segregation led to conditions of concentrated poverty, and that

> The segregated ghetto is not the result of voluntary or positive decisions on the part of the residents who live there…. the segregated ghetto is the product of systematic racial practices such as redlining by banks and insurance companies, zoning, panic peddling by real estate agents, and the creation of massive public housing projects in low-income areas. (p. 14)

Wilson was careful not to blame the residents of high poverty neighborhoods while he aimed to construct understandings of the conditions of their lives. Wilson's work is often cited in other studies examining the effects of concentrated poverty (Kraus, 2008; Wilson & Martin, 2000; Ainsworth, 2002; Erickson, Reid, Nelson, O'Shaughnessy, & Berube, 2008; Gaskin et al., 2014; Lofton & Davis, 2015) and often critiqued for his controversial suppositions about cultural traits and their origins in class, poverty and racism. Wilson stated that among the effects of con-

centrated poverty were low-performing public schools where conditions often matched those in the neighborhood. Described as overcrowded and lacking in adequate equipment and books, the qualities of the school spaces Wilson described were not that different than the qualities of the neighborhoods the schools served.

Wilson (1996) illustrated how increased unemployment due to large losses in manufacturing jobs had reshaped the social organization of inner city neighborhoods. The results of historic disinvestment and segregation were described as almost self-perpetuating problems of inferior service in housing, schools, and medical service. Participants in his study expressed interest in leaving to find better living conditions but could not afford to. Wilson struggled in his portrayal with two contrary approaches to observing inner city life. On the one hand, Wilson rebuked the conservative view, which largely blamed the citizens of such neighborhoods for their troubles and ignored or denied structural issues and racism. However, he also argued against what he called the "black-perspective proponents" (p. 173) who he claimed refused to use any language describing problems "in favor of [that] underscoring black community strengths" (p. 173). This view, he noted, does not acknowledge destructive behavior that takes place in the inner city, choosing to focus exclusively on positive traits, as if the negative events did not exist. He thus refuted two opposed perspectives, blame-the-victim and celebrate-the-strengths.

Thus, scholars have taken Wilson's work and used it to support opposed arguments, some showing how it was used to dismantle inner city structures (see Lipman, 2008 & 2011 for examples) and others rejecting it for its reification of the deficit discourses. This is a pertinent tension, for Wilson's work was used to enact policies that arguable worsened the conditions of life in the inner city or displaced residents altogether. It also attempted to describe issues but in the process perpetuated deficit views that fueled racist responses and continued segregation.

For people about whom such research is written, there are long-term consequences in continued segregation and segregating discourses, such as internalizing blame and thinking of themselves as broken, as this brokenness is rendered textually and given the authority to stand as truth (Tuck, 2009). Nevertheless, Wilson found that residents shared mainstream values and aspirations found elsewhere in U.S. society, but the lack of strong institutions in the neighborhoods undermined these values. His argument was that concentrated poverty created "social and cultural constraints that confront people in inner-city neighborhoods [that] will cause many who subscribe to these values [work ethic, individual responsibility, striving for upward mobility] to fail" (p. 181).

In Wilson's work, schools were parts of communities, and therefore they were parts of the problems of communities. However, in policy discourse, schools are often positioned as solutions and educational policies as interventions in the problems of poverty. This has led researchers to empirically test specific causes of educational failure and to seek which educational interventions raise educational achievement, always under the umbrella belief that "education is an effective antidote to larger social problems" (Granger, 2008, citing Lafer, 2002).

An example of such research is C.A. Wilson & Martin's (2000) project, which sought to examine specific causes of educational underperformance. In this study, they partially debunked what they framed as Wilson's (1996) concentrated poverty thesis, the claim that such poverty leads to educational deficits. They found that per capita income on its own had a greater effect on test scores rather than the sum of all parts of concentrated poverty. Another study (Ainsworth, 2002) found that of all the factors associated with neighborhood poverty, collective socialization had the strongest mediating effect on educational outcomes. In other words, the collective social-

ization that led to the solidification of attitudes about school had the strongest influence on educational achievement.

Both of these studies sought causes of educational failure, ostensibly because knowing the causes can lead to the solutions. Solutions, of course, are to take place within the schools. Transfer the focus back to NCLB, which I have already pointed out many believe resulted in reduced equity in public schools. But it promised the opposite; NCLB was framed as a solution that would help to restore equity by restoring accountability. The formula was not too complicated: increased visibility of the results of increased testing would lead people to work harder to produce better results. Once people were working harder, results would improve and equity would be achieved. Then, because education is the key to a more prosperous future, poverty would be alleviated. In NCLB's formula, the main problem to solve was the laziness of public school educators, and the implication was that structures outside of schools did not need to change. According to Granger (2008), "it [was] as though passing tests magically [brought] with it a new, more equitable set of social conditions" (p. 220). Likewise, it was as if social conditions could be offset by tests alone.

While this spectacle of educational accountability (Granger, 2008) has been playing out in the political sphere, other social and economic policies have resulted in reductions of stability in inner-city neighborhoods. Both residential and school segregation have increased since 1980, and none of the policy interventions aimed at narrowing achievement gaps, namely increased funding, accountability, and structures of governance (i.e. school choice and charter schools), have been very successful (Duncan & Murnane, 2016). A few researchers explicitly recognize that when it comes to education's ability to change poverty, the cause and effect paradigm, which uses educational interventions and assumes the side effects will be poverty reduction, is

doomed to fail (Anyon, 2013; Anyon, 2014). Neighborhood boundaries, criminal justice policy, welfare policies, affordable housing strategies, all of these and more combine with educational policies to result in the conditions we find in U.S. public schools. All of these co-constitute society and school spaces, which are microcosms of society. As Anyon (2013) stated, “Trying to fix an urban school without fixing the neighborhood in which it is embedded is like trying to clean the air on one side of a screen door” (para. 1).

Conceptualizing the social nexus

Some researchers propose different ways of looking at how social policies, including school policies, function together. Hargreaves (2001) conceptualized five emotional geographies of teachers, constituted of categories drawing from the external factors: sociocultural, professional, political, and physical, as well as an internal factors: moral geography. These five categories intersect and act upon one another. This is applicable to how schools function too, with external factors such as race, culture, history, politics, and place interacting with the individuals and their moral and ethical standpoints. Miller, Pavlakis, Lac, and Hoffman (2014) understand that socioeconomic status has serious implications for school performance. They offer some support for the ecological reform movement, which promotes a full set of institutional supports within one school (educational, medical, and after school opportunities). However, since funding for such programs is usually precarious, they cannot be counted on to lead to lasting change. These authors propose a new approach to school leadership, in which leaders are experts not only in school policy but also “spanning to health, transportation, and housing policies (to name a few)” (p. 135). Such an approach acknowledges the interconnectedness of all these policies and suggests that a differently trained principal can leverage policy more effectively for his or her students and their parents.

Above are two proposals that move away from the cause-effect paradigm and conceive of the relationships among schools, neighborhoods, policies, and educators differently. Thinking of the school as part of a nexus of factors may be more useful than thinking of the school as either the cause or the effect. Justice (2017) pointed out that such thinking is more than just a paradigmatic preference. It is fitted to the times. Justice theorizes that in the 21st century, curriculum is not limited to that taught in the schools; it is everywhere.

> Schools now exist within a vast network of public institutions, policies, and laws that together constitute a complex and unevenly distributed ecology of civic experience and training. Schools join prisons, police, welfare agencies, family services, public transportation, housing and health care providers, municipal courts, and the military, among other institutions, as sites of systematic learning that provide a coherent and powerful set of experiences about a person's relation to the state. Insofar as such institutions are educative, they have a curriculum. Social policy is curriculum work. (pp. 20-21)

If curriculum is everywhere, the effects of learning in school can be only one piece of any person's total learning in the world. Therefore, it is naïve to believe that schools can assume the amount of power they would need to have to create the effects promised in many educational policies (for example, the alleviation of poverty).

Thinking of school policies as part of a larger nexus is not new. Thompson, Lingard, & Wrigley (2012) used the term in their call for "rethinking the schooling/economy nexus in more radical ways" (p. 6). Buendía (2011) understood the importance of theorizing the "nexus between the inner city space and its populations" (p. 5). Nexus thinking is an increasingly salient approach in reconsiderations of the "school-to-prison pipeline metaphor (SPPM)" (McGrew, 2016, p. 341). McGrew wrote explicitly about what he called the "*Field of Dreams* notion of ed-

ucation as a way of correcting poverty and… preventing incarceration" (P. 355). McGrew's field of dreams bears similarities to what I have called the failed cause and effect paradigm, which relentlessly analyzes each education gimmick as the latest, most promising intervention that will finally solve the problems of poverty and low educational attainment. The critique of the SPPM is especially useful for this research because it acknowledges the ways in which the pipeline metaphor creates an overdetermined analytical model. The notion that there is a direct pathway from school to prison, or really from school to anywhere becomes an "ontological metaphor" (McGrew, p. 363) that severely narrows and limits the understandings of the complex relationships between social factors that interact in human life. Thomas (2017) theorized the school-prison nexus as four-part framework featuring "a system of policies, structures, and actors that involve practices intended to control the lives of African American and other minority students inside and outside of education and incarceration spaces" (p. 2). For this study, these conceptualizations of interconnections of schools to many other elements of the system that controls the lives of Black people, will form an essential part of the findings in chapter 4.

This review of literature on schooling and poverty provides a look at ways in which issues of concentrated poverty, social systems, and segregated schools serving Black students, have been conceived over the last several decades. The relationship between schools and neighborhoods, frequently conceived of in terms of causes and effects, fails to provide a thorough enough understanding of the complex interrelationships between all the factors that contribute both to systemic poverty and endemic school problems. The nexus metaphor is more illustrative and helpful for understanding neighborhood boundary-making and social investments. Moving away from a cause and effect model moves us away from the assignment of blame for the repeated failure of policy interventions on the individuals towards whom the interventions are

aimed. This is especially important because powerful, neoliberal discourses of individual responsibility and the entrenched American ideology that hard work will yield prosperity help to perpetuate beliefs about the likelihood of some populations to fail. As Lipman (2015) wrote:

> We need … multifaceted and dialectical analyses to grasp the complexity of the present social conjuncture and possibilities for counterhegemonic action. Further, we need scholarship that is rooted in lived experience to reveal social struggles and potentialities not visible from a bird's-eye view. (p. 342)

In the next section, I prepare a transition from literature review to methodological description through a discussion of issues that emerge in thinking and writing about others' lived experiences. At the foundation of this ethnographic research on veteran teachers in an urban elementary school was each educator's knowledge, accumulated over time and located in their daily work in the school.

Urban Teachers' Ways of Knowing

History and policy analysis suggest that teachers, both White and Black, have always faced barriers to full realization of agency. Hegemonic policy discourse depicts teachers whose deficits are so numerous they must be controlled, managed, even rehabilitated. Media discourse upholds policy discourse. The political right and neoliberals of all political parties convince the public that teachers' unions breed complacency and bloat public school systems with excessive teacher pay and benefits. Teachers are intellectually sub-par; they cannot be trusted to provide children with proper education. Inner-city students do not usually pass state tests; this is due to teachers. Thus we find a network of educational policies designed to control teachers by limiting their decision-making power. As stated previously, teachers are complicit in the creation of calculable people (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1997) as they deliver the examinations mandated within

policy. They perform the disciplinary gaze of testing, yet they are also gazed upon, evaluated, and ranked (Croft, Roberts, & Stenhouse, 2016). As Ball (2015) stated, "we are subject to numbers and numbered subjects" (p. 299). This section asks what this means in terms of veteran teachers' knowledge. Given the numerous judgments of teachers' abilities, can teachers be said to possess knowledge? And if so, what form does this knowledge take? There are a number of empirical studies on procedural knowledge and teaching and focused on curriculum trends, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and more (Ben-Peretz, 2011). A far smaller body of literature focuses on teachers' knowing in philosophical terms, i.e. the epistemology of teaching (Roth & Tobin, 2002) or the epistemological commitments of teachers (MacKay, 1978). This ethnography studied ways participants negotiated their positions vis à vis power-knowledge (Foucault, 1997) within a racialized context, and I both observed and asked directly about their understandings of their positions as teachers and as knowers. In order to develop a more nuanced understanding of the role of epistemology in this study, I briefly share typical studies of teachers and procedural knowledge. Then I share a sample of empirical studies of teachers and knowledge. Finally I discuss several studies of philosophy, epistemology, and teaching.

Literature on teachers and knowledge usually avoids the philosophical terrain and addresses practical questions of procedural knowledge. Reading this literature, one may develop the impression that teachers are merged with educational procedure. Clandinin and Connelly (1986) described teachers' "personal practical knowledge" (p. 381), which combined the rhythms of their work lives with their whole lives. More than just time management, these authors argued the rhythms of the school day led to the formation of the personal, practical narrative belonging to each teacher uniquely. Teacher knowledge was intertwined with everyday life and embodied experience. There was no mention, however, of the notion that teachers might

think critically about their daily lives and teaching work. On the other hand, Feldmann (2005) claimed that the principles of scientific management have meant customizing teacher knowledge to no more than what is necessary to produce the results sought by the industry. For Clandinin and Connelly teachers possessed a form of daily, narrative knowledge, while for Feldmann, scientific discourses of efficiency narrowed teacher knowledge to the merely practical. In both of these conceptions, knowledge was practical; it referred to that which was used to get the job done.

Professional knowledge is another term used in this literature to describe knowledge needed to do the job well. Ben-Peretz (2011) reviewed twenty years of studies of teacher knowledge and found that it has meant curricular and subject matter knowledge as well as pedagogical knowledge. She also found several studies focused on what colleges of education need to teach in order to produce knowledgeable graduates who become competent classroom teachers. In her review, Ben-Peretz did not mention finding any studies of teachers and epistemology.

Another strand of literature on teachers and knowledge relates to how teachers form knowledge of themselves. Oswald & Perold (2015) asserted that teachers' knowledge must in part be framed by what popular discourses claim to know about them. They wrote, "teachers themselves have received negative media publicity and are frequently blamed for the failure of educational innovations" (p. 2). Teachers internalize such knowledge of themselves and yet they are faced with this contradiction as they also come to know, "they are expected to act as agents of change and have a key role in ensuring that quality education is delivered to all children" (p. 2). This study, located in South Africa, argued that among the reasons school reforms fail is that reforms fail to account for how teachers are positioned within them, and that teachers' agency, knowledge, and identity must be understood for educational improvement to be possible.

Research oriented in epistemology and/or teaching as an area within the philosophy of education is rarer. Boyles (2006) examined epistemology, teaching, and agentic knowledge and explained the absence of epistemology in the philosophy of education as perhaps because "epistemology [had] come to be seen as suffering from a hypertrophied and myopic focus on traditional accounts of 'pure' knowledge (2006, p. 58). Boyles wished to revive Dewey's pragmatist approach to epistemology to "show the value of fallabilist epistemology for practical and social teaching and learning contexts" (p. 60). In this conception, classrooms should be places where knowledge is made during an active process of inquiry from within the natural environment for learning (p. 65). Following Dewey's notion of warranted assertability, Boyles asserted classrooms should be spaces where

> both teachers and students would become fallible knowers who must defend their claims to knowledge, where knowledge represents a temporal suspension point in the process of making judgments. In so doing, both teachers and students would realize the limitations of universal, foundational ''comfort zones'' and demonstrate the kind of continual thinking and rethinking required of those who face change in their lives and who, as a result of said change, must continually defend their claims to knowledge. (p.66)

This essay asserts that teachers can, if they claim it, have both power and epistemological responsibility in their classrooms. Boyles argues that traditional epistemology, as a "(passive) spectator theory of knowledge" (p. 67) reinforces the calcifying effects of the neoliberal accountability form of schooling that has structured learning as a disbursement system of little chunks of information immediately followed by tests.

In a later essay, Boyles (2009) further argues for a revisioning of students and teachers as knowing agents. In this paper, Boyles interlaces "situated knowledge, strong objectivity, epis-

temic responsibility, and a modified coherentism" (as cited in Haraway, 1988, Harding, 1995, Code, 2006, & Alcoff, 1996, p. 134) to create a model of "an embodied, actively engaged, contextualized, social knower" (p. 126), envisioned as both student and teacher, to replace the traditional, foundationalist, reliabilist notions of epistemology usually found in schools and schooling. Each facet of the model in this essay helps to form the figure of the agentic, situated knower-student and knower-teacher Boyles imagines. Strong objectivity, for example (as cited in Harding, 1995), demands the elimination of the notion of political neutrality from scientific inquiry, subjecting it instead to vigorous contextual debate. The term strong objectivity means acknowledging the hackneyed nature of phrases such as "research-based" and "best practices," questioning the validity of structural elements of schooling like tracking, and instead subjecting such aspects of schooling to rigorous contestation.

Epistemic responsibility (as cited in Code, 2006) also forms a part of this re-envisioned knower within the public schools. In these schools, the realities of the students' contexts, their backgrounds and their interests, form the backdrop for exploration and understanding. Emphasis is placed on "understanding and knowing well" (p. 129), which means de-emphasizing correct answers on high-stakes or multiple-choice tests and rote memorization.

Literature on teachers and epistemology contrasts with other literature on teacher knowledge in ways that go beyond the merely disciplinary. Philosophical inquiry clearly contrasts with the empirical approaches of sociology and other disciplines within education research. Philosophical methods differ significantly from those of, for example, narrative inquiry or survey research. Apart from these more obvious differences, however, considerations of teachers as knowers found in philosophical research are predicated on particular notions of thinking that seem to be absent from the empirical research reviewed here. In epistemological inquiry, teach-

ers as knowers are thinking beings who have the capacity to question the mandatory procedures and components of curriculum within their jobs. The empirical studies I have found of teacher knowledge do not envision knowing or knowledge as fluid features agentic knowers will exercise in any variation.

Literature examining teaching as epistemological work is limited. Considerations of the physical, or the role of the body, within teaching knowledge is even more limited. Yet, there is an implied sense of bodily knowledge in public discourse. Metaphorically speaking, teachers' bodies are under stress and at risk for death, either through combat injuries or suffocation. For example, Kamenetz (2015), in her book questioning the intensity of testing, used a military metaphor to describe standardized testing. We are in a "testing arms race," (p. 9) Kamenetz says. If we are headed to war, then the physical toll should be palpable and observable, if not even measurable. Former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said in August 2014, just as the school year was beginning, that he shared teachers' concerns about too much standardized testing and test prep, and that he believed "testing issues today are sucking the oxygen out of the room in a lot of schools" (Strauss, 2015). The presence of bodies in these metaphors is notable. Bodies of teachers are illustrated through discourses that construct a teacher's body under a considerable amount of stress. The work of Perumal (2012) also follows this line of inquiry into how bodies construct and communicate power in public spaces.

The teachers' 'body of knowledge' must include practical understanding of what to do in classrooms, knowledge of the curriculum, knowledge of the hidden curriculum, pedagogy, procedures of the workplace, technology, even cultural norms and practices. These are all aspects of knowledge, and the vast majority of studies of teachers and knowledge are concerned with how bits of knowledge are turned into actions that yield achievement for children. Boyles (2006 &

2009) addresses this absence by envisioning an epistemology of teaching in which inquiry forms the antidote to neoliberal educational policies, which rely on a passive theory of knowledge valuing rote memorization. However, an epistemology of teaching could include a stronger understanding of the physical work entailed in teaching. Investigations of the teacher's body as a feature of knowledge seem to be completely missing from the literature.

Grosz (1993) addressed this absence of the body from knowledge in philosophy, which she said exacerbated the "crisis of reason" (p. 187). Reason is portrayed as a disembodied, purely mental process, taking place outside of or despite the body, and therefore outside of or despite place. As I have pointed out, however, the history of teaching, and the effects of policy on teacher work, and the discourses of testing are all intrinsically geographic and place-bound. They are also intrinsically bodily, though it seems not many scholars are thinking of teachers and policies in these terms.

For Grosz (1993), the body is a missing piece, "disavowed in the production of knowledges" (p. 187), and as such, if brought in or acknowledged, has the potential to displace the hegemony of masculinist knowledge. Grosz theorized the body as a "kind of *hinge* or threshold: it is placed between a psychic or lived interiority and a more sociopolitical exteriority" (p. 196). The teacher might be viewed to function as a sort of hinge as well, linking the lived interiority of a school and the exterior realm of policy. But importantly, Grosz wrote of a way in which exteriority "produces interiority" (p. 196) through the inscription of the exterior on the body. From this it is possible to construe teachers and teaching as experiencing a lived interiority inscribed by exterior forces—policies like VAM and test-based accountability.

These philosophical inquiries into teaching and the body help to ground this study of veteran teachers. Teachers embody a conflict between themselves and policies governing their

actions. Policies construct the atmosphere that governs how teaching is perceived. Teachers are workers whose jobs involve intersecting series of encounters with other human bodies as well as the atmospheric pressures and forces of policy "weather." Teachers' human encounters are characterized in most cases by an imbalance of power, and as such the knowledge they obtain, possess, and disseminate is as positioned as they are. Teachers function on the second rung of heirarchical systems, just above the students for whom they are responsible, but below all others who maneuver the school and/or the system in its functioning. In some cases this second rung is thickened by collective bargaining, with the organizational structures of unions binding their members together to advocate for forms of protection. However, in other cases, in the "right to work" states for example, the rung is strengthened only by the teacher herself, in her ability to support herself through esteem, charisma, success, or other character merits.

3. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In the literature review, I examined how the profession of teacher was formed and shifted over time, how the work of teaching came to be understood as both academic and care-oriented, how teaching is figured in poor communities of color, how testing informs and intensifies teachers' work, how teachers are and are not perceived as knowers, and how teachers' bodies are constituted in this knowledge. I have come to understand teaching as both an occupation as well as a social role in U.S. society and myself as a student of critical approaches to understanding contemporary public education in the face of persistent race- and place-based inequities. This chapter details my methodological approach to this ethnography of veteran teachers in one U.S. urban, high-poverty school. It addresses the following: (1) research questions; (2) philosophical paradigm; (3) research design; (4) researcher's background, beliefs, and biases; (5) population, participants, and sampling technique; (6) data collection process; (7) data analysis process, and (8) assumptions, limitations, and evaluation criteria.

Research Questions

As stated in chapter one, this ethnography examined the following questions:

1. How did veteran teachers in one predominantly Black, low-income school "navigate and negotiate"[6] the constraints of accountability policies while striving to provide education that enriched their students' lives?[7]
2. How did Clement Elementary School function as a multipurpose site of hope[8] aiming to improve its surrounding community?[9]

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[6] Dr. Clementine, Final interview, June 2017.
[7] For the rest of the dissertation I will refer to this as Question 1, *navigate and negotiate*.
[8] Dr. Clementine, Final interview, June 2017.

Philosophical Paradigm

The philosophical underpinnings of this ethnographic study are informed by critical theories of power, race, and educational policy, which help to explain how I understood the larger political and discursive context in which the research site was formed. However, I also understood my task as one that required a desire-based framework (Tuck, 2009), intellectual openness, and the embrace of relationality (Hoagland, 2007) that enabled me to absorb the participants' views and ways of seeing their world. As political subjects, the research participants and myself all operated within the broader social and political contexts I see as inscribed with violence. However, because we held different positions in terms of race, these contexts affected us in disparate ways, which led me to rigorously interrogate anti-racism as a philosophical position.

Clement Elementary School was located in an urban neighborhood, where most residents were Black and Latino and where many coped with frequent struggles in the areas of employment, health, criminal justice, housing, family stability, and education. During the study Brooklyn told me that in a group of students she was teaching, only three had their dads at home; the rest were locked up. Most outsiders judged it as a so-called bad neighborhood based on measures like incidences of crime, distressed properties, per capita income, incarceration rates, and employment data. Most outsiders judged Clement as a bad school because of low test scores. My ethnography was not concerned with the truth of such judgments, but because it is situated in the belief that poverty and privilege result in geographical areas inscribed by the prevalence of different forms of violence, such judgments did matter.

Moallem (2004) theorized that "modern regimes of knowledge and power" (p. 47) are forcibly circulated through images. To witness such regimes, she suggested, one must examine

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[9] For the rest of the dissertation this will be Question 2, *multipurpose site of hope*.

images of violence and analyze "the ways in which violence and protection are linked together through race and gender" (p. 47). For Moallem, violence is coded within the discourse of protection. This discourse is encompassed by both the markers of citizenship, such as race, national origin, and family heritage, and the measures of citizenship, such as birth certificates, social security numbers, and green cards. "Uneven processes of subject formation" (p. 48) characterize neo- and postcolonial regimes, and different groups across geopolitical locations and within specific locations are granted differential status according to race, nation, class, gender and sexuality. I find this idea most relevant to the explanation of what created the neighborhood in which Clement existed, and so many others like it. Within regimes of unevenly distributed power, what counts as violence and what warrants protection formulate social and political tensions and cultural struggle. Examining which "acts, events, signifiers are brought to visibility/vocalization" (p. 50) can "expose the geopolitical underpinnings of the discourse of violence and protection" (p. 50). The violence outside Clement Elementary School was a presence within the school in complex, nuanced, and persistent ways. It was far larger than the violence of individuals. It was a political and policy-induced violence with a deep past in racist education policies and the demands made of educators of color working with children of color. Seeing violence and protection as interconnected discourses helps to expose systems of power that extend far beyond the research site.

I read contemporary school reform policies featuring extreme, test-based accountability in light of Moallem's (2004) theory. The trope of the failing school emerges from these readings. The failing school is a cultural metaphor, produced discursively as a consequence of educational policy and perpetuated through mass media, established at the outset of NCLB as a surveillance device intended to discipline public school communities by rendering their statuses visible. The

punishments of test-based school rankings include school closures, often accompanied by far-reaching consequences of loss and disinvestment for communities, among numerous other strategies. Students' test scores are presumed to indicate the quality of their education and their future lives. Test scores and ranks produce a schools' value and signify its ability to prepare its students. In neoliberal society, preparation for the economy is protection. The failure of a school to prepare its students for the economy constitutes harm. Failing schools become perpetrators of violence. Since failing schools often serve low-income people of color, their failure reifies and normalizes these schools' subordinate status and layers that failure with malevolence. The school and its teachers are guilty of inflicting harm. Mediatized images and numerical reports of school rankings circulate to create a world in which low-scoring schools are bad, the adults within them provide inadequate educational services, and these deficits are read not only as ineptitude but also injustice—a form of violence.

This ethnography is situated in the counter-reading of these images. It shows that the perpetrators of violence are the policies and the forces, including people, who construct and perpetuate them. The stratification that created failing schools exposes capitalism's disinterest in justice. The data tools used to support the division between so-called good and bad schools have become weapons of mass destruction, as they influence real estate values and rents and are aligned with other destructive statistics, for example the alignment of the achievement gap with the discipline gap, which relates to the overrepresentation of boys of color in school suspension statistics (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010).

Unpacking these discursive formations constitutes a part of the philosophical framework for my field-based study of the problem. As I argued in Chapter One, I believe that the educators in this study are "substantive, agentic, corporeal, and embodied knowers and experiencers of ed-

ucational work" (see p. 19) I did not see myself as a neutral or detached knower, though I did and do recognize myself as having been socialized into ignorance of my position as a White, middle class woman (Hoagland, 2007). I did not believe participants should share my understanding or my way of thinking through the phenomenon of failure. I anticipated each had their own way of seeing their teaching work in light of the role of testing and accountability within the school and the surrounding community. I knew these women's different ways of seeing and thinking through the deficit school label imposed on so many schools in the community would come to inform my thinking. I did not impose my understanding of the discursive construct of the failing school upon my participants, or for that matter upon the research site, and I also did not undertake to reconstruct the discourse. I read the discourse of school policy that figures the failing school as one with low test scores and populated by low income people of color as a policy problem, but as a qualitative researcher I simultaneously set that reading aside to be open to my participants' experiences and their readings of the their circumstances. This listening across worlds forms another part of my philosophical framework.

Hoagland's (2007) ideas about relationality inform my thinking about open listening as a researcher. In her work on epistemologies of ignorance, she discusses ways in which the denial of relationality enables the construction and perpetuation of unequal power relationships. Those who make policy, whom Hoagland calls "competent practitioners of the dominant culture" (p. 96) do not relate in substantive ways to those about whom policies are made. Policies are then inscribed into law for people about whom policy makers remain ignorant. The failing school metaphor might be viewed as an outcome of this practice of ignorance, or perhaps it is its collateral damage.

Yet thinking in terms of damage, thinking of places and people as damaged and of myself as an investigator of damage is an ontological trap, too easy to fall into. To assume, non-relationally, that my thoughts about the damage and violence of test-based accountability are the truths upon which all the rest must follow would have positioned me as an objective knower I could not be. Hoagland (2007) defines relationality as "forming and being formed, both individually and culturally, in relation through our engagements and practices. Who we are is in part a function of our relationships—in logic, an internal relation. We are interactive and interdependent" (pp. 99-100). During the fieldwork I interacted with my participants, and we formed relationships with one another. From these relationships I generate the findings of the research. In Chapter Four, all notes and quotations are presented only after I have considered the truthfulness of the claim to the speaker to whom it is attributed, and as often as possible, that speaker has been consulted for verification.

I was not interested in looking at urban schools or their veteran teachers as victims of political or structural damage. Participants did not impose the trope of the failing school upon Clement; instead they did "navigate and negotiate" the educational policies that presupposed their failure (see Research Questions). Tuck's (2009) desire-based framework, explained in Chapter One, pushes us away from binaries such as broken/fixed or succeeding/failing and away from constructs that presume damage to be the driving force for social justice-oriented research and suggests that a more complicated reading of social structures is not only possible but necessary to produce social change. This desire-based approach was already central to most participants, who, as explained, did not relate to the failing school idea. Coming to understand the embodied nature of their desire-based ways of relating to their work as teachers under the pressures

of accountability was made possible through engagement in relationships; the practical acts of creating relationships lead to theoretical understandings of how Others live and know.

Developing understandings of the school and how it functioned as a site of hope (question 2) involved similar processes, but while investigating question 1 involved looking at individual acts and ways of knowing, question 2 required a me to synthesize experiences and observations, to construct an amalgamated version of Clement in which the amalgam is representative of acts of desire. This was easy to do once I understood the process, because the materials were all there, already forming themselves. Desmond (2014) defined relational ethnography as a methodology that gives "ontological primacy… to configurations of relationships" (p. 554). His approach involved following paths of relationships within a social system, and instead of comparing the system to others outside of it, analyzing the interconnections and interactions among the array of actors who come together to make a place.

So, in undertaking this ethnography, I understood the system as one perpetrating forms of violence, but did not consider the actors affected by this violence as victims. The philosophical paradigm, drawn from understandings of testing as violence, but also from understandings of educators as not-victims, can only make sense through concepts and practices of relationality.

I also drew guidance from researchers who explained ethnography as a way to "reveal a world" (Varela, 2013, p. 1). I explained the problem of the trope of the failing school and its perpetuation within media and policy discourse in Chapter One (Parker, 2008; Mathesz, 2014). I discussed the its pervasiveness in Chapter Two (NCEE, 2007) and unpacked the untenable proposition that education can be the cure-all for unaddressed community problems (Anyon & Greene, 2007; Anyon, 2014). In this section, I aim to situate the trope of the failing school as a problem of the philosophical context from which I am operating, and to position that trope as a

part of the experience we, my participants and I, shared. My philosophical framework positions me relationally, and not as an outside, objective observer. In policy critique, some of which I relied upon to define the problem of this ethnographic study, there are certain knowns about what perpetuates school inequities and race-based injustices. Once I was situated as an ethnographer, however, I aimed not to impose assumptions of knowledge upon the participants (Sefa Dei, 2005). The participants became guides in the meaning-making process, and in this partnership, a unique set of priorities and a broad range of knowledges emerged from each participant, only some of which aligned precisely with the problems and intentions I identified at the outset of the project.

Research Design

The methodology of this study draws from the interactionist tradition of educational ethnography in that it was designed to study teachers' work with an emphasis on its "processual, personal, and social character" (Hammersley, 2014, p. 10). It followed some classical ethnographic practices and aimed to adhere to ideals of anthropological rigor. It was influenced by ethnography's critical turn (Brown & Dobrin, 2004), which, while personalizing and politicizing the practice of ethnographic research, also raised questions about its potential as a research method to promote racial equity, given the history of anthropology and its complicity with colonization alongside more recent turns in school reform, which have perpetuated racist values and promoted school resegregation. These questions demanded consideration on procedural, ethical, epistemological, and ontological terms, and they are active features of the research design.

The interactionist tradition

Pole and Morrison (2003) identified five methodological characteristics of ethnography, which I quote in full below:

1. A focus on a discrete location, event(s) or setting.
2. A concern with the full range of social behaviour within the location, event or setting.
3. The use of a range of different research methods which may combine qualitative and quantitative approaches but where the emphasis is upon understanding social behaviour from inside the discrete location, event or setting.
4. An emphasis on data and analysis which moves from detailed description to the identification of concepts and theories which are grounded in the data collected within the location, event or setting.
5. An emphasis on rigorous or thorough research, where the complexities of the discrete event, location or setting are of greater importance than overarching trends or generalizations. (p. 3)

This study met these five characteristics. It took place in one discrete setting, Clement Elementary School, an urban, U.S. school. I observed in six classrooms and throughout the school for approximately two hours per classroom each week, so I was in the site for about fifteen hours each week for eight months, observing in six classrooms and all the school's common areas. The data collection methods included field observations and interviews designed to make sense of participants' teaching. The data analysis method involves the explication of five overarching themes that have emerged from close readings of the data. Finally, I emphasize the "complexities of the discrete… setting" (p. 3) over the overarching trends. One minor variation occurred over the course of the study in that one of my participants, Jewell, did not want to be interviewed on the school site. Our alternative interview sites included her home, a local pizza restaurant, and a Burger King.

Anthropological rigor

Procedurally, the study design observes features considered standard in educational ethnography, and it strove for anthropological rigor. Ogbu (1981) believed in the application in school ethnography of the traditional principles of participant-observation in which a researcher 'lives' among the people she studies. Such long-term investment in a school site and its people "can provide rich and valid descriptive data that can be used for theoretical and practical objectives" (p. 5). There were several features of Ogbu's vision of school ethnography that I did not pursue given constraints of my personal circumstances, the school district, and the IRB. For example, I did not study the entire community, nor did I seek permission to include data from children or auxiliary staff. However, I did engage in the lengthy and intimate version of participant-observation Ogbu recommends, becoming at times, according to some of the faculty, what seemed like another employee within the school. Ogbu argued that macroethnographies had the greatest potential for developing deep understandings of and theorizing the intersections of social structures and schooling. The study examined teachers' engagement in the embodied act of teaching and sought to understand through observing their daily experiences how teachers negotiate policy, educate children, and influence the community. However, since I did not extend my examination out into the broader community, according to Ogbu, this study might be considered a microethnography.

The importance of Ogbu's (1981) findings related to the positions of students and parents who attend socially segregated schools resonates for this study. In his early studies of minority communities in Stockton, CA in the 1970s, he found that historical underinvestment and cultural mistrust of segregated schools was self-perpetuating, that these factors combined to create an

> ethnoecology that leads [those who control the schools] to offer Burghersiders inferior

> education and to treat them in school and classroom in such a manner as to facilitate a disproportionate school failure, thereby reinforcing their menial position in adult life. (p. 23)

Based on Ogbu's description of Burghersiders' experience of schooling from 35 years ago, many things about urban poverty have not changed. The Burghersiders community shares similarities with the Clement Elementary's. And given what research has shown about resegregation of schools and inequities of geographic opportunity (Green, 2015), Clement likely reflects many more contemporary neighborhood schools across the nation. However, much has changed since Ogbu's work. For one, Ogbu's research predates the test-based accountability era we are now in, so the underachievement he noted among African American children is now measured in test scores and school rankings. Conditions in schools are now shown and known through statistics, and deep cultural studies are left out of policy decision-making altogether. Another change has occurred epistemologically within the of the educational research landscape. The shift to criticality in qualitative research demanded rethinking race, class, and gender hierarchies, the meanings of social conditions related to those identity factors, and searching for ways to create change in community with research participants.

Ogbu's (1981) ecological framework resonates for this microethnographic study, but is limited by the fact that I did not conduct participant-observations in the setting outside of the immediate school. Nevertheless, the outside world entered the school space every day. The educators I worked with had deep understandings of the children's and parents' circumstances and often first-hand knowledge of their home lives. I relied upon their testimonies to develop an understanding of the forces shaping the community, which I will detail in Chapter Four. Ogbu's (1981) seminal theory about the reasons for persistent underachievement of Black children is

important for this study, but a critical perspective on the effects of racism and discriminatory policy foregrounds this work.

Anti-racism and criticality

Consciousness of race and power dynamics as part of social science research is a feature of the turn to criticality that has taken place in anthropology over the last 30 years. After Ogbu (1981), a Black anthropologist, encouraged the use of more classical anthropological methods to glean deeper understandings of minority cultures, White anthropologists (i.e. Lamphere, 1994) were coming to recognize anthropology as the "quintessential colonial discipline" (p. 217) and confronting their use of the method with the help of post-colonial and post-modern theories. Lamphere wrote about recognizing the "blind spots" among White middle-class academics; meanwhile Foster (1994), a Black anthropologist, was reconciling the ways in which "matriculation into the mainstream" (p. 131) required Black academics to forfeit "community belief systems, or [embrace] an ideology no longer in accord with that of our communities" (p. 131). Ogbu wanted to retain the rigor of ethnographic methods in studies of urban and minority schools and children. Lamphere wanted to change the colonizing effects of Whiteness on anthropological studies of education. Foster wanted to recover "cultural knowledge and history of the Black community" (p. 144), and the same time, de-marginalize and legitimate Black investigations of Black culture in the academy. This study mixes these three ideological positions related to ethnography and grafts a mixed ethnographic methodology. It was a rigorous anthropological project. I was disciplined as an observer to be involved, to listen radically (Pybus & Rouse, 2015), to critically observe my own patterns of knowing about others as I observed others' patterns of knowing, and to be vulnerable in the process of studying and of writing (Behar, 1996). In this research space in a majority Black community, Black perspectives were in tension with White

perspectives. In my position as ethnographer, I could not claim either perspective as my own. It had to become hybridized.

To flesh out this process, I draw in the concrete principles of critical ethnography (Thomas, 1993; Madison, 2005; Brown & Dobrin, 2004), decolonizing methodology (Anderson, 1989; Beeman-Cadwallader, Quigley, & Yazzie-Mintz, 2011) and critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998). What draws all these different approaches together are their common awareness of the political, race-conscious, class sensitive factors that formed the core of the study. Since I am a White, middle-class female veteran educator who studied with veteran, mostly Black, all female educators in a predominantly Black, urban elementary school, we were often conscious of the unequal power dynamics produced by racism in society. The study needed methodological principles that brought the oppressive power structures of White supremacy to the fore. In fact, I believe my explicit promise of commitment to these principles was among the reasons that my research participants agreed to work with me in the first place.

Critical ethnography

Anderson (1989) explained that critical ethnography values the negotiation of meaning in community with participants. Epistemologically, critical ethnography questions the positivist assumptions of social science and highlights local knowledge:

> The ethnographic account, for all its faults, records a critical level of experience and through its very biases insists on a level of human agency which is persistently overlooked or denied. (citing Willis, 1977, p. 1)

Critical ethnography drew from interactionists and ethnomethodologists, who valued negotiated meanings within context, through social interaction, but the methodology emerged as a strategy to counteract Marxist and feminist overdeterminism (i.e. Althusser, 1962), which might

point to persistent social problems, for example poverty in this research site, and attribute to it the causes of all other problems (i.e. academic underperformance).

One of the most significant features of critical ethnography that resonated for this study is founded in the notion of the ethnographic Self. As opposed to the traditional ethnographic notion of an absent, objective researcher, critical ethnography converts "its pseudohierarchical absence into a dialectical presence not only with its readers but also with its participants" (Brown & Dobrin, 2004, p. 3). Participants in this project were always situated as "potential collaborators, not as exotic Others to be objectified" (p. 3). The knowledge-making process of the ethnography was one fueled by my continuous presence in the research site. We held regular conversations about the social issues and the political implications of both the work they were doing and the research project itself. Through these conversations and other methods, the knowledge-making process included the participants. We all initiated conversations about our experiences as educators and researchers, as participants in the struggled for more socially just education, and the political and policy obstacles facing us all, a condition that intensified following the outcome of the Presidential election of 2016.

Decolonizing methodology

In addition to inviting participants into the meaning-making process, I drew from principles of decolonizing methodologies. Smith (2008) primarily theorized decolonizing methodology as an approach to social research through her work in Maori society in New Zealand. However, qualitative researchers interested in unraveling the history of colonization and returning well-being to colonized people have taken up these ideas (Beeman-Cadwallader, Quigley, & Yazzie-Mintz, 2011). Characteristics of the process in the decolonized research space include "relinquishing control, reenvisioning knowledge, cultivating relationships, and purposeful representa-

tions of communities" (p. 3). As an outsider who went inside, I attempted the inside-out process of research relying on indigenous, or in this case neoindigenous, knowledges for its substance. I follow Emdin's (2016) use of 'neoindigenous' as he describes the experiences of urban youth. For Emdin, the term "carries rich histories of indigenous groups, acknowledges powerful connections among populations that have dealt with being silenced, and signals the need to examine the ways that institutions replicate colonial processes" (p. 9). For me, the term signifies the rich understandings of cultural histories and experiences of both oppression and empowerment my participants understood (albeit in different ways), that I had to strive to understand, both personally, through them, and ultimately for them and the communities of children whom we educate. Given our racial and cultural differences, there are undoubtedly gaps and spaces in my understandings of my participants. Also, I expect there are blind and blank spaces, including elements of participant's lives and practices they would not explicitly share with me, and explicit evidence I was culturally disoriented to and could not see.

Indeed, tensions over our differences and questions of my suitability to represent my participants arose immediately, for instance during our first meeting, D.J. (second grade teacher) stared me down and said, "*You* gonna tell *my* story?" (D.J. Wright, personal communication, October 6, 2016). D.J. meant that I, a White woman, would not understand her experiences or her story as a Black woman. From almost the very first moment, I practiced observational discipline, radical listening, critical observation of others as well as myself, and vulnerability. I never told D.J. that I *would* understand her, and I still do not claim that I do. I promised to share my recording of what she shared and offer an interpretation that comes as closely as possible to what she and I both think needs to be told. But I am not "telling her story," which is something she did not want me to do. She told me she wanted to write her own damn story.

D.J. and the other participants invited me in, but they did so on their own terms. More than anything they related to me as a fellow, a guest, a tutor, someone who shared teaching, parenting, and research in common with them. Those who had completed their own education research related to me as a student, offering advice and encouragement, sometimes comparing their work to mine. It is essential to note that many of the participants knew well the concepts and approaches I am detailing here. They were experts in their own right; I was the novice.

Decolonizing methodology recognizes that neoindigenous communities "hold knowledge in their traditions and that enacting those very traditions makes knowledge sustainable" (Beeman-Cadwallader, Quigley, & Yazzie-Mintz, 2011, p. 4). To decolonize or break down colonial structures within an educational institution requires that we interrogate how knowledge is utilized as a colonizing force as well as a force of resistance. The participants in this study were enacting curricular and testing mandates, but they also had years of experience with culturally responsive pedagogy and were simultaneously attempting to provide a culture-rich education for children. Thus, decolonizing methodologies were already part of the pedagogical environment. I learned to pick up when and how these methods were being used.

Weems' (2013) interpretation of Smith's (2008) theory of decolonizing methodology was useful for my understanding of how my participants' expertise influenced my methodological process. She wrote that when studying teachers and students in neocolonial settings, researchers need to learn to balance "'knowledge about' with 'learning from' individuals and groups in pedagogical relations" (p. 22). Weems refers to practices within women-of-color feminisms such as

> "showing up," convivimiento, testimonio, and story circles… communal pedagogical activities where teaching and learning are considered circuitous within a shared space of storytelling AND listening; collaboration and action. The same principles of minding the

> neocolonial gap imagined in the individual/dual/dialogic might apply — (for example, that there is intersubjective play made possible by through "knowledge about" and "learning from"). (p. 22)

Each participant possessed decades' worth of knowledge of educational structures, of oppression facing people of color in urban communities, of elementary curricula and pedagogical practices, and of being a teacher. Weems' concept of minding the neocolonial gap resonated throughout. This methodological principle served to remind me that I was generating knowledge through a synthesis of data with the participants and not just simply functioning as a student with an interest in gaining more knowledge about teaching for my personal use. To be unconscious of this methodological problem could be to produce a form of microcolonialism that would involve taking the good lessons for myself and missing the hard work of using this data to make a difference in the lives and educational experiences of urban Black children.

Critical race theory

Each part of this methodology is interlinked and layered together. CRT and questions of perspective (emic vs. etic) are the last pieces I will explain. As Hopson and Dixson (2011) stated, "The normative Whiteness of qualitative research supports and perpetuates the persistent dismissal of race as an important factor in education" (p. 5). This study is situated in a historical, ethnographic continuum and a political climate that needs to recognize its culpability for the inadequacy of its policymaking to stimulate more equitable educational outcomes for Black students. It occurred in the presence of institutionalized racism we saw at the local, state, and, as it was 2016-2017, at the national level better than ever before. The study therefore investigates this presence and highlights explicit strategies of resistance as facets of the experiences of the researcher and the participants and their students.

CRT, which stemmed from critical legal studies, is characterized by the notion that racism is normal in U.S. life. It features storytelling, the narration of lived experiences of oppression, which helps critical race theorists develop analytical positions as it “adds necessary contextual contours to the seeming ‘objectivity’ of positivist perspectives” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 12). It also incorporates the critique of liberalism and colorblindness in legal paradigms (Cook & Dixson, 2012). Another tenet of CRT is the notion of Whiteness as property, in which White people come to possess wealth and privilege simply by virtue as being figured as normal, the standard against which “all other forms and expressions of culture are judged” (Giles & Hughes, 2009, p. 690). Alongside Whiteness as property is interest convergence, the awareness of the ways in which civil rights legislation has primarily benefited Whites (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Ladson-Billings (1998) wrote, “CRT [is] an important intellectual and social tool for deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power” (p. 9). With this Ladson-Billings offers a tenet that helped to shape the ethnographic lens. As I was present in Clement Elementary School and participating/observing in classrooms and common areas, I witnessed these three acts taking place. Oppressive structures were evident, yet efforts to deconstruct these structures, to empower students and provide pathways to more equitable lives for students, were also evident. CRT undergirded the methodological processes we undertook and provided an intellectual framework for understanding the impact of racism on the structures in place in Clement.

CRT formed an intellectual foundation for experiences of teaching and learning at Clement. It also informs the argument for the generalizability for this ethnography, because as Cook and Dixson (2012) explained, “CRT challenges the notion that the individual experiences that

people have with racism and discrimination cannot represent the collective experiences that people of color have with racism and discrimination" (p. 1243). In other words, while I heard the unique stories of each individual participant and will detail those, Black participants made many references to stories they shared with other Black women, and they often taught from their position of understanding the collective experiences of Black people.

Whereas CRT informed methodological thinking, critical race methodology informed action. In their articulation of critical race methodology, Solórzano and Yosso (2002) foregrounded the recognition of "the intercentricity of racialized oppression—the layers of subordination based on race, gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent, and sexuality" (p. 27). This integration of different forms of oppression was a feature of this study, as the intersection of race with issues of gender, national origin, class, sexual orientation, language, and other factors, like marriage status, age, and parenting, influenced the experiences and knowledges of all the participants in salient ways. This understanding of these intersections, along with CRT's central tenet of the imbrication of racism with U.S. society (Giles & Hughes, 2009), allowed for a flexible notion of belonging within shared experiences. Solórzano and Yosso recognized that it "is within the context of racism that 'monovocal' stories about the low educational achievement and attainment of students of color are told" (p. 27). The participants and I all functioned as educators with similar understandings of this force and its destructiveness for Black education. From that common understanding, we could recognize other commonalities across difference. I was conscious of those ways in which I, as well the White and Filipino participant, could witness or surround but not be a part of experiences that were representatively and exclusively Black. All the participants and I could interrogate those moments when we caught ourselves wondering what was true, what was the story of school failure, was it truly the "majoritarian story" (Solór-

zano & Yosso, p. 29) that privileges "Whites, men, the middle and/or upper class, and heterosexuals by naming these social locations as natural or normative points of reference" (p. 29)? The majoritarian story has unfortunate power. We had all learned it and learned to reject it to varying degrees, and it influenced all of us as we observed the challenges and victories of teaching at Clement.[10] Critical race methodology, as it challenges cultural deficit storytelling, recognizes the majoritarian story as the perpetuation of deficit thinking, and builds counter-stories (Solórzano & Yosso). In the next chapter, I will present the data as counter-stories based on three themes I analyzed using theoretical sensitivity (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and emic understandings I developed over the eight months of my residency in the site.

Emic ethnography

As a conclusion to this section, and as a transition to the next, I briefly analyze perspective. For this I draw from Wolcott (2008) who explained that ethnographic methods are fundamentally about "mapping cultural terrain" (p. 139). Ideally an ethnographic study contributes to a more nuanced picture of a cultural group and space. It is the route to this picture that the research design should map: the reader should be able to picture how the ethnographer drew the cultural map in the findings chapter. One of the most troubling aspects of the positionality of the critical, anti-racist, de-colonizing ethnographer: the map will be imperfect. It will be inaccurate. It will be one person's, the ethnographer's, composition of multiple perspectives, and it will not be conclusive. Wolcott explained, this is "emic ethnography, the insider view, [which] is most successfully achieved when the effort is presented and clearly understood to be the telling of the *ethnographer's version* of a people's story" (p. 148, emphasis in original). Wolcott makes clear that the

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[10] "as we all observed": I will explain in Findings that this construct—me as participant-observer observing teachers observing children—is a central feature of ethnographic study of teachers. Teachers are in a constant state of observation of what is happening in the classroom. I spent my time watching them watching kids.

ethnographer's status- emic or etic- is a matter of perspective, not of membership. I was not officially a member of the group at Clement, though over time the members and I had moments of thinking I was. What some might see as my membership, but which I might more comfortably call vulnerable belonging or intimacy (i.e. Behar, 1996), came with time. This affected the data I was able to collect. The principal invited me in to her school. Six teachers invited me in to their classrooms. Kids and other adults invited me in to their conversations, their games, their projects, their field days, their sales, their performances, their clothing drives, their test preparation, and more. The process itself led to my methodological understanding of the meaning of being an insider and an outsider.

I created my own patterns of coming and going and being in the space that I held to rigorously, but I did not mimic the teachers' patterns or the principal's. I held myself to a pattern of work. I signed into the building's electronic visitor sign-in system every time. I also signed out (which most visitors did not). I carried the same type of tools with me to each visit, paper and pens for old-fashioned note taking. I wore the same type of visitor badge every visit, planned my time meticulously so that I could meet my commitment to see each person a minimum of two hours a week. I eventually went to certain classrooms on the same days of the week; for example, I went to Allecia's class on Wednesdays at the start of the school day and participated in social-emotional learning and reading tutorials, and the pattern stuck through most of the year. Though I was not there full-time, my continuous presence led some people, as I pointed out above, to believe I was a hired staff member. Even the principal, who was one of my participants, from time to time would hand me tasks before remembering that she did not actually have to hold me accountable for the same responsibilities as her contracted teachers. My patterns were

so consistent that I came to feel like an accountable staff member. For example, I did not go to all faculty meetings but I felt like I was playing hooky when I could not attend.

I became a kind of insider within the school, which was an easy fit after years of experience being a teacher myself. In terms of gender, we were all women. I was isolated in terms of sexual orientation, being the only queer woman, and in terms of social class, we were all over the map, with one of the Black participants and the White participant hailing from high levels of class privilege and the rest of us middle and/or working class or a mix of both.

Once again, though, this is all evidence of my membership in the space, not my perspective as an ethnographer. The perspective I am adopting in the composition of this dissertation is the emic, the insider perspective, filtered through my lens, which I will not try to hide. This aligns with the most integrity with the critical and decolonial methodological perspectives, but, as I will later explain in the final section of this chapter ("Assumptions, Limitations, and Quality Assurance"), this perspective affects any notion of generalizability of the study in the strict terms of social science. That is a risk I have to be willing to take to do the data, and the lives of the participants, justice.

Researcher's Ethnographic Positionality

I traveled over two sets of train tracks to get to Clement, tracks that symbolized divisions between wealthier and poorer neighborhoods as well as municipal investment and disinvestment, in a city crisscrossed by many such sets of tracks. The work of educators at Clement Elementary included the mediation of the geographic space. The tracks in part constructed the "spatiality of exclusion" (Wood, 2016) that the community experienced. But this does not mean that exclusion was the primary condition of Clement's students; rather, this stems from my theoretical perspective on planned divisions in neoliberal society. As both as an educator and as a White, queer, fe-

male U.S. citizen, my work has involved crossing and contemplating many sets of tracks, many such planned divisions. I situate the following section as a disclosure of my ethnographic positionality (Madison, 2005). This rendering of positionality differs from a generalized subjectivity, in which I would explain my beliefs and provide autobiographical explanations. Here I intend to offer explanations of my position vis à vis the research participants and the site. According to Madison, ethnographic positionality spotlights

> how our subjectivity *in relation to the Other* informs and is informed by our engagement and representation of the Other. We are not simply subjects, but we are subjects in dialogue with the Other. We understand that our subjectivity is an inherent part of research, but in critical ethnography it is not my exclusive experience…. critical ethnography is always a meeting of multiple sides in an encounter with and among the Other(s), one in which there is negotiation and dialogue toward substantial and viable meanings that make a difference in the Other's world. (p. 35)

There are at least three positions I occupied relevant to the ways in which I perceived the research site and participants: my position as a veteran teacher in urban spaces, my position as a White woman, and my epistemological and theoretical yearnings for a embodied alterity as a way of knowing.

Learning teaching and race

My work as an educator has always been intimately tied to my experiences as a learner and to consciousness if not understanding of the complexities of race and racism. I was educated in a mid-sized southern district whose segregated schools had been dismantled and reconfigured as one system in the early 1970s. I began kindergarten in 1976, in a school that was about 50% White and 50% Black, integrated using cross-town busing. For me, school was a mixed-race

world, and busing out of my neighborhood to another neighborhood was normal. I was unaware of the politics and tensions in our society and in my parents' White neighborhood about integration. Racism was all around me; I observed it. Racist aggressions were explicit and exposed, and though I was deeply uncomfortable, I was ignorant of the ways in which structural racism constructed barriers for my Black peers. It was only as I put the pieces of my past together while studying school resegregation that I realized the number of racist aggressions Black kids must have experienced and realized that if our district had not used busing, I would never have met half of the kids I went to school with for years. I have celebrated the opportunity I had to grow up in integrated schools, but I am left with more questions than answers. For example, to what extent did integration via busing in the South change White people's attitudes about race? Considering the fact that as a White person I have chosen to unravel Whiteness and racial privilege, I think the answer is that it did not, but maybe it cracked open a door for some of us.

My understanding of Whiteness as a race as a cultural frame and identity developed later, as did my understandings of the effects of oppression and internalized racist beliefs. However, I have always worked in mixed-race settings. My teaching career comprised three parts. Part one took place in a large urban center, where from 1995-1998 I worked in multiple public schools, both in Title I/highly segregated and mixed race/class schools. I taught dance to children in Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade. In these classrooms teachers frequently offered explicit instruction in the cultural norms and expectations of their schools and classrooms, lessons that became foundational to the development of my understanding of the intersections of school and community cultures. Teachers told me what their students needed. I was the cultural outsider in these sites due to my race, youth, and status as a beginning teacher and a visiting artist with no formal teaching certification. My teaching depended entirely on trust and collaboration I gener-

ated with these teachers, especially since in some cases I could not speak to some of my students, because I speak only English. Most of the teachers I met guided me so that students and I learned together, incorporating their knowledge and insights into the ways in which I used dance to reach students.

During these experiences I received direct instruction in cross-cultural encounters, in how to be open to students, and in a teaching ethic centered on caring, and I was fortunate to literally *move* through these lessons in my first teaching medium, dance. Ultimately it was the caring and connection within these school environments that led me to pursue a K-12 teaching license. My work as a visitor back then also informed how I situated myself in this ethnography.

Part two was a fifteen-year stretch where I taught English in one mixed-race, mixed income high school. In this school, teachers often split into highly segregated relationships with students where White teachers taught more White students and Black teachers taught more Black students. I was promoted to the role of coordinator of the mostly-White IB Diploma Programme. I came to understand that racial segregation and cultural favoritism were upheld by the hidden curriculum of the school, and I realized my complicity in maintaining this segregation. I left, and after a few years as a full-time graduate student, where I began to develop the tools to read and interpret racism, neoliberalism, and inequity in education, I began the third phase of my K-12 education career. I currently teach English in a Black high school in a neighborhood with some similarities to Clement's.

I have realized that my intellectual understandings of race were grossly simplified. Despite my exposure to integration in my early years of schooling, I had come to believe race mattered far less than it had in the past, say, during Jim Crow, and that society had become more race-neutral. Di'Angelo (Highline College, 2016) explained that many Whites were groomed to

believe that our society had moved past the racial divide. I began looking at the issue differently and to see that I *needed to see* racism in its depth. Racially segregated classrooms and schools in urban America are unjust. They signify White racial power in action. Racial ignorance, or the false belief that we have moved past the need to understand race, contributes to the proliferation of this power. I grant that my intellectual development as a race theorist is grounded in a life of weak racial understanding. Years ago I thought that my experiences working and learning with people of color were enough to claim understanding of race matters. Now I claim to be just a learner. During this ethnography I was a doctoral student of educational policy studying teachers; I was also a student of anti-racist epistemology.

Performance and culture

Prior to becoming a K-12 public educator, my first teaching medium, as I explained, was dance. I was trained in dance, theatre, and performance studies. I was taught by performance ethnographer Dwight Conquergood, whose life work focused on the interrogation of how we come to know people, cultures, and ourselves, and whose later work featured a turn towards the critical, the belief that we must investigate whose lives are privileged and whose are not and develop a "view from the body" (2002, p. 146). Conquergood believed performance studies could "bridge segregated and differently valued knowledges, drawing together legitimated as well as subjugated modes of inquiry" (p. 152). This belief is embedded in my intellectual background, and this perspective is knitted into this study.

Beliefs and commitments in motion, in writing

Much of the literature on inter- or cross-racial qualitative studies suggests that based upon my race, I would be unlikely to do this work well, and some writers have said that I should be centering my energies elsewhere, in promoting anti-racist pedagogies in White communities, for

example (Hughes, 2017). I have aimed to be as honest as possible about my background and to engage in critical examination of my racial position. I have exposed a brief glimpse of the process I have undergone to learn to see the world more accurately. But DiAngelo's (2012) caveat is helpful here:

> Thoughtfulness can include being cognizant of the history we bring to racial encounters, being considerate about the language we use, being sensitive to group dynamics, and being attentive to our patterns and blind spots. But thoughtfulness taken to an extreme can become carefulness, in which we are so cautious about making a mistake or offending that we end up engaging disingenuously. (p. 217)

This passage illustrates the methodological line I attempted this research to tow.

As I write and think, I come to know over and over again there is so much to consider and to mediate without becoming so careful the project is watered down or White-washed. Racism is a boulder blocking the way; the privilege afforded me to even do this project is part of that racism. I am reminded of Wolcott's (2008) comments on "the leisure of the theory class," (p. 147). I spent a year working on this study living off of a fellowship from my university, a fellowship granted to doctoral students for four years, only one of whom in my cohort was African American. You cannot un-know ethnography's grounding in colonialism. You cannot un-know that the result of this study, for me, is a Ph.D. Wolcott wrote

> In the future we will surely be asked again to recount- and to re-count—what we took in exchange for our beneficence… There have been good intentions aplenty in all this, empathy and altruism underwritten with genuine efforts not only to understand others but to understand ourselves as well. (p. 147)

The participants in this study accepted me because they agreed with the mission of the study and its focus on teachers who dedicate their lives and do their best to educate Black children in cities. They gave me time and I aimed to give them all something concrete in return: time, attention, help with their students, reflection, camaraderie, and more. The question of what I took for *their* beneficence remains open until this paper is complete.

I sought to construct a positionality from which I can do some good. There are numerous guides for what *not* to do. hooks (1984) addressed insidious conflicts in the feminist movement in her critical analysis of political relationships from the 1960s and 1970s. She described well-meaning White women teaching White audiences about “unlearning racism” (p. 12) and explained how the White women constructed a “privileged discourse on race” (p. 12) in which they had become authorities on how to come to terms with racism that situated Black women as objects, excluded them from the conversation, and attempted to change others’ attitudes but said nothing about the structural functions of society that enable and sustain racism. hooks described this as White activist methodology that enabled the “system of racism, classism, and educational elitism [to] remain intact” (p. 12) and enabled these women to maintain and propagate elite positions. hooks identified the disingenuous legacy of White women teaching about antiracism imbued with the authoritative and exclusionary flavor of White privilege. Today, Twitter calls this #whitesplaining. In this work I exercise caution in my talk about antiracism, given these legacies. Thus I am authoring the narrative from a position of small knowledge, an author without authority, save that which I acknowledge as the work and testimony of seven women who invited me in.

My position in the research creates a conceptual, methodological, and epistemological challenge. In traditional ethnography, and in traditional social sciences, differences between the participants and the culture under study are precisely that which was valued for interrogation.

Smith (2008) explained that views of the Other became formalized during the Enlightenment "through science, philosophy and imperialism" (p. 32). The purpose of comparisons between the imperials and Others was to reinforce the advantaged position of the imperials. Positioned as a critical descendent of the imperials (White Europeans) and as a queer feminist, I seek other ways of knowing.

To enact this as a boundary-crosser/researcher required action within myself, something like what Ahmed (2017) called the feminist snap. The feminist snap means to break damaging bonds; it also means to react against pressure. To snap may mean to break a bond; after all, "a bond can be a bind" (p. 484). For Ahmed the feminist snap is about breaking through, picking up shattered pieces, building anew. It is a philosophical position that I couple with a methodological position I can apply to this research.

I worked to break through the limits of growing up in willful racial ignorance and enter Clement as a listener. Listening and speaking, making conversation, which so much of this research was, "demands copresence even as it decenters the categories of knower and known" (Conquergood, 2003, p. 357). Again, Conquergood argues, the body works with the ears to gain visceral insight into the lives of others. But once again, embodied intimacy between White and Black women cannot be assumed. Mann (2010) argued that because of differences in the ways White and Black women perceive their racial identities, gender alone may not be an effective axis for examining experience. I had gender in common with all my participants, and this had resonance for our mutual understandings, but the gaps based on race, sexuality, US region or country of origin, age, religion, political interest were there still. I aimed not to overuse either our similarities or our differences in my analyses of events.

Walcott (2008) warned against settling too much on comparisons for ethnographic understanding and other critical and poststructural ethnographers have grappled with conceptualizing comparison (Meyer, 2017). To situate myself in this project, it was important that I did not seek to understand participants' racial and other differences solely through the lens of my own identity. In all the ways described above, I sought to distort my historical lens by reconceiving my epistemological position.

Epistemological positioning informed by race, class, and gender and their intersections have shaped my responses to each informant's story, and shapes the way I wrote this study. I did not assume informants shared my beliefs about how policy forms failing schools, but over time my participants became more than informants, they became makers of meaning. Since we were positioned relationally we shifted and overlapped epistemological frames. To understand others' knowledge, I scrutinized the question of what knowledge is.

Ladson-Billings' (2000) explanation of the contrast between Eurocentric and African-centered ways of knowing was helpful. The Eurocentric paradigm claims the authority of objective truth and founds itself as the legitimate purveyor of knowledge about culture and the world. This perspective was integrated into my education both at home and in school. Ladson-Billings contrasts this frame with an African-centric position she likens to W.E.B. DuBois's double consciousness. She describes this as a "transcendent position allowing one to see and understand positions of inclusion and exclusion—margins and mainstreams" (p. 260). In her discussion Ladson-Billings believes that racial identity and epistemological positioning are not necessarily co-inscribed; being from one race does not pre-situate a person with one way of knowing the world. She warns against aligning people of color with racialized epistemologies. I read it as a White person looking for a way out of White epistemologies. Ladson-Billings offers alterity, which she

defines as the "alter ego category of otherness that is specific to each culture's 'metaphor of the self'" (p. 262). Alterity, or the liminal position, is one from which, because of society's forced constraints, a researcher is able to see both mainstream and margin.

What I have experienced as an educator and a queer student of feminist theory informs the understandings I bring to and use to process ethnographic data. I claim to know a liminal position because as a woman-educator-queer-outsider I have been in and out of positions of privilege. I have witnessed exclusion and been excluded. I have experienced class, gender, and sexual marginalization. I have experienced the ageism of the academy as I have moved through the experience of earning a Ph.D. during middle age. I have witnessed the racism of the academy as Black women in the same college of education as myself became subject to policies, such as the increase of GRE scores for admission, meant to exclude precisely their population. Yet I realize it cannot be enough to say that because a thing has happened to me it is therefore the same as to another or that because I witnessed a thing I therefore understand it intimately. I embrace the doubly sharpened position of an epistemology that claims to know where it is and to know there are gaps. As Denzin (1997) pointed out

> All texts are shaped by the writer's standpoint, by one's location within culture, history, and by the structure of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, family, and nation. Standpoint reflexivity, long associated with the feminist perspective, questions this positioning, recognizing the 'situatedness and partiality of all claims to knowledge' (Marcus, 1994, p. 571). (p. 220)

My recordings and reportings of the data can only be situated and partial, mediated through adherence to principles of anthropological rigor (Ogbu, 1981), an active search for

moments of blindness (Lamphere, 1994) so that I can open my eyes wider, and willingness to change my view so that I can see what I have missed.

Though the outcome of this ethnography will be represented in the written word, it is derived from an experience in which word and body were indistinguishable. As a scholar and educator whose first medium is dance, I think of all learning as embodied, bodily, energetic, improvisational, and performative. I experience the world not just through words but also through visceral experience, bodily witnessing, touch, breath, proximity, negative space, and memory. Performance studies and queer theory inform scholarly understandings of these ways of knowing. Queer theorists believe the "world cannot be known directly through experience, nor can any text directly represent raw experience" (Denzin, 1997, pp. 221-222). The research text cannot represent the truth of anyone's experience—neither the participant's nor mine. Therefore my position as researcher must be explained separately from my position as author. I existed in a state of reflexive being as researcher but as an author, how do I take these commitments to the written word? Queer theory helps again: "the concept of reflexive agency is located not in a unified subject-author but rather in subversive bodily acts, the body being the site at which agency is realized (Clough, 1994, p. 155)" (Denzin, 1997, p. 222). What this means for my position as author is that I write through memory to language. It means rereading my notes and interview transcripts and locating the ethnographic experience at the site of the body, that is, each participant's body (which I saw, heard, and sometimes touched), my body (in which experience was resonant), our bodies of knowledge, separate but conjoined through shared experience and dialogue, and to record the ways in which our bodies mattered, to capture the fleshiness of educators' experiences. I will focus on the relevance of educators embodied, their dancing, their postures, and their vocal presences given. I will try to make the text dance like Allecia's voice did in front of

her students. I will try to capture in language meeting D.J., who wept, and whom I embraced, on my first day. I will consider the layers, the seven participants and me, interacting with the space of Clement Elementary and the larger "space" of the contemporary urban center, and from these considerations a text of these bodies will emerge. It should be like Pollock's (1998) Performative Writing, "evocative, metonymic, subjective, citational, and consequential" (Madison & Hamera, 2006, p. xxii). The life and movement I observed and participated in should be set in motion, in language.

This study, in its written form, aims to reach diverse audience of educators who believe in and work toward social justice, as well as outsiders to this mission who value rigorous applications of ethnographic methods and critical examinations of educational policy. My hope is that the gaps I expose will provide spaces for new conversations. I believe in the precept that what I do not know can create awareness of what others also do not know, too. Through a shared consciousness of what matters most to all of us we can co-create more common understandings. That is all I can do.

Population, Participants, and Sampling

Population

This study intends to contribute to strengthened understandings of the conditions veteran and Black teachers in high-poverty schools face. Part of the reason this is important is because new teachers outnumber veteran and though the number of teachers of color has increased, it is nowhere near at pace with the number of students of color (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). Meanwhile, economic disparities have increased and may continue to increase, which would promise further separation of the overwhelmingly white, wealthy class from poor and working class communities of color (Essletzbichler, 2015). Logically this tells us that if economic trends

continue, as they are likely to do unless the political tide shifts, we are going to see a worsening of this problem. The teaching force will remain "greener" (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014, p. 1). Although studies have found that teachers of color may be more likely to remain committed to "and continue teaching in high-poverty urban schools" (Whipp & Geronime, 2017), others point out that due to mass layoffs and displacements caused when districts close underperforming schools in Black and Latino neighborhoods, there has been a significant and underconsidered loss of teachers of color (Rizga, 2016). In this way, teachers of color have been pushed out of jobs at high poverty schools for the same reasons students are pushed out: they fail at the uphill data climb. The public representation of teachers in high-poverty schools has become a false narrative of doubt, mistrust, and the blaming of failure on teachers. Researchers have stated that as the population of students of color grows in the U.S. public education system, we need more educators of color because racial match leads to greater success for students of color (Ahmad & Boser, 2014). Research has found that veteran educators benefit schools in numerous ways (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey). As complex as these problems are (the profession drives veteran and Black teachers away from high poverty schools due to pressure, stress, and stigmatization, yet it needs veteran and Black teachers because children of color learn best from both), very little qualitative research addresses the issue.

Because the research problem is centered in the paradox articulated above, I sought to conduct the research in a neighborhood school (not a charter) that was not undergoing gentrification. I did this because the factors of charter schooling and gentrification change teachers' work and I did not want to investigate those factors. I found Clement, it fit the criteria, and the principal, Dr. Clementine, was interested in the study. She fit the inclusion criteria because she had spent her career, both as a teacher and administrator, in Title I schools in urban areas. Though the

neighborhood itself was experiencing elements of gentrification, these had not affected the school as of the time of the study.

Of course, the contexts of the neighborhood school and the district were intrinsically tied to what and how the participants taught, especially concerning Question 2, *multipurpose site of hope.* None of the participants lived nearby, so it was not *their* neighborhood per se, but some of them related to it as if it was. The school district offered little resistance to the elements of neoliberal competition and accountability that disproportionately and negatively affected learning environments in the lowest-income, most racially segregated schools (see Lipman, 2009; Au, 2016). The cultural factors of the neighborhood and the school district bore heavily upon the actions and reactions of the teachers in the daily school context.

Neighborhood schools are centered in culture and community. In keeping with the tradition of ethnography in education research, this research reflects the belief that the immersion in daily life and the cultural detail that will emerge (Yon, 2003) will offer ways of understanding teachers' work that cannot be known through any other methodology. In mainstream social science research terms, Clement Elementary School was ideal for this research because it was a neighborhood school whose students represented the majority of many urban school districts in terms of race and socio-economic status. The site could be considered generalizable or normal because it is, on average, quite representative of what is widely known about such sites. It is a 'normal' urban school with a very high percentage of Black and Hispanic students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. However, as I explain in the philosophical paradigm section, because the discourse of the urban failing school normalizes inequitable processes of subject formation and the uneven distribution of power, what is normal in terms of the population cannot be considered a characteristic of validity for this project; it would be dishonest to make it so and

would reify the very subordination of power dynamics in U.S. education this study seeks to undermine. Trustworthiness and validity in this study are not derived from situating the population or sampling techniques within the commonly accepted norms. Rather, I strove for an integrated epistemological approach to the site and research participants. If the integrity of the paradigm and the research practices can be maintained, then validity will be determined "by the nature of the critical understandings [a given observation] produces" (Denzin, 1997, p. 8). What mattered most for this project about Clement as a research site was not that it was, in general, similar to other high poverty urban schools but rather that it was a meaningful place for each individual participant and shaped her work and her life in significant ways.

The research design required long-term involvement in one school site, collecting a large amount of data from a small number of participants, in keeping with the methods and principles of qualitative ethnographic research. Wolcott (2008) wrote that ethnography's strength is its ability to delve into a case in depth and that "the ideal unit of study for any ethnographic inquiry is one of something" (p. 93). In that spirit, I selected one school. However, within that one school, I selected several participants to observe and interview throughout the study. Wolcott warned that even modest increases in sample size may "compromise an opportunity to report in depth" (p. 93). However, such methodological choice making became a subjective matter. Wolcott did not provide a formula to calculate an ethnographer's capacity to process. I decided that a principal's perspective was essential, and she agreed to participate. In addition, I intended to recruit 5 teachers.

Participants

After the recruitment process was completed, I had 7 participants, 1 principal and 6 teachers. They were all veteran U.S. educators, 5 Black, 1 Filipino, and 1 White. The participants

had all experienced two or more decades of late 20th and early 21st century educational policy reform, along with the re-segregation of U.S. schools and an ever-widening income and achievement gap. All the educators in this study had spent the bulk of their careers in high poverty, predominantly Black elementary schools. All had Masters degrees. Most had done some doctoral work as well. Three had completed doctoral degrees in education and one was nearing the dissertation stage for a doctorate in Educational Leadership. Six were from the United States and one grew up in the Philippines. Lyric and Dr. Clementine described their childhood neighborhoods as similar to Clement's. Allecia had been educated in predominantly Black public schools as a child.

Sampling

As explained, the school site met specific selection criteria, criteria that were purposely integrated to the philosophical paradigm around which the study was designed. Participation in the research was limited to veteran teachers with 10-30+ years of experience because I sought to learn how veteran teachers understood shifts in local, state, and national policy that have taken place over the last few decades. Teachers with fewer years of experience would not have the direct experience with the policies that have shifted over the last two decades; therefore, they would not be able to contribute data to the study. Teachers all had to work in the research site. They were of diverse races based on the group who volunteered to participate. They were all women because there were no male teachers at the school who met the study criteria.

Once research approval was secured, I intended to recruit a core group of four or five veteran teachers with 10-30+ years of experience and one principal. I sought participation through emails and face-to-face communication at the start of the study. My intention, if more than 5 participants volunteered, was to screen candidates through brief, face-to-face meetings

and determine the most suitable candidates. The selection criteria included years of experience in Title I schools and years at the study site. I planned to narrow the participant pool to the five teachers with the most overall years of experience teaching and the longest tenures in the school site. As shown above, this is not what happened. I chose to work with all seven participants who volunteered, instead of turning one of them down. This decision evidences the integrity of the research design and philosophical paradigm. I sought to construct a critical ethnography and valued negotiated meanings. Eliminating one or two participants, who approached me willing to offer their perspective on their work, because I did not want to oversaturate my notebook or my energy level, seemed wrong. To refuse to work with all participants who volunteered seemed akin to shutting down the voices of participants who expressed a need to share theirs. Critical research necessitates the investigation of what it means for members of a society to be marginalized and silenced (Rodriguez, 2016). I could not assume the role of silencer in this process. They were intrigued by the project and wanted to help answer the research questions. I did not say no.

Finally, though my personal experience is as a secondary educator, I selected elementary school because I want to examine teachers whose experience with their students is more immersive and inclusive of pedagogies of both academic subjects and social dimensions. Young (1981) explained that while schooling is implicated in the process by which certain individuals experience a type of selection for participation in various income categories, “it is at the secondary level that the major decisions are made about the educational path” (p. 123). The sorting process begins in earnest in U.S. public secondary schools and in my experience, tightly shapes teachers’ work socially, curricularly, and pedagogically. In elementary school, such decisions—the sorting and tracking of children—I assumed would not yet be so fixed. Also, elementary students have the least amount of educational history following them in to their schooling, and so, as a factor

that influences how students relate to teachers, this aspect of schooling, its fixing of children into their future places in the economic sector, I felt would be least evident in elementary school.

To conclude this section, ethnography is a research methodology in which "place and purpose have to intersect" (Wolcott, 2008, p. 38). Place influenced participants' knowledge in fundamental ways. Though the participant criteria were established in advance, participant selection was based on participants' desire rather than any narrowing or exclusion on my part. Thus, the philosophical purpose of the study and its critical, reflexive orientation are evidenced in the methods of participant selection.

Data Collection Process

Once the IRB approved the study, attending Clement Elementary School became my job. I became a privileged witness to participants' teaching process and even at times a co-teacher or assistant within the classrooms of six teachers. I walked the halls keeping an eye out for Dr. Clementine, the principal, seeking opportunities to observe her in faculty and student meetings. I kept hand-written notes describing events and evidence that provide insight into both research questions, Question 1, *navigate and negotiate*, and Question 2, *multipurpose site of hope*.

As a participant-observer at Clement, I developed a consciousness of who I was as the research progressed so that I could understand how the data itself was filtered through the changing lens of me. Haraway (1988) exposed the inauthenticity of objectivity in her work on feminism and the "science question." I had no delusion of objectivity at any point during my data collection. All of the data reflects my lens, which changed as the study progressed. At first I was an outsider, as I had to navigate the spaces within the school, the participants, and the non-participants who became frequent companions during my time at Clement. As an observer, I sometimes slipped into the position of learner, meaning I related and reacted to what teachers

were teaching as I do as a learner. Later in the study, I found myself following expected patterns of movement, visiting particular classes at the same time each week. For example, I went to Allecia's class at 8 AM most Wednesdays to participate in her Social-Emotional Learning session and do small-group reading tutorials. I visited Jewell during her math hour. Lyric's class was a good place to end the day, so I was often there from 12:30 to 2:30 PM. In this way I slipped into (and helped to create) a pace for everyday life, which my participants and I came to expect.

It is just this notion of everyday life and its regularity and consistency that Wolcott (2008) suggested the ethnographer pay close attention to. Ethnography, Walcott insisted, "must be predicated on difference… It is difference itself to which ethnographers attend" (p. 139). In my work on Question 1, *navigate and negotiate,* my field notes consist of descriptions of what was happening in teachers' classrooms, where I disciplined myself to focus on moments I perceived as teaching, those that would reveal the participants' knowledge of teaching and their ways of navigating policies to educate children. However this meant engaging in the persistent question of what constituted teaching, which became both clearer and blurrier as I became more consistent in my patterns of observation and settled into a schedule. I got to know the participants and their patterns very well, but I also became part of these patterns, which inevitably influenced what the participants were doing. In some classrooms, Jewell's and Lyric's primarily, I came to almost always function as an assistant teacher, whereas in Lucca's music class, I almost always used the rocking chair she set aside for me to sit and write what I was seeing. Over time, I became attuned to each teacher's unique methodology, but I also learned to notice moments of difference, some moments I perceived as teaching that participants perhaps did not intend to be teaching. In other words, I noticed many moments of unintentional teaching, teaching that fell outside conventional lesson plans.

Wolcott (2008) warned ethnographers of being swept up by comparison and focusing more on difference, encouraging us to make “a conscious effort to attend to the richness of detail *internal* to the account” (p. 141). In this spirit, I did not look for differences between the teachers. Rather, I noticed that they themselves slipped in and out of modes of behavior: their “teaching” selves who followed the various scripts of lesson plans and district mandates and other selves, what Lyric called “Lyric” versus “Mrs. Lawrence.” When “Lyric came to work” that meant a whole different kind of teaching was possible. These differences within participants’ moods and modes of being came to inform the findings in crucial ways.

Racial identity, heritage, and pride were essential to Clement overall and in each teacher’s classroom in her own way. Recording evidence of details of racial identity inform both Question 1, *navigate and negotiate,* and Question 2, *multipurpose site of hope.* Yet, in the same way that I did not make deliberate comparisons between different teachers’ styles, I also did not dwell in comparisons of different teachers’ racial identities or their navigation of racial identity, history, and teaching within their classrooms. I noted some race-based comparisons some participants made between themselves and others, which pointed to important ways participants practiced situating themselves and making meaning of their choices within the larger context of the school and community. As a novice learner of both ethnography and Black cultural teaching, I used some comparison to understand what I was seeing. For example, I noted that some Black participants taught Black children academic content through a Black cultural lens and to understand this, I compared such details to how similar cultural anchors are absent in the White and multicultural environments I was most familiar with. I also noted how others, both Black and non-Black, navigated cultural similarities as well as differences, in heritage knowledge, values, social class, and more, both with their students and with the policies and policy actors that in-

formed the work they were charged with doing. Therefore, while characteristics of difference obviously functioned as an unavoidable feature in the ethnography, Wolcott's (2008) precept that the comparative detail should hone us more closely in on the internal details of an account drove the focus of the data collection done in the field.

Most of the data is constituted in hand-written notes. There are also a small number of photographs, drawings, and recordings. I made the drawings as Brooklyn was teaching art classes, which helped me to see how her teaching might be absorbed the other learners in the classrooms. The photos and recordings capture moments of learning I witnessed in several art and music classes. Compared to the words I wrote, there are very few of these other data sources, such that they hardly contribute to the saturation of the data (Saunders, et al., 2018).

I also conducted interviews with each participant. With the school principal, Dr. Clementine, we completed two interviews. With the other six participants, we completed three each. These interviews have all been transcribed. The interview questions can be found in Appendix A, but as I was conducting the interviews, my use of the questions was flexible.

The teachers who participated in this research were living and working under several state-specific uncertainties. They lived in the United States, where the idea of a state-run "district," was popular among conservatives (Wong & Chen, 2003; Schueler, Goodman, & Deming, 2017). Participants were aware that their governor might choose an invasive type of intervention if scores did not improve. Among the many messages in such proposals, both implicit and explicit, is that teachers are at-risk of failure and only the patriarchal intervention and control of the state will provoke the necessary changes. This political condition was always under the surface in Clement. However, while direct questions about politics did enter our conversations at times (especially with Dr. Clementine), they did not form the bulk of my questioning. The methodo-

logical focus of the study was not on responding to the perpetual deficit messaging about the school. Instead, its focus was on knowledge, problem solving, and personal engagement in educating children.

As I was engaged in the study, I held frequent conversations with my participants to ask questions or elaborate on topics that emerged during observations. Oftentimes, these discussions sprung up in down times, like while walking a group of students down the hall or sneaking a minute to write notes to one another during a faculty meeting. These conversations looked a lot like those I had held during moments in my other teaching jobs. For the purposes of this study, they constituted a form of member checking (Zembylas, 2007: Haynes, 2008) and allowed me to garner feedback that led to more sensitivity in my data collection process. Also, throughout the process I have asked participants to read transcripts and verify their truth or propose modifications if needed.

Nevertheless, the data has all been collected and filtered through me. With the exception of the interview transcripts and several of the notes participants wrote to or with me, the data are filtered through my senses, my hands, and my interpretations. These data, and the analyses that followed, produce the "partial truths" (Segall, 2001) of this ethnography.

Data Analysis and Writing Process

No matter the ethnographer's good intentions, "representing Others is always going to be a complicated and contentious undertaking" (Madison, 2005, p. 4). Given the reflexive nature of this project, data collection and data analysis did not function as wholly distinct steps. There was a continuous and informal analytical process that took place interactively and informed data collection (Ezzy, 2002). At first this was improvisational, an intuitive part of the participant-observation process, which grew with the relationships between participants and me. Later, it

became more purposeful, and as questions arose during fieldwork, I asked them, and participants often engaged me in analytical conversations about what I had witnessed and what we were experiencing. Sometimes this process occurred in the reverse, where participants would ask me questions about their experience. The data collection experience frequently included the interactive analytical experience.

Describing the principles of "good" ethnography Spindler and Spindler (2000) wrote,

> We are interested in the meaning that social actors in contexts assign to their own behavior and that of others. We are concerned with the ways in which people organize information relevant to their behavior in social contexts. And we try to understand how individuals emotionally load their cultural knowledge, thereby assigning priorities that are not a direct function of the taxonomic ordering of that cultural knowledge. (p. 254)

In this passage, Spindler and Spindler outline three concepts that I found succinctly summarize what informed this process of data analysis. They wonder how participants give meaning to their worlds, how they organize information, and how individual emotion interacts with cultural knowledge. These three interests place *individual processes of meaning making* at the forefront of ethnographic analysis. As educators, I watched each participant in the act of making meaning of the interactions she was undergoing with her pupils. As teachers, it was their business to make meaning of the world and translate that into communications with children. As such, it was not the researcher's job to make meaning from the research site. It was the researcher's job to examine what and how meaning was already being made. In this conception, my job was to process others' processing. This suggests a holistic, reflexive, and metacognitive approach to the consideration of the data. Using this precept as a guide, the data analysis process involved reading and rereading the data, going through a systematic coding process, and then

looking for recurrent themes and trends across the notes and testimonies of the seven participants.

This process has involved the use of qualitative data analysis (QDA) software, Atlas.ti. I found this tool provided freedom to create quotations and codes, to annotate both the quotations and the codes themselves, to organize codes into master code groups, and to reflect and reorganize as needed. This software allowed me to sort and view multiple aspects of the study at any given time, which was useful given the quantity of written notes and interview transcripts. It was possible to view multiple documents at one time, which provided a visual sense of the broad sweep of the study. The ability to see broadly enabled me to narrow and hone my focus.

Initially, the coding process was intuitive and open. I attempted to get a sense of the whole, to see what emerged in the early field notes and observations. I began the coding process chronologically, with the earliest field notes and first interviews, working through the data until the final pages of field notes and interviews from May and June 2017. At first the types of codes applied to the data tended to be descriptive, enabling me to begin sorting out what was happening in the research site (Saldaña, 2009) and what participants' teaching knowledge was. While coding continued and subtleties emerged, types of codes changed. The research questions also evolved and solidified. Examining the data in light of the two research questions, 1) *"navigate and negotiate"* and 2) *multipurpose site of hope* meant focusing coding approaches to the research questions. It became common for some data to require simultaneous coding, to explain more than one instance of a code at one time (Saldaña). There were also participants who repeated verbal themes and mottos, which required In Vivo coding (Saldaña). Participants also spoke frequently of themselves and their ideals, both to their students and to me, which warranted what Saldaña called values coding. Perhaps the most frequent type of code I used, however, was the

process type (Saldaña). Because teaching is fluid behavior, constantly changing to accommodate the multiple needs intersecting at once, process coding enables “consideration of the complex interplay of factors that compose a process” (p. 80) and allow for the analysis of how events emerge, how they shift over time, and how they generate meaning for those involved. Other code types were used for particular participants who had unique ways of relating to the study. For example, D.J. often told stories of her past and talked about deep psychological and political themes, so field notes and interviews demanded motif and narrative types of codes. Jewell also told stories in her interviews, so narrative coding of these data worked best.

As initial codes solidified, I began to rename and organize codes into groups. This meant merging some codes and figuring out redundancies. In this phase of the process, trends and categories began to emerge, which I divided into four code groups. These four code groups were Teaching Craft, the Craft of Countering Structural Oppression, Structural Oppression, and Power of Love. I later added the code group Methodology as I began to notice teachers’ metacognitive processes recorded in the field notes. These groups encompassed elements of life at Clement and teachers’ work that consistently presented throughout the study. In the final phase of data analysis, I examined these code groups to determine underlying themes, which will structure the upcoming chapter of this paper. As Saldaña (2009) suggested, in this final phase, where I underwent a shift from raw coding, to organizing codes into groups, to thematic analysis, and finally, to writing, As initial codes solidified, I began to rename and organize codes into groups. This meant merging some codes and figuring out redundancies. In this phase of the process, trends and categories began to emerge, which I divided into four code groups. These four code groups were Teaching Craft, the Craft of Countering Structural Oppression, Structural Oppression, and Power of Love. I later added the code group Methodology as I began to notice teachers’ meta-

cognitive processes recorded in the field notes. These groups encompassed elements of life at Clement and teachers' work that consistently presented throughout the study. In the final phase of data analysis, I examined these code groups to determine underlying themes, which will structure the upcoming chapter of this paper. In this final phase, where I underwent a shift from raw coding, to organizing codes into groups, to thematic analysis, and finally, to writing, I began to develop an understanding of how the data answered the research questions. During this phase of the process, participants were invited back in to review content relevant to them personally. Their feedback was incorporated into the final written product.

As the writing ensued, three themes emerged from the initial data analysis for inclusion in this dissertation. The first two related to Question 1) *navigate and negotiate.* The first, policy-adaptive pedagogy, relates to how educators navigated and negotiated policy constraints through adaptations of practice. Some of these adaptations had taken place over many years as curricular demands changed and educational reforms demanded different methods of teaching. Some of these adaptations were related to how to direct and manage students' behavior and motivation. Teachers were experimenters and they changed and synthesized their methods so that what they felt worked suited the policy demands. The second theme, culturally responsive pedagogy, synthesized teachers' negotiations of curricula that often excluded the experiences and identities of the students. Teachers had developed methods of culturally responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogy that added to the culturally excluding curriculum, sometimes emphasizing the role of African Americans in the material they were teaching, but more often diverting from the curriculum to address the needs of the students more directly. The third theme, community outreach and 'inreach,' developed in response to Question 2, *multipurpose site of hope.* This theme addresses

the site as a whole, and incorporates ways in which participants included outsiders in their plans to improve student's lives but also brought out intimate versions of themselves.

In shifting from data analysis to composition, I established the following norms for the writing process: 1) focus on the research questions, 2) keep myself out of it, and 3) let the participants' actions, speech, and, hopefully, their knowledge, emerge. Chapters 4 and 5 represent the best exercise of these norms, which were influenced in two ways. Alsup (2004) pointed out that while the practice of self-reflexivity in the reporting of qualitative data has been a popular approach, too much researcher reflexivity can "distance the researcher from her participants" (p. 222). The second impetus that led me to establish these norms was Allecia, one of the participants, who upon reading an early draft of a section about her, pointed out that moments I had written reflecting on my experience of the data made her wonder *who* the ethnographic account was actually about.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Evaluation Criteria

Assumptions

Many of the assumptions within this study emanated from my personal experiences with K-12 teaching, which I have done for over twenty years, as guest teaching artist, full-time content teacher, substitute teacher, administrator, and researcher. These assumptions are:

- Teachers would share understandings and knowledge of teaching practices and methods derived from their backgrounds, educations, and collective teaching experiences.
- Through years of practice, teachers' knowledge and understanding would have evolved and adapted to changing cultural conditions.
- The representation of teachers as failures, used to shape the public's sense of teachers, would have affected the teachers themselves.

- Neoliberal education policies, such as merit pay and accountability tests, would make schools less humane places and construct a competitive culture in which teachers had to prove their value instead of acting upon knowledge of their value.
- Already addressed, my Whiteness located me in the power structure that created unequal opportunities in our society and would affect the relationships I developed in the research site.
- Policy decisions would be unlikely to serve the needs of learners or their teachers, but dedicated teachers would attempt to make their teaching fulfilling anyway.
- Policy attempts to construct the teacher, but teachers find ways to construct authentic lives and connect with students in ways that promote learning and even joy despite policies.
- Authenticity and teaching in the face of policy impositions would have different meanings for each participant.

Limits of critical praxis

Though it draws on elements of critical ethnography, this study cannot be considered such. If it were, it would be written with the participants so that the ethnographic goal "the dialogic relationship with the Other whose destination is the *social transformation* of material conditions that immediately oppress, marginalize, or otherwise subjugate the ethnographic participant" (Brown & Dobrin, 2004, p. 5, emphasis added). In Brown and Dobrin's version of critical ethnography, problem identification within the site of fieldwork would be followed by solution-generation. That is not an element that my ethnographic study achieved other than in small ways. I was not the usual visitor, like a critic from the district or a charitable outsider looking for ways to fix things. I came to be part of teachers' classrooms. I did not evaluate or contribute to any of

the accountability procedures teachers were held to. I was not there to remind my participants of their subjugation to an unequal system but rather to see them as powerful agents. My hope was for participants to see me as a defender of their practice, not a judge.

By all angles, these differences between the usual observer in this research context and myself do not amount to much in terms of critical research practice. The research did not attempt to alter the existence of the extreme accountability structures within the school system. To become an active agent of change, and to create a research structure in which participants might co-engage in change making with me might require another study altogether. Indeed, after this year of study and another year of incubation and data processing, I can envision another process by which the participants and myself could co-create a more liberatory teaching praxis within this culture of extreme accountability. But it could not take place within the school site itself.

Limits of geographic anonymity

I accepted the strict anonymity that the school district and IRB insisted upon, despite the descriptive limits that result from this anonymity. Throughout this dissertation, I refer to the school as urban or as predominantly Black, but I do not reveal the location beyond the general "urban America." Because the participants, the location, the school, the district, and the geographic region will remain concealed, no public actions undertaken between the researcher and the participants could be part of the written study. The original applications and the agreements between me and the school district, as well as me and my institution's IRB, limit the degree to which the study could be action-driven. It is also very important to make clear that the participants did not want to be identified and their anonymity was a condition of their participation. This must tell us a lot about the culture of surveillance we function under in educational institu-

tions. Participants felt free to communicate with me about their teaching because their identities were concealed.

Trustworthiness, validity, and reliability: Towards honesty as the best criteriology

Trustworthiness. Seale (2003) explained that shifts in criteriology, that is, the standards or criteria by which qualitative research is judged, have led to a mass of conflicting notions of quality that each researcher must sift and sort through. It is time, within a few pages, to move to the reporting of data, and here my task is to explain to readers how and why they should trust that what I have to say is true. Yet, given the profusion of paradigms (Lather, 2006) and readers' expectations, this is nearly impossible. What I use here to propel forward may seem oversimplified. It is a commitment to radical honesty, which will result in suggestions of knowledge without knowledge claims. Jackson (as cited in Conquergood, 2003) developed the notion of "radical empiricism," (p. 355) which draws no boundary between the observed and the observer and instead locates validity within the "*interplay* between these domains" (p. 355). Conquergood explained further, stating, "The radical empiricist's response to the vulnerabilities and vicissitudes of fieldwork is honesty, humility, self-reflexivity, and an acknowledgement of the interdependence and reciprocal role-playing between knower and known" (p. 356).

The chapters that follow construct the findings, with the participants' feedback in the form of member checks where possible (Zembylas, 2007; Haynes, 2008). The voice is mine. The passages from my field notes are filtered through my body, mind, and spirit. The passages from interviews are the participants' direct quotes, yet they will also be filtered through me both in their original iterations (after all I asked the questions) and their selection (I read and re-read the data). As Lincoln and Denzin (2003) wrote, "All writing reflects a particular standpoint: that of the inquirer/ author. All texts arrive shaped implicitly or explicitly by the social, cultural, class,

and gendered location of the author" (p. 17). I agree with this viewpoint; thus, what is represented in this text is my standpoint. In this text I am representing my interpretation of my observations of teaching at Clement. Under no illusion that I am *becoming* the voices of the participants or subsuming their identities into mine, but that I retain my voice as I report my observations, I construct a form of trustworthiness. There is space between seven women and me that I could not breach, therefore that this text cannot breach. There is space between this text and them, which means the reader will not be transported there. I bring the reader no closer to Clement Elementary than me. But the text has been thoroughly subjected to rigorous inspection.

Validity. Debates abound about how ethnographies, both traditional and critical, can and should achieve validity (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p. 139). Some ascribe to Geertz's (2003) assertion that "ethnography is thick description" (p. 149) to "rescue the said" of social discourse and "fix it in perusable terms" (p. 160). Thick description turns the culture of the research site into a text which has extracted what was said from its saying. A performance ethnography perspective argues that such a rescue constructs a "Eurocentric, print-based bias that potentially silences the subaltern" (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p. 140). Instead the goal should be, according to Conquergood (cited in Lincoln & Denzin, 2003) argued that instead of "rescuing the *said* from the *saying,* a performance paradigm struggles to recuperate the *saying* from the *said,* to put mobility, action, and agency back into play" (p. 140). Like the radical empiricist, one who subscribes to this perspective does not expect a disembodied, observer-produced text to earn the stamp of validity through authorial techniques. Here, validity needs to be defined quite differently. Drawing again from critical ethnography (Anderson, 1989), I recognize that the participants' reflections on their social realities were rendered as theoretical constructs. This project cannot achieve valid-

ity through the construction of the interpretation of the observed. It must construct the most concise possible rendering of how the participants *were interpreting* their work in their domain.

Ultimately, reflexivity should subsume validity as an evaluative consideration for this project. According to Anderson (1989), "for critical ethnographers, the locus of validity in research is neither the research technology and the 'objective' distance it provides nor the cultural informant's meanings" (p. 14). It is the exploration of the "dialectic relationship between social structure and human agency" (p. 14), or reflexivity, that disciplines and ensures the rigor of this project.

Conclusion

Guba and Lincoln (1994) claimed that generalization in critical qualitative research "can occur when the mix of social, political, cultural, ethnic, and gender circumstances and values is similar across settings" (p. 114). I must represent this research in a generalized urban American elementary school, which may share common traits such as racial isolation and generational disinvestment or gentrification and neoliberal reinvestment (or even a bit of both). However, urban American elementary school teachers are also often subject to particular generalizations in mainstream America formed by those with biased and/or privileged epistemological positions. Generalizability in this case must be troubled. Well-known generalizations will be challenged in the findings that follow, but the point is not then to argue that these findings can be generalized across urban American schools and their teachers. This project does not aspire to become an allegory of teachers in the urban American elementary school of today. On the other hand, it actually hopes to disturb biased ideas about urban schools through its narratives of the approaches and strategies, motivations and methods, and histories and hopes, of seven individual participants.

Several methodologies support the desirability of such a pursuit. Counter-story in critical race methodology is defined as a “tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). Moreira (2012) codifies the “resisting story,” which resists “disembodied knowledge construction that still tends to reproduce the very oppression it intends to challenge; resisting narrative that defies…” (p. 164). In the next chapters the counter-story and the resisting story become very similar types of story.

4. FINDINGS

Introduction

The data analyzed in this chapter are derived from observations and interviews collected from October 2016 to May 2017. Each day, I visited at least two teachers, rotating through the classrooms of the six teachers and observing Dr. Clementine in public spaces whenever possible. I did not observe in her office. I conducted myself in this rotation as if it were my job. I followed the patterns of each teacher and the subjects and/or grade levels she taught at different times of day, and I was immersed in the school's rhythms and routines.

In Chapter 1, I examined the problem of segregated schools in terms of the policy-driven and mediatized portrayal that shapes the failing school narrative. I discussed school and neighborhood segregation and suggested that the condition of segregated schools we face today could be viewed as de jure segregation, because though race-based segregation itself is illegal, a whole slew of policies and practices that sustain race-based segregation are legal. So, though it may not be a standard usage, I claim this study is situated under conditions of de jure segregation, not de facto as is typically stated.

I also suggested in Chapter One that the conditions in segregated communities align with what Kozol (2005) termed apartheid schooling. Clement's neighborhood was a mixture of well-kept, modest homes, old apartment complexes, renovated apartment complexes, and run-down, boarded up, or uninhabited homes. There was limited evidence of a development or improvement plan designed to serve the neighborhood's long-term residents. New construction and renovations attracted investors with means, many but not all White, who harbored the belief that the neighborhood was going to be "up and coming" and a "good investment." New residents seemed to be buying properties or moving in from the outside largely because there was income to be

made, although there was also a discourse of community improvement and "mixed income" investment (see Lipman, 2008). None of the children of these wealthier newcomers attended Clement. The students at Clement resided in houses their parents and grandparents owned, rental houses, and apartments. Many of them knew one another from the neighborhood and there were numerous family lineages and connections. There was conflict between some of the families, and there were also indications that children had seen violence, drugs, and loss in their short lives. There was likewise evidence some children had afterschool activities, traveled, and had opportunities through athletics and the arts. There did not seem to be a lot of extra money available for many of the kids, but that was not a universal truth. In other words, there was evidence of socio-economic diversity in this neighborhood usually considered under the single umbrella, "low-income." These economic conditions influenced participants' teaching in complex and nuanced ways.

In Chapter 2, I presented analyses of research literature I saw as relevant to the main concerns of the study. This literature included theoretical investigations of the social effects of marginalization, surveillance, and mainstream deficit perspectives on communities of color. I analyzed literature on American teaching, Black teachers, and culturally responsive pedagogy. I looked at studies of neoliberalism and accountability mandates and how those affect teachers. I also discussed how culture has been defined in educational ethnography, and I end the chapter with an explanation of how standpoint epistemology helps to ground the investigation of educators at Clement.

The intention of the literature review was to situate the social and political systems in which the study took place so that the threads, which are political, policy-oriented, cultural, and epistemological, that constructed many of the structures of the city and school system could be

present in our minds as we read the findings. However, as a researcher in the field, these pedantic topics were not generally at the forefront of anyone's mind. Within the walls of the school, the children and their needs ruled each day. As an ethnographer, I saw my role as participant-observer to engage as authentically as possible with participants and other members of the community and to write those findings from an asset-driven theoretical framework influenced by CRT's counterstory (Ladson-Billings, 1998) and Tuck's (2009) desire-based framework. As stated at the end of Chapter 3, what I am attempting here is intended as both counter-story (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) and, to some extent, resisting story (Moreira, 2012). I maintain that the findings of this dissertation are situated and perceived individually. I entered this study an outsider, and I left a quasi-insider. Each participant was an insider, but each had her own outsider's perspective. All of these understandings influence this chapter. Ultimately, this paper comprises 8 distinct individual perspectives.

In the first section of this chapter, I will provide further description of the context and setting of Clement and my process of getting acclimated to the site. Next I present a profile of each participant's background and approach to teaching. I then define the three themes I have selected for presentation in this chapter and explain how they related to the two research questions:

1. How did veteran teachers in one predominantly Black, low-income school "navigate and negotiate"[11] the constraints of accountability policies while striving to provide education that enriched their students' lives?[12]
2. How did Clement Elementary School function as a multipurpose site of hope[13] aiming to improve its surrounding community?[14]

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[11] Dr. Clementine, Final interview, June 2017.
[12] For the rest of the dissertation I will refer to this as Question 1, *navigate and negotiate*.
[13] Dr. Clementine, Final interview, June 2017.

Finally, I offer the stories supporting the three themes.

Clement: Location and Acclimatization

My participant observations began in earnest in early October 2016 and ended in late May 2017 on the teachers' final workday of the year. I conducted final interviews in June 2017 and began the data analysis process after all data was collected. I aspired to the expert practice of analysis during data collection (Ezzy, 2002) and agreed that the iterative, abductive process of ethnography means that questions, impressions, and ideas constantly evolve as a practice of thinking during ethnography (Green, Skukauskaite, & Baker, 2012), for this project, the most significant findings described in this chapter emerged almost a year after fieldwork ended.

In order to do this study, I wrote proposals for the school system and the institution's IRB. I met Dr. Clementine after she responded to an email I wrote asking if she was interested in the study. She and I met and talked about the study design. During this meeting she agreed to move forward to name Clement as the research site, and I completed the IRB and district applications. Then Dr. C referred me to the teachers. I met them, asked for participation, and waited for their responses. Each teacher agreed to allow me to observe two hours per week for the school year and to participate in three interviews.

Clement is located in a low-income district in the city. At the time of the study, industrial properties, including several abandoned, surrounded the school, along with a large cemetery, a gas station/convenience mart a few blocks away, a car repair shop next door, and a suburban-type neighborhood with many single-family houses and apartment buildings. Rents were lower than the average in the city, as were incomes and numbers of people with college degrees. Numbers of households headed by single women were much higher than average. The ratio of women

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[14] For the rest of the dissertation this will be Question 2, *multipurpose site of hope*.

to men in the neighborhood was about 2 to 1. The school was less than twenty years old and the property was vast; there were several acres of green grass that included a playground area and a field used for PE classes and field days. Faculty tried to ensure children got recess daily, but if there were demanding curricular events (i.e. tests) or crime in the neighborhood, the children were kept inside. Geographically, Clement was not in the most bustling or intense part of the city. There was outdoor space, there were trees, houses had yards and porches and so, a better description for the school might be urban emergent, a term Farinde-Wu, Glover, and Williams (2017) coined. Urban emergent schools are those that share "some of the same characteristics and sometimes challenges of urban intensive schools" (Milner, 2012, as cited in Farinde-Wu, Glover, & Williams, 2017, p. 281). Given the neighborhood's distance from the urban center, it may be slightly misleading to characterize it as urban.

The visual, structural reminders of financial inequity that existed outside the school did not appear inside the school building. Clement's atmosphere was cheerful, colorful, and child-centered. From the main door of Clement Elementary School people entered a large round atrium with three hallways going in three directions. The halls were named Best Behavior Blvd, Creative Circle, and Learning Lane. Centered in the atrium was a wooden display. Three giant ABC blocks had two plywood sculptures of African American children perched on them. The kids on the blocks were dressed in cute clothes like bell-bottom pants. They were reading books. They were about 1.5 times the size of real children. Small children could fit between the blocks and frequently did walk between them. No one could come in the building and not see this sculpture. Clement's students saw it multiple times a day.

The school was welcoming for children. It felt safe. The faculty was friendly, warm, and firm. The school was in the process of acquiring more equipment for science, technology, and

the arts, in line with its effort to complete a STEM program application. There were several computer labs and a science lab, two music rooms and a large art room. The technology and equipment worked most of the time, and when problems came up there was technology support available to fix it. This was not a run-down, aging, dilapidated urban school building exposing systemic disinvestment. This was a different story; the school system had invested in the school, but the social and economic system had led to a neighborhood surrounding the school that felt as though it had abandoned its residents. Worse, it felt as though municipal policies aided gentrifying investors who sought to raise property values and consequently push out long-time residents.

Transitioning into my role as researcher took time. People wondered who I was, walking the halls and watching things. I explained what I was doing on and off all year. I had been a teacher for 20 years. Being at Clement felt similar to being a visiting teacher, similar to how I was a visiting artist in schools in Chicago. In that way, it was familiar.

Someone once told me I should expect research fatigue, which faculty in predominantly Black and lower socioeconomic schools had from too many people coming in to study them and their students. I felt cautious, and I was tentative at first, concerned about the risks participants had to face from sharing the intimacy of their stories. However, when it came to making agreements about the project with the participants, they were generous and supportive. I think the teachers were tired, but rather than research fatigue, I think it was more that they had deficit-fatigue. In other words, they were tired of people looking at their school and the environment as if something was wrong with it.

The project got underway. After several visits, I developed a rapport with Ms. Vogel, the front office clerk. The entrance and sign-in process became second nature. In a short period of

time, I became a presence people expected to see. Midway through the year, Dr. Clementine sometimes confused me with her contracted teachers.

Participant Profiles

Dr. Clementine, Principal: A quality education in her students' back yard

Dr. Clementine (Dr. C., as she is known in the field notes) gave me permission to do this study and agreed to be one of my participants. She also gave me knowledge and feedback. She had earned a Ph.D. in Teaching and Learning a decade earlier, and offered advice on perspectives, methods, and literature I should use for this study. She opened the door to Clement, and her leadership guided our actions.

Dr. C. is an African-American woman in her mid 40s who became a teacher in the mid-1990s after graduating from college with degrees in Chemistry and English. Her original plan had been to become an engineer; but her mother's early death in 1991 meant that she had to return home to her family from college and find a career that enabled her to be present for her younger sister and her father. She participated in a fast-track master's program at a local university and started teaching in 1995. She quickly found that she was successful in the classroom, and her principal selected her to work with Title I children who needed extra help to become strong learners. After a few more years, she earned an Ed.S. in administration and went on to serve as an assistant principal. She earned her Ph.D. in teaching and learning in the late 2000s. She was an assistant principal for over 10 years before applying for the principal position she held at Clement. She was in her 4th year at Clement when we met, and was "loving every minute of it" (personal interview, October 21, 2016).

Dr. C cited her own experience being educated in elementary school as what drove her values and decisions at Clement. In the 1980s, as young as four years old she woke up at 4:30

a.m. in order to catch a bus to attend a school to receive a better education than the one available in her own neighborhood. In her community, as in many nationwide, busing was the district's solution to segregated schooling, and because the bus rides were so long and tedious, Dr. C's mother moved briefly to another community. In that district, teachers recommended Dr. C for testing for behavioral disorder, but the test results revealed giftedness. She was gifted and bored, so she was naughty and wanted to play. After this discovery, her mother moved her back to the community she started in and resumed the busing arrangement.

Dr. C explained that she was driven to create an environment at Clement that mirrored the one she had experienced in the best of her early childhood, just without the bus. "I don't want my kids to fear; I'm talking about my school kids. I don't want my kids to feel they have to get on a bus for an education. We're right here in their backyard, and we should be able to provide a high-quality education that will lead them through the pathways of their lives" (personal interview, October 21, 2016).

Allecia, 4th grade: "It's the years with the children that make me who I am"

Allecia, an African American woman in her early 40s, had been teaching since 2001. It was a career she resisted right after college. She had been interested in law and had taught English in Japan. Upon her return from Japan, she made her living teaching aerobics and playing the keyboard; however, a series of life circumstances, divorce and a having a baby, led her to apply for a spot in an alternative teacher certification program. She found that once she was teaching elementary school, she was made for teaching inner city kids. She had created bridges between herself and her students' community and had committed to striving to help them realize their potential and to become good people.

Though Allecia had started her teaching career determined to be subversive and refuse to teach to the test, but rather to teach, over her years she had changed her thinking. She wanted her students to be able to pass tests because tests are a fact of life in numerous fields of study all over the world. She wanted her students to show how smart they were: “My kids are brilliant, they’re smart and given opportunity and proper instruction, they’re capable of being as successful, if not more successful than counterparts” (personal interview, November 11, 2016). She had also come to believe that as a contracted employee of the school district, she was obligated to uphold the mandates, the mission, and vision of the school district. She shared a memory of her first principal observing her doing an interpretive activity with her students, and though he was impressed, he said to her as he was leaving, “I want to tell you something Allecia, nobody cares what you do if you don’t get test scores.” She was taken aback, but she also imagined him actually saying, “If you’re gonna stay with this district, you’re a contracted employee and whether or not you subscribe to this, that or the other, when you signed that you were going to honor the contract and honor the vision and the mission of the institution you’re working for, you’ve gotta buy in.” After sharing this memory, Allecia said, “It’s only right and I get it.” So in her 15 years in public schooling she had built a structured ethic of teaching that included commitment to teaching Black children, to nurture their abilities to learn and succeed, to fulfill the terms of her contract, to navigate the challenges imposed by biased policies and unpack the biases, and to create relationships that meant that her teaching went beyond the curriculum, to become more than the standards and create a situation in which her students became successful students and good people.

Lyric, Technology: “I don’t stress”

Lyric, an African American woman in her early 40s, always reminded me of the song "Waterfalls" by TLC (Lopes, Etheridge, & Organized Noize, 1994). In the opening moments of the video, three women rise up out of the water and begin to dance as they sang. In the center is T-boz, who shakes her index finger to the rhythm of the song, incorporating it into the full body dance, the wagging finger of a stern mother flowing to the grounded, smooth hips of an R&B artist. Lyric's energy was musical and calm, like the song.

Lyric was born and raised in Miami, FL in the late 1970s. She was the oldest of 6 kids in a poor household, where "it was a lot of love and it was a lot of hard times, too" (personal interview, October 17, 2016). She grew up one of the smartest kids in school, always knowing she would be a teacher or a lawyer. In the tracking system, she said, just her and another little girl were in the "smart" classes, "the only two chocolate chips in the class" (personal interview, October 17, 2016). Lyric had a particular affinity for teaching Black boys. As the oldest in a family of 6, she had carefully watched and cared for her younger brothers and had vivid memories of how readily their teachers had dismissed them because of their high levels of energy and different learning styles.

Lyric and I discussed the difference between teaching in a union district versus a non-union district. The state where we were was a right-to-work state, and public employees could not collectively bargain, but Lyric had also worked in a union district, and she found the freedom her current district had to demand her time, for example, for frequent after-school meetings, without the obligation of compensating her, extremely frustrating.

Lyric navigated policy demands and strove to shape a career that included promotion. During the study she was actively pursuing career advancement; she had applied to several assis-

tant principal vacancies and was approaching the prospectus phase of her Ed.D. at a local university.

Lyric had upbeat strategies to cope with stress. During the study she was in graduate school as well as in two subject-specific elementary school endorsement courses offered through the school district. This was all on top of her day-to-day work, which involved completing the school's application to become STEM certified and teaching 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade technology classes. She often said that she did not stress, but nevertheless there were several instances during the year where her health and wellness were at risk. She would sometimes tell me "Lyric" had come to work, instead of "Mrs. Lawrence," which was code for needing a break, just being over it all, and stressed, and exhausted. She persisted, however, meeting all those obligations and at the end of the year being promoted to STEM specialist for the school.

Lucca, Music: Tuneful, artful, beatful[15]

Lucca's second grade teacher, Mrs. Santos, inspired her to be a teacher. She described Mrs. Santos in glowing terms, as a "magical person… who played the accordion, harmonica, guitar, piano, organ, every single instrument she could put her hands on. We always had lots of fun in her class. Nobody cried, everyone was happy. That was my recollection of her. We always went to recess twice, once in the morning for half an hour and once in the afternoon for half an hour, and she always had so many things that seemed so magical to me" (Lucca, personal interview, October 13, 2016). Mrs. Santos made a permanent impression on Lucca because of her kindness. "She always had one child her and one child here [as if close by her sides] and she was teaching them. It was nice. So I said I wanted to be like her."

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[15] In the Orff technique, which Lucca taught, the word "beatful" is used to indicate a long-term goal of the teaching process. Students will become beatful, meaning knowers of rhythm.

Growing up in the Philippines, Lucca was raised in a racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse community and did not experience discriminatory behaviors among people, even though she herself was poor. Her experience teaching for 18 years in predominantly high-poverty, African American schools in the United States confused her at first, coming as she had from the Philippines and then teaching for a number of years in an ethnically diverse part of Canada. She did not use language to describe discrimination or racial segregation. She saw segregation, but she did not understand it. She taught in her school because she felt needed there and she felt that wealthy, White kids in the other region already had a lot of opportunities.

During the study, the elementary music coordinator for the district tried to get Lucca to transfer to a school in the wealthy part of the district. She reported that he said, "'You're just a magical teacher that I need for that school.' … He said it would be so much fun and easy to teach the kids" (Lucca, personal interview, February 27, 2017). Lucca was a magical teacher. She felt she was needed at Clement, not at the wealthy White school across town.

Jewell, Kindergarten: Contested methods

Jewell, an African American woman in her early 60s, had attended one of the first integrated high schools in her community growing up. In her teaching, she was elegant and soft-spoken. She had the most experience of all the participants, and she loved to teach. Her practice included a focus on the basics of literacy and numeracy. Her students wrote letters and numbers daily, did sight words, and recited their ABCs. She used ability grouping in her class, with a low, middle, and high group that shifted slightly based on their achievements.

Jewell taught traditional nursery rhymes like "Mary had a little lamb," and poems like "As I was going to St. Ives." She asked questions of her students that varied in difficulty level, which challenged them and made them feel enthusiastic. Jewell was a loving person who worked

hard to spread her attention evenly across all of her students. Over the course of the year, her students seemed to learn a lot and grow, but Jewell's methods were not the favorite of school administrators, and she had received some unfavorable feedback on her evaluations. Jewell was perceived as not sufficiently adapting to new methods and mandates, which meant that her year was at times filled with tension between her, the instructional coaches, and even to some degree, Dr. Clementine.

Jewell believed that the district was making deliberate efforts to push out older teachers and force them into retirement. Her concern about this was evident in her classroom several times throughout the school year. In Jewell's classroom, the children heard and discussed a story on a daily basis. They wrote their letters, words, and simple sentences by the end of the year. They wrote their numbers and learned the basics of calculation. Their math teacher assistant was a tiny, imaginary guy called "Mighty Math" who would sweep in to help Jewell teach math lessons. Jewell's voice and manner drew children in. However, she experienced stress and fatigue based on issues that occurred both within the school and outside it.

Brooklyn, Art: "I'm not a super hero, I'm a part of a car"

Brooklyn, a White woman in her late 40s, had taught a number of different schools in different regions of the country. She had worked at Clement since 2005, first as a general classroom educator and when I met her, as the art teacher. She had always used art in her teaching, and she loved to nurture students' creativity. During the school year I witnessed Brooklyn teaching different projects and art concepts, like Zentangles and the color wheel. I also heard stories about her perceptions of education, teaching in high-poverty schools in different areas, and what it was like being one of the few White people in a Black space.

During her career, Brooklyn had crossed many cultural boundaries to work in environments where she was in the minority. This was mostly racial and socioeconomic, but she had also worked as one of the few hearing people in a school for the deaf on one occasion. She had also crossed socioeconomic boundaries in her own family. Her parents raised her and her siblings in the projects, but later in life her parents made some money and moved out of poverty. She was a single mom and had moved to her current city alone, had struggled to make ends meet and give her son a good life. Meanwhile at least one of her sisters had become upper middle class, so Brooklyn had experienced many different class and racial communities.

One of the things Brooklyn had to navigate as she made her way through the school year had little to do with her own teaching. Her son was making his way through 9th grade and in the middle of the year, he became deeply depressed. When that happened, I observed its impact on Brooklyn's work and her perspective. She was distressed and absorbed in helping him. As the year came to a close, his mental health improved.

D.J. Wright, 2nd grade: Storyteller and craftswoman

D.J. Wright is a Black woman in her fifties. She grew up in a professional family in Washington, DC. D.J. grew up hearing stories about her great-great-grandmother, who had been enslaved. D.J.'s parents were both college graduates, and her mother was a math whiz who worked behind the scenes for the U.S. Department of Defense, as one of the human computers, like the women featured in the film *Hidden Figures.* D.J. kept her hair short and natural yet lightened to create a striking golden crown effect. She was tall and fit and fast on her feet, with her wit, and with her mouth. Other teachers in the school had mentioned that she would be perfect for this study; she had worked in the district for over twenty years, all in high-needs schools. She was creative and passionate and had a wealth of knowledge and stories to tell.

Later in this chapter I share the findings of theme 3, structural oppression, and I describe the first conversation I held with D.J. when I began the study, when she shared a dramatic and damaging incident that had taken place within the school district several years earlier.[16] In this conversation D.J. revealed that this incident had seriously affected her relationship to teaching; it was a traumatic experience within the profession that had helped to catalyze several other traumatic experiences in her life. D.J.'s way of navigating and negotiating accountability policy could not be considered outside the context of this trauma.

During the study, D.J. told me many stories, of her family, of her daughter, her past, her hopes, dreams, her relationships, and her daily realities. I observed D.J. on a weekly basis, teaching math, reading, writing, science, social studies, and social-emotional learning. Her goal with the kids was always to keep it real. She described the classroom as their space. It belonged to them, and that meant that what they did well was theirs, but when things did not go well, it was also theirs. She taught her students to be accountable to one another, and so she divided her class up into three equally-sized, heterogeneous groups and each day, members of the group could earn the group points, either through doing good individual work or accomplishing group tasks. The class was full of big personalities, second graders whose habits and mannerisms sometimes clashed with D.J.'s. These clashes were all part of the same structure for D.J., they were a family and they lived together in peace and in conflict.

What D.J. did not expose to her class was that she saw the political and economic systems in the world as so grotesquely oppressive that in her mind, they could not have been created

[16] D.J. has consented for this data to be included, though the conversation occurred before she officially consented to the study. D.J. has read these findings and agreed to treat the written account as data.

by human beings. On several occasions D.J. shared her theories about the participation of extra terrestrials in the geopolitical battle for power. She described scenarios in which world leaders acted with the help of extraterrestrial operatives to gain and maintain power. She knew her ideas sounded crazy, but she was not crazy. Her logic was that the corruption was so vast and so harmful, that no human beings could be powerful enough to achieve it.

Defining Themes

As explained in Chapter 3, the coding process led to the development of four code groups, craft, craft of countering structural oppression, power of love, and structural oppression. As the analysis proceeded, a fifth group emerged, methodology. This was reserved for data that demonstrated insight into how and why educators made the choices they made. These were metacognitive revelations that often occurred in the midst of teaching moments. They took the form of stories and anecdotes participants told to students as well as asides delivered to me as I was observing.

These five final code groups evolved into the three themes explored in this section. Developing the code groups into analytical categories relied on repeated deep readings of quotations that matched the codes. Because many of the quotations from the field notes and interviews were aligned to more than one code, this took on complex layers that informed the development of the following three themes. Next I provide a brief definition of each of the themes selected for this dissertation.

Theme 1: Policy-adaptive pedagogy

The educators in this study were *policy adapters*. They all demonstrated instances of model teaching and content expertise clearly grounded in years of practice but adapted to align with policy mandates, particularly those accountability policies that narrowed the curriculum in

the interest of increasing test scores (Granger, 2008). Their adaptations responded to macro-level policies on the district, state, and federal level as well as school-based policies. This theme started with the code group craft and encompasses strategies, techniques, skills, and practices that construct policy-adaptive teaching in classrooms. It includes teaching tricks, ways of relating to students as well as standards-based instruction and test preparation. Each participant had developed her policy-adaptive pedagogy over her years of experimenting with different ways of teaching and different ways of attempting to do what accountability policies had asked her to do. The stories explaining this theme are about teachers' planning, their classroom management, and how they maneuvered policies to meet needs of their learners. They had all absorbed decades of accountability-driven reforms, and sometimes, old, retired reforms would leak out in their teaching. Sometimes adaptations were more like rebellions, as teachers revised the demands to suit what they thought was best. This theme represents a counter-story of teaching in relation to curriculum and accountability policy. The participants strove to ensure their students would be successful. They picked and chose pedagogical techniques they felt worked for their students. They were early-childhood experts, pedagogues, and maneuverers of reform, trying to make things work for children even at times when they felt reforms had little to do with what their children needed.

Theme 2: Culturally responsive pedagogy

The educators in this study were *cultural responders.* Several were warm demanders, who, according to Ware (2006) "effective, culturally responsive teachers" (p. 436) who kept high standards for students and were willing to provide them with assistance. All participants believed children could and would succeed. Participants celebrated their students' culture and understood how it intersected and shared similarities and differences with their own. Some teachers' warm demands included speaking truth to power, explicitly teaching about political conditions and

their effects on Black life. Dr. Clementine demonstrated a school leader's version of warm demander pedagogy along with a strong commitment to remaining aware of the effects of politics on education. She had high expectations for her teachers and she understood the external influences that affected their work. The outcome of the presidential election in 2016 and the series of political outcomes that followed were deeply felt in the school and in some of the teachers' classrooms. The election brought out fears, concerns, and commitments deeply resonant to culturally relevant pedagogy.

Theme 3: Community-outreach/inreach pedagogy

The educators in this study reached out as well as in to bring the community into more intimate relationships with the school. Community outreach is the process whereby an institution or entity reaches out to improve relationships and connections between the community and itself. *Inreach* is a term I imagined that involves a different type of exchange between an individual and the community. For teachers, I conceived inreach as their process of bringing outsiders, starting with students and their families but also including the community, inside their personal spaces, classrooms, which were infused with the their beliefs, values, and goals. Using outreach, institutions hope to garner more involvement and support from outsiders and to perhaps exchange or share values. Using inreach, individuals within an institution become vulnerably open, garnering more understanding from outsiders and helping those outsiders to come to know the institution. Outreach increases involvement, whereas inreach increases intimacy. I saw these two operations in co-occurrence throughout the school year, and I see it as the answer to the second research question, *multipurpose site of hope.* These operations were constant undercurrents in the school. Dr. Clementine led from a position of hope and of love and belief in the fundamental gifts and abilities of the students served and sought ways to spread that understanding outward, to parents

as well as community partners. Inreach, practiced by some teachers, involved bringing the community, including me, *in* to their personal spaces, their classrooms, and their lives, in order to make an imprint upon them, to instill a sense of what that teacher was trying to convey. Farinde-Wu, Glover, and Williams (2017) highlighted the phrase "heart work" for culturally responsive urban teachers. As opposed to hard work, heart work is motivated by belief systems. Heart work strengthens and drives educators' work. Heart work, taken in the context of the community outreach/inreach theme, creates openness between educators and others—both students and nonstudents—with the intention of making students' experiences better, richer, and more sustainable.

Themes and Methodological Processes

As explained in Chapter 3, the research questions framing this dissertation, Question 1: *navigate and negotiate,* and Question 2: *multipurpose site of hope,* developed in a reflexive manner and were finalized after my last interview with Dr. C. in June of 2017. One thing I learned, which I make clear at the end of this chapter, is that working with teachers to make meaning of their processes meant, in many ways, learning to see the meanings they had already assigned to their processes. What I came to understand was that the methodological process for this research meant, in part, seeing teachers as methodologists in their own right. The findings represent my attempt to capture with integrity choices teachers made and meanings they had already assigned to their work.

These themes also represent my attempts to construct connections between different participants' work along thematic lines in order to answer the research questions. Question 1 is shortened to *navigate and negotiate.* How did veteran teachers at Clement deal with the policy constraints- in particular accountability policy constraints- they faced while striving to provide their students with an enriching education? Question 2: *multipurpose site of hope.* How did

Clement function within the community it was striving to improve? The teachers understood their individual efforts to do their work, and they had spent years developing pedagogical practices that served Black children. Clement was continuously attempting to sew threads connecting itself to the community. Each teacher understood her own purpose. Dr. C. understood her goals for the whole school. As an outsider I sensed that the school and its teachers, with their diverse approaches, did function as a whole. I took a critical race perspective, an anti-deficit approach. At the center of the critical race perspective is the counterstory. In the case of this study, constructing the counterstory was not that difficult, because in most cases, the participants themselves were striving to live the counterstories they had written themselves.

I have aimed to organize a composite counterstory (Cook & Dixson, 2012) of Clement and 7 veteran educators along three discreet themes. (1) Veteran teachers navigated and negotiated the constraints of policy through pedagogical adaptations, (policy-adaptive pedagogy). (2) Veteran teachers navigated and negotiated the constraints of policy through practices of cultural responsive (Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009) and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012). (3) Clement functioned as a multipurpose site of hope through both community outreach and a concept I call inreach, which means “keeping it real” by enfolding outsiders and their cultural practices into intimate, personal space. In cases where participants shared themselves with students and outsiders, their was an intimacy developed that outreach as a practice typically does not develop. Thus, conventional community outreach practices merged with inreach, which was at its foundation a willingness to embrace both intimacy and truth.

Theme 1: Policy-Adaptive Pedagogy

I observed policy adaptations all year. This theme started with something I just thought of as “good teaching,” and it seemed to be based on years of practice, experimentation, and revi-

sion. Participants often demonstrated model teaching and content expertise. Everyone was concerned about test scores and accountability measures, but on the day-to-day level, teachers wove all their concerns, the policies, and their years of experience together and *taught*. They strove to provide an enriching curriculum and produce hope despite the constraints of outside factors. They *also* strove to meet the goals the district and state had established.

Policy adapters cared about outcomes. They believed in the students' abilities to be successful and they demanded that students rise up to expectations. Sometimes, they subversively disengaged from those goals and added goals of their own. Sometimes, fatigue and outside forces or circumstances further constrained, distracted, and/or stalled them. They were *good* teachers who worked persistently to weave together their beliefs with the students' needs and the district's demands. Policy adaptations were fluid processes that changed throughout the year. Policy adapters were jugglers, trying to address all their concerns about students' academic progress, their lives and communities, and their self-concepts and social-emotional health while remaining focused on state standards and policies they were responsible for administering.

The following stories of policy adaptations are divided into three parts: **Tricks of the trade; Testing realities;** and **Reform grafts**. **Tricks of the trade** includes stories of teachers' highly developed techniques like read alouds, interdisciplinary teaching of math and literacy, and ways to direct children's focus and attention. **Testing realities** is about how teachers dealt with testing as a fact of life for their students and explicitly addressed the tests. **Reform grafts** describes the ways old reforms and scripted curricula from previous eras had become grafted onto their teaching lexicons and practices.

Tricks of the trade

Several decades ago, Apple and Jungck (1990) argued that years of gains in teachers' skills and power were systematically eroding due to an overreliance on managerial elements geared to increase the efficiency of public education. This hyper management of the curriculum, the authors argued, along with strict accountability systems and standardization, was deteriorating and deskilling teacher work and increasing the tendencies of teachers *en masse* to simply teach to the tests. Now, almost three decades later, the hyper management Apple and Jungck warned us about is well established in our set of expectations for educational culture. In 2015, Carpenter wrote "By the time a student in one of Chicago's public schools completes eighth grade, she will have taken an average of 180 standardized tests" (para. 1), which amounts one standardized test per day for one year of the nine that student would have attended school. At Clement during the year I attended, students took district benchmark exams in the content areas as well as reading and math tests several times a year. They also took end of grade state exams starting in 3rd grade. Finally they received additional reading tests in a one-on-one setting with their teachers. Participants in this study indeed spent a significant amount of time readying for and administering high-stakes assessments. They were also persistently worried about the outcomes of these assessments.

As I have stated, when students' outcomes are poor, it is often treated as a teacher problem. The teachers in this study were familiar with such biased discourse. In conversation with Brooklyn once, we discussed how teachers were blamed for not doing their jobs and how some teachers as a consequence would blame parents for not doing their jobs. But what jobs were we talking about, exactly? The job of getting students to pass tests? The job of ensuring the children were equipped to pass their tests? Or was it something else, for example, the job of instilling cu-

riosity and values in children or stimulating their native abilities to engage in stories and numbers? In this study, as I observed participants teaching, I considered "good teaching" as all those actions with students that provided opportunities for layered engagement with academic content.

Researchers have struggled to grapple with how to discuss effective teaching in light of the consequences of high-stakes tests (Haynes, 2008). Others have struggled to identify qualities representing continued growth in veteran and late-career teachers (Meister & Ahrens, 2011). Those struggles are understandable, given the subjective nature of observing teaching. During this study, I observed techniques that yielded engagement among students, that seemed well practiced, and that were relevant to the standards. Policy-adaptive technique engaged students effectively while providing standards-based instruction the U.S. state demanded. The following four stories related the policy-adapted techniques of four teachers: ***Reading with her teacher voice (Dr. C and Jewell); Calming the turbulence (Lucca Maximus); and Interwoven math and literacy (D.J.)***

Reading with her teacher voice, part 1. One of the things Dr. C explained to me when I began the study was that she had a "Principal's book of the month" event. She chose a book that aligned with the character trait of the month. She read the book to all of the students in the media center by grade level, so by the time she finished the monthly ritual, she had read the book 6 times to groups of 60+ students. During these reading activities, Dr. C's background as an elementary school teacher shone. She engaged students in listening and reading comprehension through questioning strategies. She shifted her tone while reading, bringing the stories to life. She taught vocabulary as well as literary structure. She also taught life-lessons, embedding the character education lesson into the discussions of the stories.

In January 2017, the book of the month was about Ruby Bridges. The character traits of the month were justice and fairness. During the lesson, Dr. C. taught elements of reading standards, like inference, and new vocabulary. She also stimulated discussion of segregation and racism. At the end of the lesson, each child was informed that he/she was going to write a reflective response about the text. Dr. C's reading lesson was policy-adaptive because she taught the reading standards for information text and literature as well as academic vocabulary and grade-level writing, thereby reinforcing what all teachers were doing in their classrooms. Meanwhile, she engaged students in a reality-based discussion of what education and segregation meant for Black children.

I observed Dr. C teach two groups of students that morning, first the 5th grade and then 4th grade right afterward. The children sat on the floor, and their teachers sat in chairs on the side. Dr. C was in front, with a large-screen TV set up behind her showing the book's cover image. With each group, Dr. C. confirmed that students knew background information on Ruby Bridges and knew the character words justice and fairness. Once she began reading, she moved fluidly from verbatim reading to discussion, pausing to ask questions and to focus on content she wanted students to learn. For example, she read that when Ruby was going to the White school for the first time, she was afraid. Dr. C. paused to ask students to infer why Ruby was afraid. She reviewed the practice of segregation to ensure that children understood that segregation laws were imposed because White people did not believe they should intermingle with Black people. As she continued reading, she also asked questions about concepts like crops and farming as well as the locations of Mississippi and New Orleans. Through questioning, she taught inference, a literacy standard, as well as geography and farming concepts, both of which were part of social studies.

Dr. C. was explicit about her intention to provide a culturally responsive education for Clement's students, but she was always also a highly trained educator who provided virtually no separation between those academic skills and concepts she felt students needed to learn and the political realities she also felt students needed to learn. This story of reading about Ruby Bridges could have been crafted to fit the next theme, culturally responsive pedagogy, just as easily. However, I have selected it to demonstrate an example of policy-adaptive pedagogy because of the ways in which Dr. C maneuvered her teaching to reinforce specific literacy standards and character traits so that the overarching message she wanted to convey would fit into the mold of standards-based literacy instruction and grade-level reflective writing tasks mandated by the state and district.

Dr. C. molded plenty of life lessons into her teaching that day. She would switch from academic discourse into her own brand of tough-minded warm demanding. She lauded the students for having a school in their neighborhood making sure they understand that prior to Brown v. Board, there were not equally funded schools in Black neighborhoods. She encouraged the kids to put themselves in other peoples' shoes, like Ruby's, by imagining what it was like to walk through the lines of foul, swearing protesters who bordered the sidewalk day after day as she made her way to the steps of the school. Through this discussion, she was reinforcing literacy standards related to comprehension and text-to-self connections. She was also ensuring her students knew their history and knew their good fortune.

Reading with her teacher voice, part 2. Jewell read to her kindergarten students on a daily basis. She used a teacher voice in her reading that might be described as classically sweet. It was soft, lulling, and full of strategic changes in pitch. Like Dr. C., Jewell used questioning strategies frequently while reading, asking her students to comment about what was happening in the

story both as a method of sustaining student engagement and of teaching concepts students might not already know. Jewell struggled throughout the school year with new mandates related to structuring lessons and teaching the students' standards in a very specific and scripted way. These mandates often derailed her teaching and created tensions between her and the school's administrators. However, when taught a concept using books, music, and movement, she was able to create a community of learners who engaged joyfully with the material and satisfy the standards-based literacy curriculum she was supposed to be adhering to.

In early February, I observed Jewell read a book on how animals move. As I was listening to her read, I saw how the tone of her voice lured the children into a state of attention. She asked frequent questions that provoked the children to think about the lesson in terms of their own lives and make connections to their prior knowledge. The students' attention began to wane, so Jewell kept the lesson going by switching them to a video in which a pirate used animals to look for treasure. The lesson focused on basic movement vocabulary, swim, fly, and jump. The video was followed by a verbal quiz, which the students were eager to try. Jewell asked questions such as which animals could and could not swim, fly, run, etc. Finally, the children were able to sit at their tables and take turns demonstrating how they themselves could do the movements they were learning about from the book, the video, and the quiz. After the lesson, Jewell explained to me that they would soon visit an animal park with a petting zoo so they could see the animals in person.

As a kindergarten teacher, Jewell was highly aware of the developmental differences among her students. Of those who had attended pre-kindergarten or preschool, adapting to kindergarten life was smooth and relatively easy. These children knew basic math, literacy, and school behavior at the beginning of their kindergarten year. However, there were others who had

had no school until they began in her class. One student enrolled in October, his first time in school ever. Regardless of their histories or past schooling experiences, Jewell knew it was expected that they all meet the kindergarten standards by the time they reached the end of the year. This troubled her, and she spent a lot of time at least trying to ensure they could all write their letters and numbers (though most of her students went much further than this). On top of this discrepancy in preschool experiences recent curricular changes had increased the rigor of kindergarten, was made rectifying the differences between her students even tougher for a teacher like Jewell.

In Jewell's case, policy adaptation was a different story than for Dr. C. Dr. C chose what she wanted the lesson to be about (segregation and understanding justice) and taught the lesson in the spirit of the current literacy standards. Jewell, who believed in a play-based approach to teaching Kindergarten, taught the standards in her own style. In a sense, she made policy adapt to her instead of the other way around. When it worked, as it did on the day of the animal movement lesson, the children engaged in joyful play, which, according to Bowdon (2015) was the method of learning most developmentally appropriate for kindergarten-aged learners in the first place.

Recent policy demands had constrained Jewell's voice in significant ways, as I learned throughout the year during our observations. She was worried about how to navigate the changes, and she worked hard to adapt to the styles of lessons instructional coaches expected her to teach. But when she was able to take the standards and adapt them to fit what she did best, children ages 5 and 6 were transformed into joyful learners who could show you how fish swam, birds flew, and snakes slithered.

Calming the turbulence. Dr. C and Jewell demonstrated policy-adaptive pedagogies in two different ways, through the uses of their voices to teach standards while also sustaining their own values and styles. Lucca Maximus, the music teacher, also used her voice (as well as instruments of all sorts) to convey the music standards and to sustain her commitment to the musical methodology she loved: the Orff Technique. Lucca taught 5 or 6 classes a day, with a 40 minute planning period, a 30-minute lunch, and 5-minute transitions between classes. Teachers, who had a lot of content to cover every day, were often rushed to get kids to their related arts classes. They brought their kids to these classes and dropped them off. When they were late, Lucca lost time, which was a struggle for her to bring them in, get them settled, and teach her entire lesson, which was planned out to the minute each day. The other factor that was part of this story was the same thing that was true for Jewell. Teachers were under immense pressure to catch kids up who were behind and meet the more rigorous standards the state had recently adopted. Therefore, in their classes, they often engaged in demanding sessions involving drills and reviews, which were difficult for energetic children to sustain. Yet they had to sustain these methods, because the teachers had to try to meet standards. So when children arrived at related arts, they could be restless, antsy, even frustrated. Lucca had adapted to this issue by developing methods of engaging students to focus and practice self-control.

While focus on classroom management as a teaching technique presents the risk that *policy-adaptive pedagogy* will be conflated with *behavioral control*, with Lucca, her quick and seamless shifting between teaching musical concepts and maintaining a focused classroom seemed to result in a high level of musical knowledge and joy for her students. In this classroom, students were organized in small groups and always began their classes seated on multi-colored lines that had been taped onto the floor. It took me a long time to realize that the five lines she

taped to the floor represented the musical staff. The whole room, in fact, was a musical lesson, from the staff on the floor (which was the sheet music) to the ways in which her wall décor reinforced musical concepts to the structures of the lessons themselves, which always taught music concepts mentally, where students learned language to express it followed by manipulations of their body to attempt it. Then they learned the concepts instrumentally, receiving constant opportunities to use a variety of instruments to play what they were learning. Finally, they learned concepts physically, combining dance movements with instruments. The best music lessons ended with students playing instruments and dancing to a song, using the rhythmic concept they had learned to show mastery.

Lucca's goals and expectations for her students' musical learning were high, and while she did not always get through all the lessons she wanted to, she never wavered in her belief in her students' abilities. Yet, restless energy and talkativeness, or bad moods and interpersonal tensions, sometimes interrupted her plans. When this happened, one of the strategies Lucca used was telling the students that Mrs. Maximus had left the room.

When Mrs. Maximus left the room, Lucca explained, she left because there was turbulence, and, Lucca would explain in her most sober voice, "Mrs. Maximus doesn't like turbulence" (observation, November 7, 2016). At this point, the teaching temporarily stopped, as, obviously, the teacher was no longer there. The person Mrs. Maximus left behind, whom Lucca never identified, would then calmly discuss why Mrs. M. had left. She would talk to the children about why they needed to focus on the music lesson and "think about Mrs. M" so that she could return and give them the music lesson she had carefully prepared for them. The children would sit there thinking about Mrs. M., even the most skeptical children would look at Lucca a little bit

differently in these moments. After a few minutes, Lucca would go to the door, open it, turn around, and walk in, telling the children she was back and resume the lesson.

In the year that I observed at Clement, I saw numerous strategies intended to help children remain focused on instruction. Their lessons were often challenging, rigorous, multilayered and urgent, because of the pressure to simultaneously catch up and move forward. This pressure was felt by all, even Lucca, who taught a non-tested subject. Frustration had to be mediated in order to sustain the energy it took to provide the education demanded of the children. Importantly, few teachers expressed the thought that the standards were too rigorous. They did the work and upheld high expectations. But the kids got restless, and this had to be mediated, too. Mrs. Maximus's departure seemed to create a moment of cognitive dissonance for the children that had the effect of calming and recentering their energy. It felt like kind of a trick, to watch a teacher in front of a room full of people telling you she was not actually there. Lucca had the ability, as unbelievable as it sounds, to make us believe her. The lesson always went better when she finally returned.

Interwoven math, literacy, and life. In the previous three stories, policy adaptations are described as ways in which participants acknowledged the demands of policy and navigated through and around those demands in their teaching. Dr. C used the language of literacy standards in her teaching about segregation. Jewell used her play-based methods to address kindergarten science standards. Lucca responded to policy's stress as it affected the children, practicing methods of refocusing children that avoided any kind of punishment. D.J.'s policy adaptations involved teaching math as prescribed in the new curriculum standards, but infusing literacy and life lessons like teamwork in all her teaching. This was a fast-paced classroom with a lot of stu-

dent involvement in the learning and a lot of negotiation of different personalities, which were almost never quelled.

The first day back from the winter holiday, I went to observe D.J. first thing in the morning. She began the day with a simple worksheet (often called a “do now”) reviewing prefixes. While D.J. got the room settled, she and I caught up a bit. She told me the school was broken into over the holiday. She told me the administration seemed to think it was students who got into the school through a window someone had left cracked open. The only things stolen were walkie-talkies.

D.J.’s students were restless but focused. They were trying to be attentive to the work. D.J. greeted each student warmly with phrases like “I’m so excited to see you” and “I’m glad to be back.” She was open to them as she moved furniture and supplies, at one point saying, “I’ve gotta be in two places at once and I am not very good at it.”

After a few minutes, she transitioned into the meat of the lesson. She asked a few questions about the prefixes from the worksheet and then she began a review of math content. She told the students they were going to review the 10s and 1s notations. Tall lines are tens and dots are ones. lll: is 32. lll: + lll: = llllll:: = 64.

As D.J. always did when she was teaching, she integrated reading, math, and teamwork into one long lesson. After showing 32 + 32, she asked them, “What is 64 + 64?” Someone went up to the board and worked out the problem using the notation system. She asked the student to verbalize the process with carefully chosen words, an example of language arts integrated into math.

The math problem was placed on pause as she shifted gears to talk about some thinking she had done during their break. D.J. said she was really proud of the students. She made a cove-

nant with the class and set goals for the New Year. She said she had examined their math and reading test scores, and explained that students had a lot of potential, except there was one student whose scores showed that "we have to work very hard."

At that moment a mom and grandma brought in a student who was holding a gift. She had agreed to bring it before Christmas for the Kwanzaa party but had forgotten. D.J. praised the student and explained how she had made good on her promise and done the right thing. Then she made fun of her own vest. D.J. was wearing a winter vest with very fluffy tan fur on it. She told the students it was her "hit dog" vest because it looked like a dog that got hit by a car. The kids all laughed and D.J. said, "I am the silliest person in this room. That's true, but though I am funny I am serious. I take you very seriously."

When I began working with D.J., she explained to me that her classroom always belonged to the students. It was theirs. The children owned the room, she said, which meant that they owned its supplies, cleaned its messes, and also, perhaps most crucially, supplied it with its energy. There were some limits to their ownership. D.J. arranged the desks, for example. She selected the seats for the students. She rearranged the seating chart as she saw the need. But the notion that the students owned the space guided her teaching practice. It seemed to be her way of conducting a student-centered classroom and trying to make it clear to the students that she expected them to develop autonomous selves.

What that often meant was that students' full personalities emerged in the classroom, where they got to be themselves, at times without filters. Conflict was not unusual, both between students and between D.J. and certain students. On this January day, they were all starting fresh. She briefly interacted with one child, a girl with whom she had frequent clashes: "You process like an adult but you talk like a baby. You're beautiful. I missed you." Throughout the research,

several participants shared their thoughts about what it meant for children to take on a lot of responsibility at a young age. This particular child was often referred to as "grown" in casual conversations between teachers, though she was only 8 years old. In this interaction, D.J. was sharing her thoughts directly with the child herself, explaining her observations about the girl, to the girl.

Through all these moments, of emotional connections (with the girl), of recognizing her silliness, of making fun of her clothing, of acknowledging a child's good choice (the Kwanzaa gift), the curricular goals were also present in the room. They were always there, though many other social and emotional topics were always also present in D.J.'s class. D.J., who cultivated her own form of student-centered classroom, had a practice of shifting abruptly in and out of academic business mode. So, after she spoke lovingly to the grown-up baby girl, D.J. shifted back to her teaching mode, and began to teach about perceiving details.

She explained that for real comprehension, students must engage in details, "I don't care what it is." She listed a whole lot of events students needed to practice paying attention to: reading, math, football, taking care of your baby brother or sister, getting dressed, etc. A discussion ensued and students provided many examples of details second graders could notice. The conversation came full circle and linked back to literacy (comprehension, noticing details) and teamwork (working together, preventing or resolving conflict).

A few minutes before a restroom break, D.J. said, "I'm just showing you all how all life is connected. There's so much work coming at us. We have to look at the connections." She was preparing the kids for the new curriculum standards they had to begin. "The devil is in the details. Even if you know [she listed a number of things second graders might know], if you pay attention to the details, the devil is there." So far, the lesson had covered math, reading, speaking,

grammar, working in groups, and social-emotional content and they had not taken their first re-stroom break of the day. D.J. taught and reconnected with the students simultaneously. Towards the end, she spelled about a simple sentence and reviewed how to punctuate. This was a verbal lesson I had witnessed earlier in the year, too. When she explained how to punctuate sentences, D.J. used her voice. She indicated a period with a loud “Boop!” A question mark was a “Swoop, boop!” She would recite a sentence and then indicate the punctuation at the end, “Boop!” The students would then take over the job, and at the end of a sentence, they would say, “Boop!” On this day, the students had not put a “boop!” on a sentence for a while, and they were enthusiastic about doing so.

As D.J. taught content in this integrated way, shifting from math to social-emotional skills, to literacy, and back again, she was also teaching her students patience, how wait while others processed the learning. She pointed out counterexamples, like some students’ lack of patience or their habits of talking out and using their energy to disrupt learning instead of enhancing learning. After reviewing punctuation, she returned to math, teaching combining terms in the marking form. They had never finished 64+64, so she showed it as

32+32+32+32.

lll: + lll: + lll: + lll:

She explained, “To combine terms, you collect 10 ones to make a new ten and 10 tens to make a hundred (indicated by a square). Then you see how many tens you have left.” Counting together, they found there were 8 ones and 12 tens. That turned 10 tens into one hundred (a square), and then there were 2 tens and 8 ones left, making 128. Once they found this answer, D.J. wrapped it up and explained that the next step in math was to learn to add 3 or more numbers.

D.J.'s pedagogical method created an interwoven tapestry of academic content, life skills, life lessons, and teamwork. She often taught all of these at once, particularly in the morning, before her students went to their related arts class at 9:20 AM. There would be a math lesson sprinkled with literacy concepts along with an overarching social-emotional topic. D.J. knew what the requirements were as far as lesson planning was concerned and she had specific lesson plans tied to academic standards as was required. She applied the teaching techniques the district had mandated for that year. Teachers were required to write each standard on a large poster and annotate the academic language of the standards. These posters were hanging all over D.J.'s room, but she was not abandoning her interdisciplinary methods, she was adding annotated posters into what she already did. It seemed as though these posters were to have taken a central role in each lesson taught that year. That was an adaptation D.J. did not make. She complied with the mandate to an extent (the posters were there), but she did not compromise her interdisciplinary and student-centered methods.

Conclusion. Policy adapters have mastered the tricks of the trade. In other words, for years, they have cultivated methods of teaching they have modified to suit accountability demands and trends. These stories show us how teachers *navigate and negotiate* policy demands. Participants engaged in reflection that influenced their adaptations. In each example above, there were pedagogical practices deployed that represented each teacher's theoretical commitments as well as practices that represented each teacher's incorporation of standards-based instruction. Verloop, Van Driel, & Meijer (2001) argued that looking differently at the relationship between theory and practice would be useful in exploring teacher knowledge. Rather than thinking of teachers' theoretical knowledge and their practical knowledge as separate entities or as hierarchically arranged (i.e. teachers apply their theoretical knowledge in practical action), they claimed it

might be more useful to think of these types of knowledge as interchangeable. When I observed teachers different methods, I was seeing theoretical processing in action.

Testing realities

Policy adapters accepted testing as a major reality of their students' lives whether they agreed with it or not. The following stories of policy adaptive pedagogy show how teachers dealt with testing. All the participants in this study had worked under No Child Left Behind norms, which included end-of-grade testing and publications of schools' Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), based on those tests. They had all worked in schools where "making" AYP was a challenge for a long time. Of the seven participants, only two, D.J. and Allecia were teaching classes where testing was stressed, though everyone except Lucca had taught tested grades (usually 3rd, 4th, and 5th) in the past. Dr. C. had been a classroom teacher, but had shifted to administration 15 years earlier. Both Brooklyn and Lyric had taught regular education, but had shifted to related arts positions, which meant their classrooms did not generate consequential data for the school. For Jewell's kindergarten class, the data was less urgent. Lucca had only ever taught music, so she had never taught under the pressure of testing.

Allecia and D.J. were directly engaged in the preparation of students for standardized testing. I found they perceived testing in several different ways. As a part of students' educational life it was just a fact. D.J.'s goal was to provide activities that honed students' attention spans so that they could focus on the specific demands of tests. For Allecia, because her 4th graders had to face a number of consequential tests, testing was a frequent topic of conversation and an expectation. Though both teachers shared critical beliefs about testing policies, they had techniques and strategies they employed so their students could be prepared, and they expected their stu-

dents to be successful. What follows are two stories of methods D.J. and Allecia used to prepare students for testing.

Low stakes, high stress. In November 2016, I was observing D.J. teaching reading and social studies. During the hour I was there, I observed D.J. guiding students through a reading selection from their social studies textbook. However, right before the students transitioned to their related arts class, D.J. asked them all to count the number of words in one paragraph. Everyone in the room enthusiastically started counting words, me included. I counted the paragraph several times to make sure I had it right. There were 95 words in the paragraph. The kids worked hard, counting and reporting, noticing they had different results from each other and counting again. After about ten minutes, several students had arrived at the number 95 and it was time to go to related arts class.

While the students were in their related arts classes, D.J. and I often took the time to talk about a wide range of topics. On that morning we discussed how hard the students worked to get the number of words right. She explained to me that this was something she would ask students to practice from time to time. She said she did things like that because it required students to develop stamina and focus they would need for standardized tests. Though it was a low-stakes activity, it was high-stress, and it stimulated the energy and the focus they had to develop to succeed on the tests. It was interesting because when the students were doing the activity, almost all were enthusiastically engaged. They wanted to get it right and were willing to count and recount and compare their numbers to others' until they matched. I learned after the observation that D.J.'s greater purpose was to provide experiences that would stimulate the energy required for standardized testing. Though their first end-of-grade test was over a year away (at the end of 3rd grade), D.J. was providing exposure to skills she felt would help them later.

All life is a test. On February 7, 2017, during their social-emotional learning (SEL) lesson, Allecia asked her students to share how they felt about tests. A few said they did not care about them. A few said they cared about the grades. A few others said tests frustrated them because they got stuck. After listening to their responses, Allecia explained her perspective. She told the students that many things in life require performance on a test, for example opening your own business, going to college, earning a certificate to do a trade, and more. She continued, explaining how school is like medicine, and the tests tell us if teachers are giving the right medicine to make everyone well (i.e. help everyone learn). If the medicine is not working, the tests can help us know we need to change the prescription.

The medicine metaphor provided an explanation and rationale for tests that children could understand. Though she provided the rationale and perhaps was trying to help students realize why they should do their best when they took tests, she did not pressure them. When some students said they did not care about tests, she did not come back with any comments other than a nod, taking in what they were saying. Allecia had explained to me that she was always reflecting on her students, always processing what was happening in the classroom, so it was possible that she reflected on those students' perspectives and considered how to respond, or reteach in order to reach them. In my presence she never demanded that all students care about the tests. She did, however, insist on her belief that all students could perform as good or better than <u>everyone</u> else. In an interview she said, "I want good data because my kids are capable of passing a test…not THE test…a test. My kids are brilliant, they're smart and given opportunity and proper instruction, they're capable of being as successful, if not more successful than counterparts" (personal interview, November 11, 2016).

In both of these brief stories, D.J. and Allecia conveyed messages to students about the realities of tests. For D.J., this message was that test taking requires tedious attention to details, focus, and stamina, so she gave them a short, intense activity to help them develop their stamina for attention to detail. The repetitive counting of words *did* resemble the repetitive reading of choices A, B, C, and D as one does on a standardized, multiple choice test. For Allecia, the approach was different. She wanted to help her students understand what the tests represented by comparing testing to something students already understood: medicine. If testing was a way to gauge if the instructional medicine was working to help kids learn, then it made testing seem like a reasonable activity. In a way, this demystified standardized testing and suggested the possibility that testing did not need to provoke the emotions of frustration, stress, and indifference that students had shared.

Reform grafts

Policy adapters carry old reforms within them, like muscle memories, that surfaced from time to time. In education research, little if any attention has been paid to this effect of reforms on teachers' pedagogies. In one analysis of teachers' adoptions of educational innovations, Verloop, Van Driel, & Meijer (2001) explained that teachers have always been expected to implement innovations according to developers' directions. However, they claimed the majority of innovations have not worked because teachers have "abandoned the new behavior and returned to the old routines with which they were comfortable" (p. 453). According to Verloop, Van Driel, and Meijer, teachers' old habits are stronger than educational reforms.

During my year at Clement, teachers had to annotate the standards and display them on their walls. They were supposed to review the posters with the children before each lesson. Participants complied with this to varying degrees. D.J. made the posters and referred to them but

never abandoned her interdisciplinary style, which did not really mesh with the discreet, one-standard-per-lesson method the district was requiring. This aligns with Verloop, Van Driel, & Meijer's (2001) finding that teachers revert to their old habits, resulting in failed teaching reforms. However, I found that the reverse also happens, when evidence of old reforms appeared in several teachers' practices. This suggests something quite different—that old reforms may embed themselves into teachers' habits and remain there, grafted into their pedagogical practices.

All of the participants had spent their careers rooted in the ebbs and flows of U.S. school reform. Two of the participants, Brooklyn and Allecia, showed evidence of reform grafts, where parts of old reforms had become part of their decision-making and knowledge base. As policy adapters, neither Brooklyn nor Allecia completely capitulated to the reforms, but the reforms got into them, they learned them and incorporated them, and they were part their pedagogical adaptations.

G-Double O-D-J-O-B! Brooklyn's career had developed in a several other states. She began her career teaching first grade in an African American school but then shifted to a school for the deaf in a different state. Before moving to Clement, she taught in another urban system during the early years of the Success for All (SFA) program. SFA is a reading reform intended to restructure "elementary schools serving many children considered at risk of school failure" (Slavin & Madden, 2013). Kozol (2005) criticized the program in his book *Shame of the Nation* for its "Skinnerian approaches… [and] way of altering the attitudes and learning styles of black and Hispanic children" (p. 154). Kozol (2006) further criticized SFA for its false claim that it turned pupils into readers, when he felt that its gains were strictly limited to test scores and did not extend, based on his research observations, to authentic, lifelong reading. He also said that because SFA was found only in hypersegregated schools, that it was "an apartheid course of

study for an apartheid schooling system, promising embattled school officials it will let them do an end run around inequality and racial sequestration" (p. 626).

Brooklyn had spent most of her career in schools entangled in such reforms, fighting for improvements in test scores. When we discussed these reform efforts, her view reflected both cynicism and acceptance. Brooklyn had developed the ability to pick through education reforms and take what she liked, and SFA had made a strong impact on her. Even though she was teaching art and not academic content when I observed her teaching, she reminisced about SFA several times throughout the year. Once, at the end of a kindergarten lesson with Jewell's class, she launched into this chant:

> Good job! Good job! Good job, good job, good job!
>
> G-double O-D-J-O-B
>
> Good job, good job, good job! (observation, February 6, 2017)

She recited the chant as the class was lining up to return to their class, and I looked at her with what must have been a big question mark on my face. She laughed and answered, "That was from Success for All!" She had memorized the cheer and after all these years, she explained it would just slip out from time to time.

Once, in an interview, Brooklyn explained that through her teaching years, she had experienced many different school reform packages. She believed that each of the programs, SFA, Chicago Math, Columbia Whole Language, and more, had their individual merits. She said that during her 20s, she questioned the use of these packages, and during her 30s, she just complied. But, once she reached her 40s, she began to notice a pattern. This was the second time she had shared this theory.

She asked me, "Do you see all this stuff we have to put on the walls?" I answered that of course I saw it. These were the posters announcing the learning objectives, with all the academic language highlighted and annotated so that every action term was explained, and they were supposed to be in every classroom. Teachers at Clement used boxes and boxes of large, poster-sized sticky notes that year. Brooklyn continued, "Whenever we have to do things like this, I always think, 'Someone is looking for a new job.'" The pattern, Brooklyn had decided, was that whenever a new reform came through any of her schools, it was because someone was "branding himself," and then she added, "here we go." Brooklyn had come to associate these reform patterns with someone higher up in the district seeking a promotion. Perhaps it was a cynical view, but it seemed to have allowed her to develop a level of autonomy in her own teaching, where she took what she believed in and ignored the rest. During 2016-2017, she was not really doing the posters, but she had been experimenting with incorporating STEM into the art curriculum because the school was developing a STEM program. We discussed this and she explained,

> I feel the drive again… I see I'm getting rejuvenated again because I'm buying into STEM because it really is about using your imagination. And if you really think about it, art is really, originally… science/scientists… their drawings, their ideas, their observations, and so I feel my job is worth merit again. (personal interview, June 12, 2017)

Brooklyn's experience had become an amalgam of numerous school reforms over the years. She had allowed each reform to influence her teaching practice in ways she had determined to be valuable. She was looking for worth in her work when she engaged in something she liked, it made her feel like her job had worth.

A contracted employee. Brooklyn had adapted her pedagogical practices over the years to incorporate bits and pieces of different reforms. This belies the claim Verloop, Van Driel, &

Meijer (2001) made, that teachers reverted to old behaviors and reforms failed. In Brooklyn's case, numerous reforms lived on in her teaching, like a pedagogical quilt. Allecia's perspective was different. Allecia took her status as a contracted employee very seriously. Because she was contracted, she felt that it was her obligation to practice exactly what the district demanded of her. Therefore, in Allecia's classroom she attempted to do exactly what the contract dictated.

In late February, at the start of an SEL lesson, Allecia was asked to step into the hallway for a few minutes to log into a computer drive. She returned a few minutes later and then SEL was cut short, so she began to teach the day's social studies lesson. The lesson, taken from a district-level social studies curriculum guide, involved reviewing constructed responses from released tests and looking at anonymous students' scores. Allecia showed her students different responses that had scored 0, 5, and 10 points (the highest) so they could learn to see the difference between low, medium, and high scoring answers and discuss how to construct their own responses on the upcoming test, which was about 5 weeks away. During this lesson, Allecia followed the outline as precisely as possible, trying to ensure that students got the opportunity to read the sample answers and critique them, developing their understanding of what different achievement levels looked like.

As I have written, Allecia believed her students could succeed and pushed them in a positive way toward achievement, focusing on the rules of the game. She would fuss at kids who did not give their best, making sure they understood, "I'm fussing but I'm not mad" (observation, February 23, 2017). She emphasized that kids were capable, and because they were capable, she fussed at them when they did not show their capability.

On this particular day, Allecia took a few minutes that day to express to me her curiosity about the level of chaos she was experiencing. Being pulled from the classroom for the computer

issue first thing in the morning and then having SEL cut short had thrown her off. She briefly pondered what it might be like to be in an environment with less chaos, but then after a few seconds, she determined she might be bored. "Because I am made for this, right now" (observation, February 23, 2017).

As explained in her participant profile, Allecia had a formative experience when an administrator told her that it did not matter how creative a teacher was, if her students did not get the test scores, her creative effects would not be valued. She had developed the belief that as long as she was a contracted employee of a school district, she was committed to fulfilling the terms of the contract. Once, she compared her teaching contract to a painting contract. She explained that a client could ask her to paint a room a color she thought was ugly, but no matter how bad she thought the color was, it was not her place to paint the room another color. She could talk to the client and offer her opinion, but at the end of the conversation, if the client was sure he wanted the ugly color, that was the color the room had to be painted. Executing the teaching contract, Allecia believed, was no different. That meant that for Allecia, whatever educational reforms came with her contract from year to year, she was going to execute the reform to the extent the contract demanded.

In Brooklyn's case, education reforms had been grafted into her teaching practice, and her pedagogical habits were infused with different methods from different reforms. Allecia, like Brooklyn, had taken pieces of her past experiences and incorporated them into her teaching practice. Similar to Brooklyn, Allecia had also taught a reform package similar to SFA called America's Choice. Allecia explained that she did America's Choice as she was expected to do, not because she liked all of it, though some of it she found useful, but because, in her words

> As political agendas change, as power structures change, you learn to be flexible. If you're not willing to be flexible, you will be very combative and very frustrated in this industry. I don't want to be that person. I've had to fight cynicism and sarcasm. Not every part of "America's Choice" did I love and did I embrace but if I gotta do it, I'm gonna do it, and I'm gonna find a way to do it so that I'm not miserable and my kids aren't miserable. I was doing "America's Choice" and still being able to do my music on the keyboard. I was doing the program, there was fidelity and because I proved to have that level of fidelity while doing the program, administrators are willing to say, 'Okay, but you know, this too shall pass. I've been at it long enough to know there are whens, and whys, and ifs…you pick and choose.' (personal interview, November 11, 2016)

Unlike Brooklyn, Allecia showed no specific reform grafts. There were no poems or chants that popped out of her when she was not expecting it. She did not list off all the packages she had learned over all the years, she just mentioned America's Choice as a major reform she had learned to teach. What she did show was the ability to adapt no matter what, so no matter what reform she was introduced to, she would learn to teach it because it was part of the contract. The graft, or adaptation, in Allecia's case, was not a teaching script but more of an attitude that grew around her. She had begun her career as a rebel, wanting to teach creatively and not teach to the test. She had been told she had to honor her contract, and that understanding had been grafted onto her. She understood the terms of her contract, and she believed her students to be entirely capable. So Allecia taught to the terms of her contract, with the expectation of good results. These two beliefs did not necessarily complement one another, as Allecia did make clear that she did not always believe the reforms were the *best* ways to teach her students or to assure

they would pass the state tests. But what seemed to be true was that Allecia taught the reforms and added to them to provide what she believed her students needed to make progress.

Verloop, Van Driel, & Meijer (2001) claimed that teachers often quit doing the behaviors outlined in various reforms because they preferred their own habits. However, both Brooklyn and Allecia had a different story. Both had learned a number of reforms and had incorporated bits of them into the teaching practices I observed. Both had experienced periods in their careers of wanting to question or rebel against reforms. However, after years of teaching, both had made peace with the reforms. They had both learned to pull what was good, suggesting that despite scholars' fears that autonomy is stripped from teachers in harmful ways (Esposito, Davis, & Swain, 2012; Esposito & Swain, 2009), veteran teachers may develop ethics and values about their teaching that enable them to use bits of reforms in perceptive and productive ways.

Conclusion

For educators to become policy adapters, they need to understand their own teaching styles and their goals. They need to know themselves and their content well. For educators who remain in the teaching field now, they need to be willing to do this repeatedly throughout their career cycle, for if the past 15 years tells us anything, it is that education reforms will come and they will go, but hopefully thoughtful and dedicated educators will remain.

Typical measurements of teachers' abilities do not acknowledge evidence of policy adaptations, which demonstrates resilience, thoughtful analysis, and synthesis of policy changes. They cannot gauge how a teaching tool like a voice interfaces with academic standards and then applaud those teachers for figuring out how to teach standards and keep kids riveted in a read aloud. Teacher evaluation systems do measure classroom management techniques, but with little examination of teachers' understandings of the conditions that affect student focus. Teachers are

expected to offer student-centered instruction that stimulates critical thinking, but there is little acknowledgement when such instruction also incorporates skills that can improve students' testing abilities. And there seems to be no way for teacher evaluations to acknowledge the juggling teachers must do to accommodate school reform demands, their district's demands, and their own beliefs about their students and their educational needs.

In fact, I overheard something during fieldwork about teacher evaluations being skewed so that if test scores were low, evaluation scores would be too. I quote here from my field notes: "I heard earlier this year they skew the teacher evaluations so they look bad, because 'the district doesn't want to see low test scores and high teacher scores'" (observation, February 24, 2017). I should be clear that I do not know if this is true. I do not know if evaluations were deliberately lowered to prevent misalignment with test scores. However, some teachers believed it was true, and this made them feel defeated and demoralized. Though beyond the scope of this study, this rumor made me wonder, if it were true, what effect would it have on teachers' morale if the quality of their teaching were judged lower *in anticipation of* low test scores?

Policy adapters incorporate and accommodate policy demands into everyday teaching acts. They integrate the realities of testing into their teaching styles. They analyze the reforms and allow them to change their style, keeping what they like and what they believe works. Most participants actively navigated and negotiated accountability policies to develop hybrid practices that brought them as close as they could to what policy demanded of them while maintaining personal belief systems and values. This was policy adaptive pedagogy.

Theme 2: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

The propensity of Black educators to engage in culturally responsive, relevant, and sustaining pedagogies aimed towards improving the lives of Black children has been widely docu-

mented (Foster, 1997; Siddle-Walker, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009: Dixson, 2003; Milner, 2006). One thing this research was able to do, with its sustained exposure to the practices of five Black women educators, was to explicitly examine the nuances of how culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) and culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP) are individualized and unique. Each Black participant demonstrated her own version of CRP/CSP, some citing literature that had inspired her, for example Delpit (1995) and Ladson-Billings (1994/2009) and others seeming to base their practices on cultural values and past experiences. This section focuses on those practices as they related directly to teaching curricula and academic standards.

In the previous section, I showed that teachers demonstrated policy-adaptive pedagogy; they were policy adapters. I shared stories of witnessing teachers teaching reading, math, social studies, art, and music. During the year, I observed that teachers aimed to help students meet the goals and objectives outlined in the state and district curricula. They made decisions about what to teach based on scope and sequence documents and instructional units they had not necessarily had a hand in crafting. They taught this content; however, though district employees had written many of the units and some of them were infused with culturally relevant content, many were not.

To make their lessons relevant to their students' lives, in many cases teachers had to add these elements in, a process that sometimes looked improvisational and unscripted, but was an intimate and intricate part of their practices as teachers. This theme included infusing the regular curricula with lessons that lifted the students up and taught them to embrace Black culture and identity. Culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies addressed numerous aspects of Black life: citizenship, heritage, family, personal outlook, personal responsibility, political responsibility, self-care, and survival. I offer 3 stories to illustrate this theme: **Food supply**, **No excuses**,

and **Getting dirty**. **Food supply** continues my depiction of D.J.'s interdisciplinary approach, but whereas in the previous story I focused on her adaptations to policy, in this one I analyze her deployment of cultural responsive pedagogical methods. In **No excuses**, I relate two stories of Dr. C and Lyric's no-nonsense methods and perspective and contextualize these methods in the political context we faced in 2016. In **Getting dirty**, I describe Allecia's approach to getting dirty, which was a way of defining student-centered and culturally responsive immersion in the act of teaching.

Food supply

On January 31, 2017, I began my day with D.J., who was teaching a lesson in technical writing. The lesson was diverted quickly when D.J. looked at J, a student who frequently came to school hungry. D.J. asked, "Have you eaten this morning?" J shook her head. She had not eaten. Then D.J. asked how many kids had eaten that morning. About ten raised their hands. D.J. asked the others why they did not eat. Their reasons varied. The line in the cafeteria was too long. Some were too late to school. Some were not hungry. One boy said, "I was sent out [of the cafeteria] because I was running." D.J.'s response was, "You cut off your own food supply with your behavior." She added, "You cut off your learning with your behavior." She then told the kids since she spent all her own money on food for them, there was none left for her. She did not tell them she was exaggerating, but I think she was. She told them, "You are the cause of your own hardship. [This is] survival of the fittest. If you acted better people would feed you more." She kept on the subject of food, turning the topic to gut health. She told them there were foods they should never eat. First, diet soda, because sugar replacements were poisonous. Second, bleached (white) bread.

In these exchanges, I witnessed D.J. doing what she often did, riffing on ideas, whether it was about the students' food supply or a word problem in math. D.J. did not mince words or tell

half-truths. Students were hungry that morning for a variety of reasons, many of which D.J. had sympathy for, but for the boy who got kicked out of the cafeteria because he was running, she had none. He could have had breakfast, but he got in his own way. She made an analogy to the interruptions that occurred in the classroom, where, on any given day, the learning was slowed due to several kids' repeated mischief. Their emotions and their impulses kept them from getting what that they needed: breakfast, improved reading and math, even recess, which was sometimes lost due to hallway or classroom misbehaviors. D.J., a veteran with over twenty years experience, could not change any of the structural or household issues that kept kids from eating breakfast at home, but she could point out the ways in which the kids themselves sometimes cut their own progress short.

Some observers might have read D.J.'s straight talk as harsh or even mean for 2nd grade children. However, it recalls Ware's (2006) depiction of the warm demander who is tough and who makes her expectations clear. Another observer might have read D.J.'s focus on food, gut health, and, what was to come minutes later, teeth, as tangents irrelevant to the curriculum. However, in D.J.'s classroom, these were not tangents. For D.J., students were whole people who needed to learn about healthy food just as much as they needed to learn about decomposing numbers and how to write a topic sentence. She believed that the children needed to know *everything* she could teach them about the world they lived in, which, to be clear, she saw as an increasingly unfriendly place for them.

D.J. continued. "People don't want boy or girlfriends with chipped teeth. There was a police officer I liked but I didn't want to date him because his mouth was raggedy." She told the students that sugar diabetes is common among Black people, and too much sugar rots parts of your body. She said, "You may want sugar before you go to sleep, but sugar feeds bugs in your

tummy. Don't turn to diet soda- it'll make you fat too, three times fatter. Bleached flour turns to sugar instantly. Wendy's doesn't serve it. Bleached flour turns to gas in your tummy." After providing these quick insights into food, flour, sugar, and bad bacteria, she changed the topic and transitioned to math.

It was time to review homework, which was number decomposition. Some of the kids had to re-do the work. D.J. told them, "Get your mind right. Your attitude determines your altitude." The students' behavior started to decompose as D.J. worked on teaching kids to decompose large numbers. In an effort to get them back on track, she shifted into her actor/comedian mode while showing the kids how to break the numbers down. This was a persona she turned on to get the students' attention, which usually involved lighthearted jokes interspersed with instruction. The students worked on the problem as outlined in *Figure X*.

Figure 1. How to decompose 2-digit numbers (observation, January 31, 2017)

During these exchanges on January 31, D.J. covered a number of topics she found profoundly concerning. First, she addressed their behavior and linked their literal food supply (i.e. eating school breakfast) to what would be their future food supply, making the link between learning in school and future outcomes. "You cut off your food supply with your behavior," "You cut off your learning with your behavior," and "If you acted better people would feed you more." All three statements pointed to the reality of how actions connect to outcomes. When D.J. shifted her talk to the effects of sugar and white flour, she was addressing another topic of great concern. She was worried about not only how students cut off their food supply, but she also

wanted them to understand that the quality of their food supply mattered too.

Clement Elementary School was in the middle of a geographic food desert. The nearest grocery stores were 2.5 and 3 miles away. The problem of the food desert, which Deener (2017) related to a concept called "infrastructural exclusion" (p. 1285) and which means access to supermarkets is limited or absent, disproportionately affects low-income communities of color. In this study, participants reported that students and their families often relied on gas station convenience stores or fast food for much of their food, and when students brought their own food to school, a lot of it consisted of bags of chips and sugared drinks. D.J. was a gardener. She understood food and wanted all of her students to know how important it was to eat well. She knew some of them had little choice, and this made her very angry about the structural inequities that caused this problem, but she felt that sharing her knowledge of food and nutrition was one thing she could do about it. D.J. kept the school's garden beds planted and would often weed and cultivate them after school hours. She also included her students in this project, so they had some exposure to how to grow food.

Without going too deep into the politics of the food desert, D.J. incorporated mini-lessons about diet and nutrition into her class. Poor nutrition deeply frustrated D.J., who was angry about the amount of sugar and processed food the children consumed and that other adults provided for them to eat:

> Donovan, right now I'm supposed to be doing DRA [Developmental Reading Assessment] on these kids; I can't test these kids. They're so crapped out and they're so strung out on that candy and those Takis. When Halloween hits, we can't do shit with these kids from Halloween until testing starts in March. Because these kids are on holidays, on candies from Halloween all the way through freakin' February and Valentine's Day. I don't

> even give my kids candy, I don't believe in it. I give them fruit or whatever else but even then, they don't need the sugar at all. And when people study the body, the white bread, the sugar, the artificial sweeteners, this stuff all affects long-term memory. And that's all they're feeding these children; that's absolutely all they get. (personal interview, December 6, 2017)

D.J. was frustrated not only by the nutritional choices made within kids' households, but also within the school cafeteria. She did not feel that the school food included enough high-quality nutritious food. D.J. wanted her students to make better nutritional choices, which was obviously difficult for children who depended on adults to provide their food. It seemed that D.J.'s best option was to teach about the effects of both healthy and unhealthy eating.

D.J. was not alone in her efforts to address nutritional inequities at Clement. On December 7, 2017, the school held an event for community partners to introduce their STEM initiatives and secure volunteer assistance to help them execute their vision. One of the visitors that day was a local African American farmer, who had a 5-acre urban farm, including a well and solar power on the property. He wanted to involve the children and bring them to his farm so that they could learn more about growing their own food. He also wanted to expand his customer base for his urban farmer's market.

Because food insecurity is a common issue facing people living in low-income communities (Milner, 2012), I include these lessons and concerns about children's nutrition and their awareness of farming and gardening as part of the culturally responsive teaching some of my participants embedded in the regular curricula. Limited research exists on the connections between food deserts and urban schooling that goes beyond documentation of the higher incidence of obesity found among children living in food deserts (i.e. Schafft, Jensen, & Hinrichs, 2009). I

found that for D.J., who wanted to teach about life within and beyond the curriculum, food and health and the challenges her students faced weighed heavily on her. She wanted them to have knowledge they could use to understand how to feed themselves.

No excuses: Dr. C. and Lyric Lawrence

Lyric and Dr. C. knew the Clement community from their own childhood experiences that the other participants claimed less. Lyric was raised in a somewhat similar setting, grew up in a house where the water was sometimes off because her mom was out of money, had been a young mother, had struggled, and she had no room for any excuses, from children, their parents, or people, especially teachers, who practiced oversympathy. She also did not engage in deficit thinking, and she did not criticize parents or communities. Lyric's expectations were straightforward: she expected her students to enter her room, remember how to log into their computers, and work.

When I went to Lyric's classroom, we often watched students together. We discussed, based on how students learned from the technological tools Lyric offered them, how far they had come in their learning that year. I would often follow her lead and we made them work together, helping kids with login and application issues, teaching things, encouraging, redirecting. Midyear, Lyric offered fun games to reinforce tested content and we would discuss the curricular demands being made of third, fourth, and fifth graders.

Sometimes, Lyric would break tradition and veer in a critical direction. Sometimes, *Lyric* would come to work. The day after the presidential election of 2016, Lyric had not slept. Lyric's daughter, finishing an undergraduate degree in a predominantly White institution (PWI), a land grant university, had called her crying at 3:30 in the morning. She was crying because she knew that the White supremacist sentiments students felt comfortable expressing at that PWI, an insti-

tution built on the backs of slaves many years ago, would increase. Lyric spent the night on the phone encouraging her daughter to stay strong, to walk tall and move forward. So on November 9, Lyric left Mrs. Lawrence at home. Lyric pushed aside the technology curriculum and gave an assignment to her fifth graders: create a PowerPoint slide explaining how you feel about the presidential election last night.

Here is one example of what a student created:

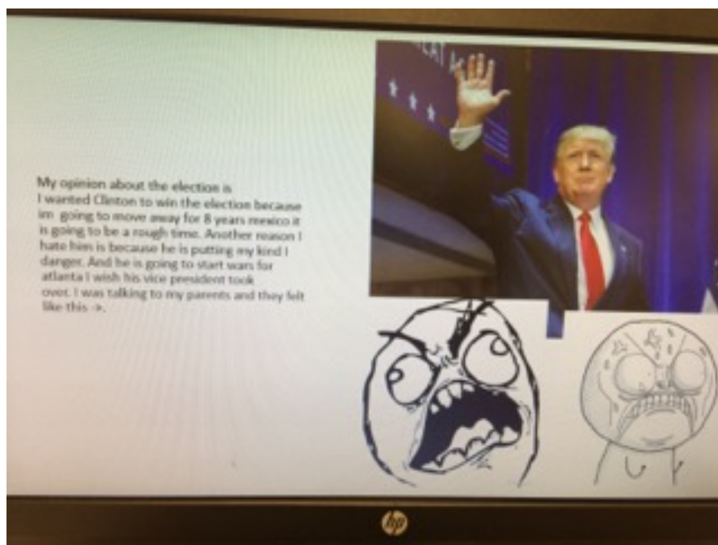

Figure 2. Fifth grade boy's PowerPoint after November 8, 2016 election.

The point of the assignment was achieved. The child used the opportunity to express his fears and anger. The teacher provided space for such expression. Giving kids this space made Lyric feel better that day.

One might argue there could have been a part two, an opportunity to edit and revise, to share, to receive feedback, to read examples of other youth resistance work, etc. That did not happen, and Mrs. Lawrence came back to work soon. Regardless, on that day, Lyric provided a chance for students to reflect on their world and current events. Means (2013) identified ways in which the structures of public schooling, such as scripted pedagogy, standardized tests, and strict disciplinary practices, serve to enclose students and foreclose their biopolitical development and

forms of subjectivity. Bourassa (2017) argued that practices of contemporary schooling for students of color constitute rituals of enclosure, in particular ontological enclosure, intended to distinguish “those who are proper from those who are improper” (p. 333). He called this a “carceral form of biopedagogy” (p. 333) intended to eradicate certain ways of being and knowing. Eliminating certain subjects by regulating some desires and behaviors amounts to a form of cultural cleansing and the overwhelming message that only certain subjectivities, i.e. White, are welcome. Lyric’s 5th grade student understood this and expressed it in his PowerPoint slide on November 9, 2016. Moreover he understood that with the election of Donald Trump as president, he and his family were at greater risk of persecution for their ethnicity, their language, and their ways of being. In this example and in many others throughout the study, participants used pedagogical practices to attempt to validate the subjectivities of their students and make room for them to grow.

Dr. C. frequently took an activist stance with strong critical justifications. She offered her own life stories and made demands of her students that were driven by the need to improve lives, to raise community up, and to imbue students’ lives with dignity. Her demand was always that they work hard, and harder, to achieve what they were capable of, and that they make no excuses to answer for results that fell short. Dr. C. put the onus on the students; yet at the same time she knew what they were up against. Dr. C acted as an instructional leader for the teachers, the parents, and the community. She conceived of leadership as an act of pursuing social justice for underrepresented kids. She was strongly opposed to deficit mindsets about the kids, but when she talked about them and the neighborhood they lived in, she was frank. It was a food desert, a healthcare desert. It lacked sidewalks and adequate garbage pickup. There were boarded up houses. There were stray dogs. These were her observations, and they were true. So it was not

that she wanted to paint a rose garden picture of a community that was full of weeds. She saw the weeds. It was about tone. She did not subscribe to attaching beliefs about kids' academic abilities to observations about their living conditions. Her belief was that they needed to harness the very best of what they had to help the kids learn to help themselves. Dr. C. and I never talked about drugs or gangs or incarcerated fathers. She never conveyed any messages linking the poverty of the parents to poor parenting, because these were not equivalents.

Getting dirty: Allecia

Allecia used song, voice, games, and critical pedagogy to engage students and make strong connections between the curriculum and students' lives. She had earned a Ph.D. in Educational Studies several years earlier and also had extensive research knowledge. She often said she was made for teaching in the environment at Clement. When she agreed to work with me, she told me that if I were going to do this, I would have to get dirty. Allecia's phrase, "get dirty," became a fundamental expression about what teaching meant for Allecia, and what it meant to teach at Clement.

Getting dirty meant a lot of things to Allecia, a combination of literal and figurative meanings that seemed to shape her approach as a teacher. She explained much of her thinking about this expression in a debrief session we held over a year after the study had ended, in July 2018, when she was on the verge of beginning another new year at Clement:

> It's the physical aspect of getting dirty. You should be physically dirty at the end of the day. You should have some dust on you. There should be some residue on you. But you also get to the point where you have to wash it off. What makes you clean? I come clean when they are smiling. We set goals and I see that those goals are being realized. It's in

> test data. It's in their abilities to perform. I see it when their confidence goes up. (personal interview, July 28, 2018)

For Allecia, getting dirty also meant going beyond the curriculum. Teaching was much more than the scope and sequence and much more than the standards. She wanted her students to become better people. "There are a lot of people who've got great scores, but are they good people?" (personal interview, July 27, 2018). She wanted her classroom to be affirming, and she taught children to feel good about their lives and their learning. She taught children they were born for the purpose of making life better for others. Allecia believed that children are an inheritance, but, she added, "Some of my babies don't feel like they're an inheritance for anyone, so I figure that while I have [them] I have to do my best" (personal interview, July 28, 2018).

Allecia was critical of policy, and she felt the constraints of social division, racism, and inequities. As stated earlier in this chapter she believed that as a contracted employee she was bound to conduct herself according to the terms of the contract, but that was not an entirely stifling demand. She felt that policy held people and institutions together, but she also built in subversive measures, "so that I am not oppressed and I don't have to suppress my children even as we meet the expectation of the policies" (personal interview, July 28, 2018).

For Allecia, getting dirty spanned from the literal dirtiness of the classroom to the figurative dirtiness of the world in which we live.

> Dirty means … dealing with the stench of school, the stench of policy, the stench of violated human rights. There are multiple contexts, multiple layers, multiple voices at work. You've got to go in and sift through all of that and do what's best for you and your kids. It can become profane, it can become sordid and chaotic. It means relinquishing your own biases and attitudes and [asking] how do I get so that I can help make my kids lives

> better. The room is chaotic, the room is messy, paint is flying, it is out of control, it is interactive, it is intentional. That's one point of the messy. You don't know what you're going to have to deal with day to day- you don't know who is going to cuss who out. [It's] trying to find the right words. It's also good, when [kids] have their own judgments. That gets messy. [It means recognizing] the power in our names. 'We're not calling each other names because that is disrespectful, that is wrong.' [It means] reconcile that [kids'] home culture is different than the school culture. It's not my right as a teacher to judge what's going on at home, but it is my right to uphold expectations in my classroom. In my classroom we're only allowed to call each other by the names their parents gave them. At the end of day we have to live in that classroom. That's our home. (personal interview, July 28, 2018)

In the classroom, Allecia's pedagogical craft combined singing, preaching, praising, and oral performance of text. It also involved one-on-one relationship building as she cultivated close ties with individual students and their families.

On November 2, 2016, two boys walked into the classroom at the beginning of Allecia's social studies lesson. Some children reported that they were going to fight each other. Allecia began the lesson, using it to lead the way away from the subject of the two boys fighting. She said, "There is a fight about to start!" Her volume went up and her intensity drew in the kids, and within a couple of seconds, she was telling the story of the battle of Lexington and Concord, teaching the students about the Revolutionary War. The worry about the boys' conflict was superseded by the lesson as she narrated the story. She explained the main characters: Sam Adams, Paul Revere, and Thomas Jefferson. She explained the gist of the conflict: they broke up with Britain, Britain sent troops, the British military attacked with weapons. The "shot heard round

the world" was fired in Concord, MA. The British unsuccessfully tried to acquire or destroy the rebels' weapons.

During this lesson, I stepped out of the room for a few minutes. While I was out, the two boys did start to fight. Allecia broke it up, and by the time I was back in the room, she was correcting that situation and connecting it to the material she had been teaching:

> There are battles that really were important. We have wars when we cannot settle our differences. You might like to fight, but your goal should be to never. Your goal should never be to make other people afraid of you. Develop a positive attitude. Treat people the way you want to be treated. Get your education so you can provide for yourself and your family. What you did was show me your level of disrespect. (observation, November 2, 2016)

After she explained these values, she returned quickly to the lesson and then reviewed what they had covered the previous day.

Allecia started each day with a 20-30 minute session in social-emotional learning that involved games, chants, and connections between children that brought their identities forth and often led them to share deeply personal experiences and feelings as well as to own and to take responsibility for the shaping of their epistemological selves. She taught the curricula for reading and social studies as the district expected and worked with the 4th grade team to make decisions that all felt would help meet the goals for 4th grade, which involved strategically maximizing test-based achievement. She told her students stories about herself, her family, and her travels, and she communicated her values, which included seeking multi-cultural experiences, traveling to other countries, and learning other languages. She also upheld students' humanity and citizenship, and used the 4th grade social studies curriculum, which was American history, to emphasize

her students' rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, per the ideals of the United States, her students' birthright.

In his discussion of stage performance, Goltz (2013) articulated a theoretical notion of performative messiness:

> The unique strengths and potentials of performance are what make it dirty, messy, and dangerous. The co-mingling of multiple intersections of identity within a singular body, in a specific temporal and historical context, within specific relations is messy in ways our words try to, yet never can quite, organize. The intersubjective traveling and risk that performance potentializes are clumsy and dangerous for they ask that we travel on an un-chartered journey to reexamine who we are and who we might be. The manner by which our stories, our lives, and our affinities and commitments cut across the clean, abstract language of the theoretical leaves us all dirty, grounded, and soiled in one another—or so we hope. (p. 23)

Goltz's phrases in this passage, "the co-mingling of multiple intersections of identity within a singular body" and "intersubjective traveling and risk" capture in theoretical terms what I believe I witnessed in Allecia's classroom, and which her merging of the historical fight and the brief boys' fight as a teachable moment and her way of collecting and redirecting the energy and attentions of her students seems to exemplify. Allecia steadily examined and synchronized her values in order to teach children and give them what she believed they needed. She brought these values forward and enacted them in the moment-to-moment work of teaching.

Getting dirty could be understood as a methodology for instruction Allecia had developed through years of experience and reflection. She told me she was persistently reflective, always thinking about her students and ways to reach them. This is important because if indeed her ap-

proach to teaching captured this intersubjective, intertwined co-mingling of different identities have the potential, as Goltz (2013) expressed, to lead us on a journey "to reexamine who we are and who we might be" (p. 23), then Allecia's approach suggests transformative potential. But even this concept can be messy, when anti-bias is a value. To transform, as Allecia pointed out, suggests the deconstruction of one thing to grow another. Transformational teaching in a social justice context must understand and resist its potential to impose the teacher's own notion of the 'ought to be' upon students. This suggests the messiness of a methodological process that is incomplete and ongoing. In the most practical manifestation of the merging of theory and practice, during the 2016-2017 school year, I observed students in Allecia's class open up. They shared themselves and practiced knowing and accepting one another. They were encouraged to shape their own ideas. They practiced integrity and focus while learning and working together. They were also learning what it meant to be a community—a peaceful community—with one another.

Theme 3: Community-outreach/ inreach pedagogy

This theme emerged from the code groups "power of love" and "methodology." It evolved to represent how educators at Clement strove to include the community and create a strong community that centered on caring for children. Dr. C. held an ideal of hope that Clement could provide a high-quality education for the communities and the families. The teacher-participants loved children and held beliefs in their fundamental gifts and vast potential. Farinde-Wu, Glover, and Williams (2017) highlighted the phrase "heart work" for culturally responsive urban teachers. As opposed to hard work, heart work is motivated by belief systems. Heart work strengthens and drives educators' work. At Clement, I found heart work both within and outside the classrooms. People worked hard to construct threads between the school and the community that went beyond classroom walls. Dr. C., Lyric and other members of the school staff (such as

the counselor, the parent liaison, and the assistant principal) forged and cultivated ties under the belief that these ties would make the school stronger and safer and would ultimately improve children's chances.

As explained, I use the term outreach to refer to educators' efforts to bring community into the school. Outreach involves bringing outsiders physically into the school to improve relationships, make connections, and/or bring in new resources. This is a common process in most schools and community agencies to make connections between the institution and the public. I also observed something else that seemed to undergird the process, which I describe as inreach. Inreach indicates the how educators engaged pieces of themselves, images, and elements of culture to construct intimate spaces of belonging both within classrooms as well as the school as a whole, and strove to create the most child-friendly version of the cultural world the children lived in. Inreach seemed to be an artistic process in which the educator selected elements of herself to expose to the children as well as to any other people who entered the space. The result was that outsiders joined that personal, intimate space. I saw inreach as a form of exposure and intimacy, a force that created relationships between educators, children, and others.

For this theme, I share stories of the child-centered environment within the school walls followed by stories of ways in which the community, both in terms of people and elements of culture, participated in the school's efforts to improve the lives of the children. This theme is encompassed in 5 stories: **ABC blocks, A place for dancing, Politics and policies, Visitors from outside,** and **Home away from home.** I close the chapter with final thoughts about the findings from all three themes.

ABC blocks

During the first days I observed at Clement, I walked the halls, learned my way around, and wrote notes in the Media Center and the atrium. In addition to the ABC block sculpture, the atrium featured positive posters, such as an acrostic identifying the qualities of the children, a congratulations sign for a recent accomplishment, a “No Place For Hate” poster from the Anti-Defamation League (2017). Posters shared the school’s vision, mission, values, and creed. It was colorful and welcoming.

Outside the school, as previously explained, the nearest grocery stores, banks, and fast food restaurants were about three miles away. Within walking distance there were several gas stations with convenience marts, a discount store, a thrift store, a pawnshop, a community center and several churches. During the first two days, someone told me that teachers used to bring their kids to the school, but not anymore. In my field notes during one of these first few days, I wrote, “30 minutes ago a cafeteria worker’s car was robbed. The farmer’s market at the local gentrifier’s community center is an okay source of fresh food. They take EBT. The local health clinic closed three years ago” (observation, October 4, 2016). A few pages later I wrote, “It is safe and secure here. The doors are all locked except for those leading to and from the courtyard. It is otherwise inaccessible. The halls are quiet, uncluttered, and clean.” I also wrote, “Children are held accountable for their behavior. They are expected to be compliant and orderly…. They appear to want the space [in their ‘space bubbles’] away from one another” (Observation, October 4, 2016). When teachers brought children through the halls, they were supposed to have space between them; the space was called their bubble. Over the year I saw teachers struggle with maintaining silent lines, and I learned that this rule caused controversy among some of the research participants and other educators, who found it constraining for children. However, at the begin-

ning I did not see those controversies. My initial impression was that the kids seemed calm; the hallway movement was peaceful. There were consequences for breaches of hallway decorum, but these consisted mostly of reminders.

A few lines later in my field notes I wrote that Clement Elementary School seemed like a safe space for children. A safe space for children was not just a space with locked doors, however, which I noted that Clement had. It was a space where children saw, read, and heard enriching messages designed for them. The art on the wall featured Black children. The students at Clement walked the halls and common spaces and saw images of themselves as learners. What had been brought inside to build the environment of the school was culturally sustaining. One might even say it was culturally restorative. Children of color need to be exposed to representations of themselves. Gardner (2017) wrote of the visual rhetoric that exposes Black children to anti-Black sentiments at a young age. Aesthetic experiences influence children's sense of self. Seeing positive, friendly and academically centered images of Black children in the atrium and in the Media Center could have a positive effect on the children. And related to this theme about community outreach/inreach, there were no images of Whites in the décor in the common spaces in the school. That could mean that there was a reduction in children's exposure to a troubling visual binary that still exposes the "social relations of privilege for Whites in American culture" (Smith-D'Arezzo & Musgrove, 2011). One might interpret this as an effort, either conscious or unconscious, to minimize the visual reminders of White privilege by simply not bringing them *in*.

A place for dancing

Several times during the school year, there were assemblies and celebrations featuring professional artists. I observed a rap group, a chamber orchestra, and a popular entertainer who

focused on youth empowerment. These were all members of the African American community from different regions, some local, some not, who provided opportunities for the children to see contemporary representations of themselves. These visitors influenced the children in ways that supplemented the static representations of the visual art that lined some of the walls. For the students, this could have felt like a fun break from class, but it also seemed to have a whole other educative purpose. The assemblies I observed occurred at fairly regular intervals throughout the year, in the fall, winter, and spring (though there may have been others). At these assemblies, children danced as the opportunity availed itself, and while they danced, they saw African Americans, like themselves, in artistic, professional roles making a difference in the community.

In one instance, the teachers and the children themselves took center stage and became the performers who made a difference for the students. To culminate Red Ribbon Week (Goldstein, 2016), Clement held an assembly to showcase each grade levels' interpretation of the annual theme, which in 2016 was *YOLO. Be Drug Free*. For the week leading up to the assembly, D.J. told me what to expect. She would be the host of the assembly. She would dress up in a huge rainbow Afro wig and platform shoes. She would have the mic and turn on her entertainer's personality and voice to its full extent.

The day arrived, and during the assembly, D.J. called up groups of students from different grade levels randomly, instead of going in order from kindergarten to fifth grade. This kept them on their toes, so when they ran up to perform, they were energized. The groups each performed their Red Ribbon skit, which, with the help of their teachers, had been created to communicate the message of Red Ribbon Week and to correlate with the *YOLO* theme. In between each skit, a teacher played a popular rap/ hip-hop song. On stage with her, D.J. had her back-up dancers-- 5 or 6 boys, all second-graders, keeping the crowds' spirits up. This was back when

Silentó's (2015) debut single "Watch Me (Whip/Nae Nae)" was a hit, and when that song played, almost every child in the room, and many of the grown-ups too, joined in the dance.

Whenever there were whole-school celebrations, music was on and the children were dancing. There were monthly celebrations of good attendance and good conduct. Children were invited to parade through the halls for perfect attendance, and during the parade a popular hip-hop song played on the intercom throughout the whole school. There were also celebrations of good conduct in the gym where children's achievements were announced, and at the end, music played and kids ate treats. These moments were warm and joyful, and most everyone, kids and adults alike, took the chance to dance.

Policies and politics come in: Tough love and warm demands

Images of Black children, live performers from the Black community, and popular rap and hip-hop contributed to the intimate, personal space designed to show Black children positive images of themselves. The children were surrounded, visually as well as aurally, with positive images of themselves. It was not community outreach in the traditional sense, because the process did not create an exchange as typical outreach does (and which I will describe soon). It created an atmosphere and sense of identity for the school.

However, in this positive and culturally responsive atmosphere, success with testing and score improvement had to take place. The pressure upon the educators and students was persistent. It was nonnegotiable. Testing, as stated previously, was just a fact of the students' lives. However, there seemed to be no observable correlation between the culturally positive atmosphere within the school and the mediation of test-based stress or pressure. They seemed to be, to some extent, mutually exclusive phenomena. The school attempted to invite students in to develop a sense of positive cultural worth, but test-based pressure resulted in reminders that their aca-

demic performance was sub-par, that the need for improvement was urgent, and in fact that low performance threatened the existence of the school. Though I did not hear any verified word on the potential for the school's closure based on test failure, the adults in the building seemed to truly fear this possibility.

In the previous year, the outcomes had put the school in a borderline position, which was celebrated, but in order to feel like things were truly moving in a safer direction, those outcomes had to be exceeded. This section, on politics and policies, represents the ways I observed participants try to mediate these demands. Educators had to motivate students to endure and produce results on measures that were *not* child-friendly, culturally responsive, or empowering. The testing students were required to do, as is the case around the nation, demanded sprints of silent, seated energy at a computer, clicking a mouse and typing responses. There was little else about the children's performance that fed into the overall score for the school, and the truth was (as it is for thousands of U.S. schools), educators had to convince children to give that energy to them. It is unclear how the method of inreach analyzed in the previous story, what I describe as the creation of a positive cultural space where Black children were represented, could function alongside the demands of annual grade-level testing. I could not see evidence of how the positivity of intimate schooling space directly affected test scores. It was a loving atmosphere celebrating the children's culture, and it was absolutely necessary that they give the tests their all so they could trust the school would stay open. It is not clear if these two phenomena are inclusive of one another, which from a critical race perspective is both ironic and unsurprising.

Dr. C. was firm, strict, and formidable at times in a form that was child-sensitive and caring. She practiced a caring strictness that was uncompromising and unequivocal, perhaps the school leader's version of being a warm demander (Ware, 2006). In the face of the threats com-

ing at the school regarding student achievement and test scores, there seemed to be no way forward but for the students to do better. Hard work was also, testing aside, highly valued in the school, too, as were attendance and positive behavior. It was all significant, but the way in which hard work was emphasized in relationship to testing had a unique kind of urgency.

"You will not be able to blame Clement Elementary School if you do not succeed" (observation, October 17, 2016). Dr. C. explained this in an achievement assembly to which children were brought to discuss benchmark test data. The gist of her message in the assembly was "I'm not going to lie to you." She explained that the state was watching schools like theirs. Not White schools, but schools like their Black school. And the state was going to come in and take the school if their test scores were not better. In this meeting, Dr. C. impressed on the children that the school was working to do everything it could do to provide the education children needed to be successful, both for the long term (college and career) and the short term (achievement tests success). The students had to place trust in the school that it was giving them what they needed to grow. But, Dr. C. made very clear, the students had to do their part, too.

Students' behavior was addressed in tandem with the discussion of achievement. Dr. C. and several teachers addressed behavioral concerns such as talking, playing, and not paying attention. One teacher pointed out that children did not seem to understand that rowdy behavior interfered with achievement. Another stated that she thought that some kids were blowing through the tests, clicking letters at random: AAA, CCC, etc. Rowdy behavior and inattentive or disengaged testing both resulted in the same thing: low achievement. Dr. C. reminded students that many careers required tests, so they should accept tests as part of life.

I witnessed moments like this throughout the year. Dr. C. was direct with the students about the urgency of the political situation they faced. The government changed dramatically

during the year. She explained that she had no faith in the new federal government to make or maintain policies with the needs of low-income, Black children in mind. Her message to the students was they could not slack. They had to make it known, through their test scores, how capable they were. The scores were the evidence of something that outsiders needed to see to prove something everyone who knew they children already understood: they were capable, they were smart, and they could pass tests just like anyone else.

In our final interview, I asked Dr. C. about her approach. We talked about her direct confrontations of the students and her demands that they put in the effort to produce the data to prove their capability. We also talked about how explicit she was about the politics involved with the testing and the way the state viewed Black schools. Her answer:

> The kids can't say I don't care. Now, they get mad at me, I get mad at them too, but they can't say I don't care. But people are looking at us based on how you perform on a test, or whether or not you sit down in a classroom and can listen, or whether or not you get along with your peers. So, *I* have to let them know, because if someone else lets them know, they might get the wrong story. I'd rather let them depend on me to know how I feel about them, than someone else who might get the wrong story…I want them to write their story, be whatever is their heart's desire and then come back and help their community. I'm very big on community… on dealing with social issues… I have to keep my nose to the grind and be more political than I thought I'd ever be, but I have to keep my hand on the pulse of that because that affects what we do in school. (personal interview, June 16, 2017)

Dr. C. believed in telling students the truth. She said she was incapable of sugarcoating the truth, because when she had tried it, it altered her personality. She did not adapt her discourse

to baby the kids. She could not say, 'we're going to make sure you pass the tests' or 'it's on us as your teachers' because she knew that once any consequential exam began, only the children could do the work. She told students exactly what she expected of them. She also told them exactly what she thought of where these demands were coming from. In the achievement assembly in October, she referred to the state's governor, who favored state takeovers and privatization, as a man "who probably couldn't even spell education."

Politics came in to the school and Dr. C. did not sugarcoat the truth about what students were facing or how hard they had to work to lessen the stigma on their community and their school. However, Dr. C. did not expect that students had to do this entirely on their own. As much as she demanded that the students take responsibility for their actions and their learning, she also expected teachers to do the same and ensure that students were getting what they needed to be successful. Meanwhile, she strategically cultivated relationships with outsiders so that the support system helping with non-academic needs grew in scope and size throughout the year.

Visitors from the outside

Within this environment, where educators reached into themselves and their culture to create an atmosphere in which children felt loved and represented, there was a constant threat, that based on test data, the loving and culturally relevant community might be closed. Just as I analyze in Chapters 1 and 2, factors shaping urban emergent, low-income communities of color influence schooling and achievement outcomes. To requote from Chapter 2, as Anyon (2013) stated, "Trying to fix an urban school without fixing the neighborhood in which it is embedded is like trying to clean the air on one side of a screen door" (para. 1).

Dr. C. brought in community members to play a role in improving the lives of students both within and outside of school. The following are stories of several visitors who came to

Clement to share their time with the students and the educators. Through these stories, the concept of visitor takes on several different meanings. In several stories, visitors were actual people who volunteered at Clement. These included the Methodist Women's Outreach, African American Men Read, and the STEM partners. There were also presences of people or things, that I consider abstract visitors, not literal physical bodies, who had significant meaning for the school and its students. All the visitors, both literal and abstract, helped to define the work of several of the participants as well as the ways in which Clement functioned as a site of hope.

African American Men Read. In SEL one morning, Allecia offered praise for a teacher at the school who had defended her dissertation the previous day. She used this story to begin a conversation about growth. She explained that growth depends on letting go of people who hold you back. After introducing the concept, she invited the children to share their thoughts. The kids opened up, telling stories of people who did things that held them back. Examples included seeing friends or family members do things like steal candy from stores, smoke, or act bad. The children opened up further when the topic shifted to a discussion of how they held each another back.

Then the African American Men Read initiative began. A visitor arrived to read a book to the students. A firefighter who read the first chapter of R.L. Stine's (2005) *The Good, the Bad, and the Very Slimy (Rotten School Series #3).* This was a children's series about boarding school, and in this chapter the characters raced slugs. When asked questions about the book, students demonstrated they could predict based on evidence (a reading standard for elementary school). They enjoyed being read to, they enjoyed hearing fiction, and it was a pleasure for the kids to have people from the community in the building. It was also a pleasure for students to hear an

adult read from a popular children's series, which were almost never part of the regular curriculum.

I noticed throughout the year how the 4th graders were obsessed with *Captain Underpants* (Pilkey, 2005), *Dork Diaries* (Russell, 2009), and other popular children's series. Students would sneak books behind their notebooks and read while teachers were teaching other content. The reading curriculum had shifted in recent years to focus strongly on information text, and to get ready for testing season, they reviewed text types and structures. The students had learned a lot about those topics, but they were still hiding Dav Pilkey and Rachel Russell and sneaking chapters instead of paying full attention to their lessons. It was as if fiction was contraband, outsider material intruding in the regulation curriculum, taking the kids' attention away from the tested content. Since usually this popular fiction was an intrusion, hearing the firefighter read it was a little like letting the cat out of the bag.

While the firefighter read R.L. Stine (2005), Allecia and I shared a few thoughts. One of her concerns that day was how administrative stressors were entering teachers' spaces and how she was handling it. There were a few different demands on teachers that week, which was right before the winter holidays. They had submitted lesson plans as required but there were interruptions and restrictions that made it impossible for them to execute the plans. The administrative stressors and demands intruded on the teachers' plans, which were not optional, but then it was not possible to execute them because of interruptions, like African American Men Read, which was nevertheless very valuable. When the firefighter read R.L. Stine (2005), for once fiction was allowed and the children did not sneak their Dork Diaries while trying to annotate information text.

A few days earlier, I had read Kearney's (2016) letter in the Huffington Post to Betsy DeVos in which he said, "We don't pick and choose the types of kids that we will teach, we teach ALL of them" (para. 1). I mentioned the letter in my field notes that day. Kearney wrote

> Our communities are very important to us. We are taxpayers in our local communities and many of us have children of our own who attend the public schools that we teach in. We care deeply that our schools are safe and that they are providing a rigorous and relevant curriculum to EVERY student who walks in the door. We recognize that each of our communities have different needs and sometimes get frustrated with a "one size fits all" mentality. (para. 3).

I thought about the kids in Clement and the how the teachers reached out and embraced every single one of them. The focus on individual relationships with children characterized most teachers in the school. DeVos's appointment as Secretary of Education was looming on the horizon and we were there at Clement, where I observed Allecia finding moments to educate every child in the room. After the firefighter finished the chapter of *The Good, the Bad, and the Very Slimy*, Allecia stepped forward next to the firefighter and began to appoint future African American Men Read participants. She said there were boys in the class she knew would be doing the same volunteer service in the coming years. She brought the lesson full circle, looping it back to the SEL discussion of how we sometimes hold one another back, as if to suggest that she knew the boys would overcome such issues. She began to say their names, pointing out each boy in the room who would be a future reader for African American Men Read. The boys beamed with pride.

This is my life. One day, Brooklyn told me about a visit from the Methodist women who had begun an outreach mission at Clement that year. The women's group, which represented a

predominantly White church in another part of town, wanted to make a contribution to Clement and had been cultivating the relationship with Dr. C. and several teachers since the start of the school year. The previous Saturday, they had brought some of their children to paint murals.

Brooklyn was teaching Saturday school. She told me about an encounter she had with one of the women whom she described as nervous and insincere. Brooklyn explained that one of the little boys in Saturday school tried to start a conversation with this nervous woman. He told her about how his daddy had been killed. Brooklyn said that on hearing this, the woman looked down at the little boy with an expression that made clear she did not want to hear it. A few seconds later, she walked away. A short time later this little boy's sister "messed up the painting work" of two of the women's daughters. The daughters cried, and so the women had to take their children home.

Brooklyn was there in the midst of the mural painting because as the art teacher, she was in charge of supervising the production of art in the school's public spaces. But there was also Saturday school going on that day, and the session was short-staffed. Brooklyn had to multi-task because the Saturday school children needed supervision. Brooklyn could not be in two places at once, so the Saturday school kids interacted with the mural painting guests. In our conversation, she related her feeling that day, "Whose needs mattered the most?" Her kids' or the visitors'? Brooklyn said, "Here are white women coming to the 'hood to help but for who? Are they coming to make themselves better or to make the children's lives better?" About the women's early departure, Brooklyn postulated, "Her mission was done I guess. But this is my life – this is what matters most to me." Brooklyn, who was White, shared this frustration about the mission of the White women coming to help at Clement. She found it suspicious.

This was Brooklyn's anecdote about the partnership with the women. Dr. C. also explained her perspective on this partnership in one of our interviews. It turns out, Dr. C. had been blunt with them about her hopes for such a partnership.

> When [the Methodist women] started to volunteer to work with us … they brought me [to a meeting] and I took about four other people with me and I told them I was so excited about the partnership they wanted to have with us but let me say this, "[Our kids] don't need white people to come in and save them; they're good. What we need is for people to give them hope and let them know they have a future." I wanted to make sure we put that out there, I didn't want them saying they were coming here to save the little black children, that's not what they need. I need people who are going care about our kids, who's not gonna judge some of the methods we may have to use to get to our kids, someone who's gonna love our kids because they've gotten along with the love of their teachers and themselves. (personal interview, June 16, 2017)

According to Dr. C., she gave this partnership a chance because she wanted and needed more people to come into the school to offer hope and love to the children. She did not witness the exchange between one of the women and the little boy, but it sounded like, from Brooklyn's story, that giving love *to that little boy,* whose father had been killed, was more than the volunteer was up for that day.

Partners and politics. The outsiders I witnessed come in to Clement that year had in common the desire to help out, but they seemed differently equipped to provide that help, perhaps based on background, culture, and/or belief systems. Mid-year, a group of local, mostly African American professionals from the STEM fields gathered at Clement to discuss how they could support the school's STEM initiative.

The meeting began with Lyric presenting data they had collected from students who had answered questions about what they were most concerned about in their neighborhood. In my field notes I wrote what they reported. “Their neighborhood is filthy. It’s a food desert, a tree desert, a sidewalk desert, a safety desert, and a police advocate desert” (observation notes, December 7, 2016). Dr. C. then explained that STEM was connected to school goals that included survival, safety, academic competence, and enjoyment. She said STEM could help to teach students how to handle their policy-caused problems, directly addressing the neighborhood conditions her students had referenced, all of which were solvable using the tools of STEM.

After Dr. C. said this, one of the attendees, an air quality expert from EPA, spoke up. She expressed her feeling that teaching students to solve their problems was not enough. She felt they also needed tools to reach people with resources. She advocated teaching children to reach out to politicians and directly ask for help. This same attendee explained later in the meeting that she was from a similar community. “I’ve been where you are. How much of my story can I share [with the children]?” “Stories matter,” answered Dr. C., “we shouldn’t be spending our time pumping them up for a week. It should be all the time. Tell your story. Do not say, ‘You can do anything!’”

STEM was envisioned as a way that the deserted environment outside the school might be replenished, renewed, and perhaps replanted. No one attended this meeting who was not deeply invested in its mission. There were no real estate developers, no one seeking to ‘improve property values’ through gentrification. As stated earlier, those people were present in the community, but they were not present in this meeting.

The STEM partners meeting took place in early December, after the 2016 presidential election but before the inauguration. Though a STEM brainstorming session on the surface, the

problems and politics of neighborhood segregation was the meeting's underlying theme. Dr. C. and Lyric did not explicitly present their STEM program as a call to political action, they indirectly invited an activist stance among attendees. After the inauguration in January 2017, Dr. Clementine's activist stance became more explicit and resistant. When she felt she needed to address the new normal of racism and White supremacy in politics, she did. This was a literal resistance to the intrusion of the new era of federal politics. It might have been rather easy to keep images of oppression off the walls of the school's common spaces. It was quite another thing to keep oppressive political news out of the minds of all the building's inhabitants.

On March 1, 2017, Dr. C. got on the intercom in the morning, as she usually did, but this time had a bit more bite than usual. She said, "We have to keep learning our history." She meant, though Black History Month ended the previous day, and for the previous month a fact about African American history had been shared at the beginning of each day, she was going to keep it going. This was because on February 28, 2017, Betsy DeVos praised historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) for being "pioneers of school choice" (Douglas-Gabriel & Jan, 2017). Dr. Clementine continued, "HBCUs were *not* started to provide an alternative to educational options. Black students were *not allowed* to attend White colleges." She wanted to make sure all the children knew DeVos's statement, which circulated widely, was false.

Dr. C. told students the truth about racism in America, both historical and present-day. When the STEM visitors came to discuss the adoption of new programming at the school designed to improve the community, Dr. C., though she was not quite as explicit, was no less clear in her views about the oppressive nature of the new U.S. regime. These literal visitors were engaged in conversation about a new presence in the school, the Trump regime and the promise of the erosion of social justice.

Home away from home

Taking a non-deficit view of a marginalized community does not mean coating the story with false evidence of the positive. It means telling the story without blame or shame. It also means looking at not only the ways in which oppression occurs, but also the ways in which members of the community countermand the oppression and create liberating spaces. It is true that Clement Elementary School struggled to generate the data the state wanted to prove (in the state's terms) that they were doing a good enough job educating the children. It is also true from this research that Clement strove to do what was needed for the children. That meant a lot more than simply getting the students to generate data. It meant assuring their health and well being, their safety and security, and their self-concepts and self-esteem. This work took an artistic level of consideration of people, community, history, the curriculum, and the environment. It was not easy, and it was always in flux.

During the study, I conducted one group interview that five of the teachers, D.J., Lyric, Allecia, Lucca, and Brooklyn, attended. During this interview, a variety of topics were covered, including their backgrounds in teacher education, how they responded to policy, and what had motivated them to remain in education. At one point, participants began to talk about the classrooms they inhabited and to reflect on how their classrooms took on meaning. D.J. questioned her sense of being a part of the building and wondered why teachers invested so much of themselves in their rooms. She said, "We *move in* to these places. We treat our classrooms as our houses. Why we treat these places like they're our homes?" The emphasis on *move in* provoked us all to wonder why teachers conducted themselves in classrooms as if they are at home. There was a brief pause as everyone thought about it, and then Allecia answered. "That's why mine's a beach. I've got my sand, my tiki torches, and my palm trees." Everyone laughed. In fact, Al-

lecia's room *was* a beach. She had made wall coverings out of paper and fabric to give the room a beach atmosphere. There were palm trees in one corner, and an ocean wall covering with blue water and light brown sand. There were also photographs of her and her family at the beach. Cleverly, Allecia has enfolded all the standards-based room requirements—the word wall and the data wall-- into the beach theme too, so they were virtually hidden in the atmosphere. I had spent hours in the room before this meeting, but I had not considered how this environment spoke to something within Allecia herself. D.J. made the point that as teachers, they made their classrooms into second homes. For Allecia, that second home needed to be the beach. Her room was warm and calming. The décor did give off the impression that in that classroom, you were somewhere nice.

Allecia's message to her colleagues seemed to be that yes, we move into these spaces and they are our homes. Therefore, we must make them reflect what we want to project from our-selves. In the common spaces of the school, the décor featured images and sculpture that show-cased Black children, creating a sense of home for the students in the school. As they moved in and out of different teachers' classrooms, some gave off a sense of closeness and intimacy that further engaged the children in a specific sense of being at home. The external representation, the creation of atmosphere, seemed to me to be the result of inward seeking on the part of educators. They had created the environments they felt would best serve their children, the students of Clement.

Final thoughts

In this chapter I have shared data from my observations at Clement drawn from partici-pant-observations and interviews. It intends to illustrate the ways in which teachers maneuvered their content and pedagogical expertise with their cultural knowledge and values in order to

make children's lives richer, better, and grounded in knowledge and to empower them. Doing all of this from a desire-based perspective (Tuck, 2009) underscored by the tenets of Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1988), it would be disingenuous to argue that the teachers, as policy adapters and cultural responders, solved all the problems facing the children and the school. However, policy adapters and cultural responders seek to provide children with important knowledge of all sorts. They teach math, reading, history, science, technology, music, and art, as well as resilience, resistance, and Black culture, love, and pride. These things were taught every day. Participants wanted solutions for the multiple oppressions coming from the outside and affecting the children, teachers, administrators, and the neighborhood. However, the air on *that* side of the screen door, meaning the political and economic landscape outside the school, changed very little that year. And at the national level, with the unraveling of civil rights laws, the election of an overtly racist president, and the numerous policy initiatives designed to weaken services for people with economic insecurity, the air was harder to breathe. There was almost no sense that any structural improvements were on the horizon. The only positive political outcome from the year was that a proposed state takeover of failing schools was unsuccessful; nevertheless, as in many challenged school districts in low-income communities of color across many states (Chen, 2017), the tug of war is unlikely to end at any point in the future.

No participant in this study subscribed to the notion of the failing school. Allecia stated it explicitly in her first interview. Others implied it through their teaching, through their commitments to the children over the lengths of their careers, and through their political perspectives, which put the onus for social failure on social forces, namely structural racism and disinvestment in Black communities. I began the study wanting to witness how, despite the negative, deficit narratives on the outside, teachers on the inside taught and enacted their commitments to teach

students. The general answer I found was that most participants adapted, filtered out deficit narratives, developed their own knowledge and expertise, and developed their own purposes for doing their work. Those adaptations and developments were technical, and they were culturally responsive. But most participants did not spend their days thinking about poverty in explicit terms. Perhaps they noted opportunity gaps, but they did not think, on the average day, "My students are poor, they are marginalized, they are at risk." Thus, at the end of the study, I confront a conflict I created: how do we identify schools like Clement without classifying them as "poor" or "urban" or any of the other deficit-narrative terms that function in discourse to equate such schools with failure? How about "striving?" Clement Elementary School was *a striving Black school in an urban emergent community*. Social forces aside, that is what it was. Whether Trump was elected or someone's house burned down; whether the conservative Whites controlling the state threw out a new threat or the district introduced a new, time-consuming pedagogical technique promising it would "move the needle" on student achievement only to abandon it seven months later when the initiator got a new job, Clement journeyed towards its goals, to enrich children's lives, and to raise student academic achievement, to show the children were as brilliant as everyone knew they were. It was, in the end, very simple. The educators in this study *did their jobs.*

In our final interview, I spoke to Dr. C. about my plan to use Kozol's (2005) version of apartheid to describe the racialized economic isolation of Clement's neighborhood. It was in this conversation that the research questions for this dissertation shifted. As we talked, it became clearer to me how the work of educators like Dr. C. was a navigation of educational policies and how the social realities of segregation and historical economic disadvantage do not become de-

fining factors of this work. The work of the participants was about the children, also known more expressively as the babies. The transcript of this dialogue is shared below.

MD: …a lot of the policy pressures ... are going to be described as features of what I think I'm going to be calling an American apartheid state.

Dr. C: mmm… [her tone seems intense]

MD: I know it's a loaded term, and I'd like for you to speak to this if you'd like to, because the idea started with this description you gave at the meeting with the STEM supporters where you reported the results of surveys the kids had completed about what they needed for their school, and a lot of them talked about things they needed in their community, and they said they needed sidewalks, and they needed garbage pick-up…

Dr. C: and the stray dogs… and police protection…

MD: This intention of this study is not to be negative or deficit, but I want to illustrate the neighborhood, and I want to be real about that, and then I want to paint the picture of the individuals who are driven primarily I think by love, like fundamentally and at the core, I mean there's more love in this place than I think I've ever witnessed in my life.

Dr. C: mm hmmm

MD: I mean I've been grieving having to leave it.

Dr. C: Awww, well you'll always be welcome! We'll just give you a permanent pass.

[We both laugh.]

MD: Anyway, this illustration, this picture, I just want to run that by you.

Dr. C: [pause] I never thought about this "American apartheid," but I can see some similarities, I can see the inequalities and the inequities as they deal with race, as it deals with the haves and the have-nots, as it deals with… what do different policies do to oppress some while

elevating others. It's real, and I can see it, and when I said "mmm," [see above] going back into my social studies mind, I can really draw some distinct similarities. I don't think that it's off the meter at all. And even in, during while you're writing these things, as they come to the surface, it is a sad day in American education, but we always have hope, and if we don't have that, if I haven't done anything else, I hope our teachers understand that I believe in them, I believe in the kids. (personal interview, June 15, 2017)

This conversation shows that Dr. Clementine's perspective on leading the school was wedded to desire, and that despite the stray dogs and the presence of garbage on abandoned properties, the lack of police presence and missing sidewalks, no matter what happened, the belief in hope was always there. Desire, hope, and love were the catalyzing forces behind the school and behind the educators with whom I worked. As I explained in Chapter 3, the epistemological and theoretical frameworks for this ethnography became enmeshed with the participants' and their perspectives. They were the methodologists before I was; their methodology was desire, hope, and love-infused. It would befit us all to follow their lead.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

In Chapter 1, I identified the multi-faceted social contexts that drove the development of this research. The study took place in the U.S., with its race and class segregation, within a community of mostly Black and some Latino residents in a school that was considered borderline failing according to mainstream observations. Within this school, I observed and interviewed seven veteran educators for one year for approximately two hours per person each week. The educators included six teachers and the principal, five of whom were Black, one White, and one Filipino.

The study investigated the problem of the dominant, deficit narrative of schooling in neighborhoods facing concentrated poverty, which has historically been that such schools are inferior, lack resources, and staffed by the least competent educators. Accountability policies favoring test-based assessments of school quality corroborate the deficit narrative, as segregated schools serving children in Black communities so often do not produce test results on par with their peers in White neighborhoods. Teachers face the blame for the destructive label of the failing school, and the label also stigmatizes neighborhoods. I argue this way of seeing public schools harms children who already experience marginalization, and that the teachers who serve children from marginalized communities have a wealth of cultural knowledge and teaching practices that are underexplored and unacknowledged in mainstream research literature. Likewise, schools themselves centered in economically marginalized communities have more to teach us than is typically acknowledged when test scores are the only measures used to evaluate their contributions to communities.

Part of the problem as identified in Chapter 2 is the segregation that marginalizes communities of color also marginalizes representation in research. For generations, the U.S. teacher has been figured in research as a White woman, though there is over a century of parallel experiences of Black and White teachers. Likewise, school improvement discourses are perpetually derived from White solutions to educational problems, while the significant contributions of Black educators fail to be acknowledged. Given all these contextual realities, this study looked at one school and a small sample of participants to gather a rich description of how these issues are navigated in the daily lives of veteran teachers.

Seven veteran educators with 15 to 30 years of experience each participated in this study, which employed ethnographic methods to examine their collective knowledge and expertise, which cannot be viewed in the simplistic terms of math and reading test results. Veteran educators were selected because their vast stores of experience enabled them to provide evidence of practice both from the year of observation as well as from their memories and reflection on years of practice. Two research questions guided the study:

1. How did veteran teachers in one predominantly Black, low-income school “navigate and negotiate” the constraints of educational accountability policies while striving to provide education that enriched their students?
2. How did Clement Elementary School function as a multipurpose site of hope aiming to improve its surrounding community?

Participant-observations and interviews were the primary data collection tools. For the most part I did not engage the debate about whether participants were effective according to teacher evaluations (which I did not see) or in terms of student data (which I did not have permission to use). I strove to adhere to a methodological approach framed by a non-deficit ap-

proach, drawing from a desire-based framework (Tuck, 2009) informed by critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998). I focused on the actions educators undertook to enrich children's lives. I considered enrichment intellectual, emotional, and material. I believe the stories of these educators can offer a positive contribution to understandings of how veteran educators in racially segregated schools provide enriching education for children.

Summary of Findings

In terms of nationwide statistics about teacher longevity, these teachers were outliers. They had all made it past five years, which for the five Black teachers was even more meaningful, as teachers of color leave the profession at faster rates than White teachers (Albert Shanker Institute, 2015), and they were working in a urban school serving a majority of students who qualified for free and reduced-price lunch, which was also significant because such schools are considered harder to staff (Albert Shanker Institute). All participants strove to make the lives of their students better, which was not just an academic effort. These teachers had stored their students' phone numbers in their mobile phones. They spent their wages on the students, on materials for their classrooms, and on their own educational advancement. They believed in rich education for their students and themselves. In order to fulfill their beliefs, they had to navigate and negotiate the constraints of accountability policies. Two of the three themes detailed in Chapter 4 address how participants did this.

Theme One: Policy-adaptive pedagogy

First, I found the educators to be *policy adapters.* Policy-adaptive pedagogy indicates those practices educators used to teach content as well as manage classroom environments to ensure students could focus on instruction. Through observations and interview data, I found that veteran educators had been experimenting for years with different ways of attempting what poli-

cy shifts had demanded. D.J. had mastered a method of teaching academic content that incorporated literacy and numeracy while also teaching life lessons. She infused her teaching with little exercises that would prepare students for the stamina required to be good at testing. Dr. C. led grade-level Book of the Month lessons, where she read a book she had selected to line up with the character trait of the month and taught academic content and reading comprehension strategies. Jewell juggled her kindergarteners' developmental needs and strove to ensure all of them caught up with the new learning standards no matter what challenges they faced. Allecia understood her position as a contracted employee and had taken what she felt worked from different reforms she had learned over the year. Brooklyn, too, had absorbed a variety of reforms and had kept elements of some of them in her teaching practice. Lucca, though she did not teach academic content, had to develop ways of engaging students in music and managing her classroom environment that accommodated for the demands of accountability policies they experienced in their regular classroom. Lyric, too, adapted her technology courses to mold the available applications to enrich academic content students were learning.

Theme Two: Culturally responsive pedagogy

Second, I found the educators to be *cultural responders.* I analyzed the ways that culturally responsive pedagogy manifested among the educators. Some educators were warm demanders in the sense described by Ware (2006) and other scholars. Additionally, some teachers were politically tuned in and provided students with both information and strategies to help them manage an inequitable world. D.J. taught lessons linking issues like access to food to science. While she gave information, she was also straightforward with her second graders, saying things like, "You cut off your food supply with your behavior" and "You cut off your learning with your behavior." Similarly, Lyric did not coddle her students or accept any excuses. She expected them to

focus and work hard. After all, as a child, she had lived in challenging economic circumstances. The correlation between low income and low achievement was not viewed as a cause and effect relationship. Allecia subscribed to the notion of "getting dirty" in her teaching. Personal relationships, connections to the students' families, and high expectations constituted her version of cultural responsiveness. In her teaching of American history, she never skirted over or diminished the ways in which African Americans and women were excluded in the original configuration of this country, and she always emphasized the rights of citizenship inherent in all of her students.

Theme Three: Community outreach/inreach

Third, I found educators engaged in *community outreach* and *inreach*. They utilized a balance of these two interrelated practices to bring community and students together with educators. Students, parents, and community members were brought into the school as educators brought out their personal values, which created a combined sense of action with intimacy. Within the safety of the school, a child-centered and community-friendly atmosphere welcomed students, families, and visitors. From the visuals on the walls, many of which depicted academically positive images of Black children, to the music playing at school events, the children and their culture were celebrated. A variety of people came in from the outside to help throughout the year from different communities. Children brought in books so they could infuse their own curriculum with popular novels and stories they were drawn to. At the same time, the political situation outside the school also came in. The election of November 2016 came in hard, and participants, especially Dr. C., openly discussed the detrimental implications of this election openly with the children. While all of these elements came into the school from the outside, I saw this coupled with the ways participants reached into themselves and brought out their values and beliefs. Teachers' styles of teaching, their classroom décor, and their beliefs are all metonyms of the self.

The atmosphere of the school represented a combination of outreach and inreach, and it created an intimate space that welcomed those who wished to offer some love and hope for the children.

Implications of findings

Of the two research questions guiding the study, the first two themes address question one and the third theme answers question two. Teachers navigated and negotiated educational policy by adapting to change and by centering their teaching in the culture of the children. Accountability policies constrained teachers' decision-making in several ways; even the presentation of standards during that school year was scripted and standardized with big posters of annotated standards on the walls. The educators had sustained change after change throughout their careers, so they were experienced adaptors. However, since the methodology sought to unpack endurance and forward momentum (not how policy destroys but rather how people create), in this paper I have not shared much of the doubt or many of the down moments I witnessed among participants that year. There are some exceptions. Dr. C. made it clear to teachers and children that if student performance did not improve the district or the state might close the school. She was also open about her belief that the new presidential administration had no good plans for schools like Clement. In that way, the control of the state and the threats of policy demands were known to all.

The public knowledge of the threat leveraged against the school makes the answer to the second research question more salient. Clement functioned as a multipurpose site of hope in several ways. Literally, it housed a health clinic and a parent center so community members could use the school to attend to medical needs as well as personal and material needs. However, educators also invited people in to participate in the school's mission, which was to enrich children's lives. This included students, their families, and outsiders, like the women's group from the

church and the STEM partners. Children were the at the center of all efforts community members made to help out, whether it was reading to the kids, painting murals on the walls, or brainstorming ways STEM principles could be used to leverage change within the community. Creating a site of hope meant people participating from diverse communities and it meant being real about the obstacles the children faced in their educations and their lives.

In considering the question of how veteran educators in urban schools navigate and negotiate education policies so that they may offer children an enriching education, I found two processes were required. First, it required a critical reading of media discourse portraying such schools as subordinate. Second it required access to nuanced and desire-based (Tuck, 2009) counterstories (Ladson-Billings, 1998) of public school life for committed teachers, both teachers of color and White teachers, in urban centers. Of course, reading nuanced portrayals of human life also required an epistemological position that accepted such stories as legitimate. Accepting a desire-based framework required being able to hear what people were doing in an effort to create something good. In the case of this dissertation, writing the counterstory also meant recognizing the ways in which *it had already been written.* After all, several of the participants in the study had read the same literature I cite throughout, and they read it before I did. They already knew this stuff, and they were living it.

Participants were aware of how their students and the community were viewed from the outside. They were also aware of the ways in which the blame for low achievement was placed on them. They knew that discourse, and their critical understandings were, in most cases, well established. It is what they did, and what other teachers like them do, with their knowledge that counters the mainstream deficit discourse. If we rely upon mainstream sources of policy knowledge and accountability data to determine the value of the work of veteran educators, we

will never understand the complexities or the possibilities of educating children of color in urban communities under accountability mandates.

For example, the way participants used outreach/inreach to draw students and community in to the intimate space of school and to try to improve the community from the inside-out appeared to be a strategy deployed alongside policy adaptations and cultural responsiveness in order to simultaneously do the work of educating while offering relief for issues families faced outside the school. It seemed to be a methodology, a way to link standards-based instruction with cultural responsiveness with community involvement and improvement. But it did not appear to be codified. It did not appear that this methodology was taught in the graduate school for teaching or leadership. It appeared to have been intuitive, rational, research-inspired, experimental, and honed over time. As Dr. C. explained, despite the knowledge that "this is a sad day in American education," where there is hope, there is creation. This begs the question, what are other urban schools and other hopeful, experienced educators doing to try to mediate external race-based economic and social marginalization while offering enriching education for children of color? This matters because despite the intensity of neoliberal education policy focus on accountability, and despite the destructiveness of neoliberal economic policy that worsens income inequality, these educators believed in their students and strove to enable them to meet and exceed their potential.

Implications for Research Practice

Links between past and present research

I had numerous conversations with individuals in the school who were not officially participants. I can say that on the whole, people working at Clement had a common goal, which was to do good. But here is the catch. This notion of doing good for children or being part of the solu-

tion was only sometimes about pushing to be what the media would define as a good school. In other words, doing good *was* about teaching standards and improving data, but it was often *also* about more than improving achievement or mastering best instructional practices.

Sometimes doing good was about addressing children's non-academic needs. For example, Jewell spent some time that year trying to make sure one of her kindergarteners wore shoes that fit. His said his feet hurt, and mom said she could not get any more shoes, so Jewell bought him a pair. In this way, adults at Clement Elementary School viewed children holistically, incorporating academic and personal needs. That meant they did more in addition to teaching children reading, writing, and arithmetic. Yet they were held to the same academic expectations as everyone else in the district and the state. These additional elements of teaching were not considered.

In general, most of the people I observed took this in stride; they understood these demands as part of their role as educators at Clement. What was important here was that this school was likely going to continue to have more to do than focus on standards and instructional practices, no matter how much emphasis the district placed on such things and, frankly, I believe, no matter what consequences came down from the state targeting 'failing' schools. This school could not be just a school according to the contemporary, mediatized sense of the word. It did, however, seem to emulate some of the characteristics of segregated community schools from the Jim Crow era: principal leadership, the belief in children's capacity to succeed, the commitment to increase racial consciousness and pride, and the effort to forge strong ties between the community and the school (Siddle-Walker, 1996; Mungo, 2013). As an implication for practice, that is a point worth noting.

The community school model promoted by educational foundations such as the Children's Aid Society does not acknowledge any roots in the segregated Black schools of the mid-

20th century (Lubell, 2011). Clement had not officially adopted such a model under the guidance of a foundation or educational philanthropy, but Dr. C. followed community school principles. Some of her choices were district-driven, but many were based on her own philosophy. She wanted her students to receive an education of the quality she herself had received under a desegregation model that required her to ride buses to predominantly White schools for hours each day. She believed a quality education could be provided right at Clement, in its neighborhood, and she wanted the children to be proud of the fact that they had a school in their neighborhood. Clement's reflection of the qualities of the community school came, in part, from Dr. C.'s hopes and beliefs about Black education.

Generally, researchers outside the Black community have not taken enough care to acknowledge the contributions of Black educators during the period of segregation, where the mainstream historical narrative focused on such schools' starkly limited resources to yield a "widely accepted portrait of … almost complete inferiority" (Siddle-Walker, 2000). Similarly, today, White researchers need to examine broader narratives of education within communities of color contributed by scholars of color, which exposes wisdom and processes that may extend from the practices of segregated schools from over 50 years ago. That is, if White researchers are really interested in contributing to creating a more equitable system of public education.

Desire-based research for striving schools

In this study, teachers were driven to do their work by multiple motives and past experiences, philosophical viewpoints and religious beliefs. They strove to provide a good education for students but how and why they did it was diverse and multi-faceted. In desire-based research (Tuck, 2009), we story the world we hope to create. Adopting a desire-based framework means believing in people's better motives. It means looking at the side of the story that honors peo-

ple's best work, not their worst. It means thinking from a strengths-based perspective at all times. That does not mean there were not challenges. Kids who are ready to learn usually need to be secure in their knowledge of how they are going to eat. Some of the kids at Clement did not have that, so educators tried to feed them. Kids who are ready to learn usually need to have some sense of benefits school can offer their lives. Some of the kids did not have that, so educators tried to convince them that working to learn was worth it. For some children at Clement, these securities were givens. For others, they had to be embellished and uplifted. Educators had to do that work in order to engage children fully in learning processes. It was not easy work, but it was heart work.

How can we change the narrative so policy makers and academics better understand a strengths-based or desire-based viewpoint? External to the school students faced the trash, the dogs, the boarded up houses, losses of family members to illness and incarceration, and the lack of police protection. In the kids' homes adults faced the utility bills, the rents, the consequences of incarceration and interrupted education and small errors of youth that for Black people, men in particular, make tall barriers even taller. It seemed global, too. Everyone felt the hard loss of the presidential election in November 2016. Internal to the district the teachers were under constant pressure to improve the scores of all kinds. All these challenges were realities, but for a strengths-based/ desire-driven perspective, we look at all the ways educators and students pull themselves through. Within a context that is certainly not fair in the scheme of things, there is always hope. Hope is work.

Limitations

Let's get dirtier

Among the most important implications for practice relates to Question 2, *Multipurpose Site of Hope*. The study only considered educators' perspectives on this question. Without data on the entire community, which I did not gather, no more than a limited view of how this site provided a sense of hope within the community can be gained. I saw what I believed represented Clement striving to be a site of hope. I saw the efforts people made to make it one. Since I did not formally gather the perspectives of families and children, I can only offer observations of actions.

After the winter break, D.J.'s student brought a gift to class early in the morning. She had forgotten to bring one for their Kwanzaa party gift exchange. D.J. commended the child and her mother for "making things right." The child and her mother looked happy to be there and happy to participate in this classroom ritual. This observation can support the claim that Clement was a site of hope following the logic that, where things can be made right, there can be hope. Hope emerges from spaces where problems are solved, and this is an example of D.J. powerfully inspiring her student to correct her mistake. However, no follow up took place to verify this interpretation.

Throughout the year I observed family involvement; I observed children happy to be at school, parents coming in to watch performances, and parents and children appreciating teachers and staff members. But since I did not design the study to gain consent from families or children, I cannot enhance this data with testimony directly from community members.

I was fortunate to be granted access to Clement, and it was Dr. C. who made this possible. She encouraged this project and enabled it to grow and last for a school year. I was also fortunate that the district enabled the research and that the IRB approved it. But given the fact that the study was designed with teachers and the principal as the only participants, the answer to the

question about Clement as a site can be only partial. A more complete study of a school like Clement would include everyone's voices. However, getting approval for such a study, from a school district, from an IRB, from parents and teachers and a school principal altogether, seems to be a challenge that many researchers and/or graduate students like myself are not willing to undertake. In retrospect, I realize that as research practitioners interested in qualitative methods and stories that counter mainstream deficit narratives and stereotypes for the purpose of promoting social justice, we must, in our research realms, follow the lead of educators like Allecia and get dirty. We need to get dirty with IRBs and school districts and make it clear that the stories of everyday life in schools show that there are educators who know what they are supposed to be doing both at the policy level and at the ground level.

However, on the other side we need to understand the tension between the needs of institutions that do not seem allied enough. Individual lives and communities need to be spared the intrusion of outsiders who come in, take for their own gain, and leave. One of the biggest issues facing the children in the Clement community was, as explained in the conclusion of Chapter 4, the sense that in their community they were not protected. So, the commitment of research institutions to protect children, at least from its researchers, is the right commitment. Yet as a researcher interested in how teachers improve people's lives, the inclusion of perspectives from the entire community is necessary for a more complete story to be told. We need more complete, nuanced, and contemporary documents of how educators are working within marginalized communities to improve the lives of children of color. This deserves consideration within the educational research field.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendation 1: What are the effects of the short-lived imposition of pedagogical trends?

What are the effects of short-lived but high demand educational initiatives on teacher practice? Why do educators sustain their engagement in reforms and others withdraw or leave? Veteran teachers with a decade and more experience were expected to adopt new initiatives without questioning their purpose. The annotated standards initiative was the thing in 2016-2017. To comply, teachers had to write state standards verbatim on Post-it posters and annotate each academic verb so students saw synonyms for each of them. Then teachers had to read the posters so children heard the academic language and the synonyms. Theoretically the belief was that the annotated standards could improve students' literacy by frequent exposure and discussion of academic language, particularly in low-income schools serving students who may have lower language exposure compared to middle class White children (Goldstein, et al., 2017). Considered linguistically at-risk, low income children, some researchers believe, must be exposed to language in the manner of rapid drills in order to make up the gap, though in reality, there is no certainty that low language exposure places low-income children at risk for low literacy levels later in life (Goldstein, et al.).

The annotated standards posters at Clement that year were a short-lived initiative driven by the belief that frequently exposing the inner city children to academic language would improve their literacy overall. However, for many of the participants, this was a labor demand that took a lot of time without a residual effect. As a part of a literacy reform, one would think this might not be a bad idea. However, emphasis was placed on ensuring teachers fulfilled the poster mandate, where other concerns, for example, how to conduct small group literacy lessons in classrooms without paraprofessionals, did not appear to be addressed.

The question for future researchers, which went beyond the scope of this study, is to what extent do short-lived, small scale reforms influence teachers' knowledge of literacy instruction? Also, what are the most effective pedagogical approaches to influence change in literacy acquisition among historically marginalized young learners? As pointed out in Chapter 4, nurturing a love of learning through reading was not the primary emphasis of the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum I observed. Kids did want to read, though, and they snuck their novels into their classes and read them under cover. Therefore another question is what are the effects of marginalizing books kids love in the interest of capitalizing on the deficit-driven belief that because low-income kids are language-starved, we must drill them in academic vocabulary and information text at the expense of literacy-as-enjoyment?

Recommendation 2: Someone more woke should replicate this study

Ware (2006) operationalized the concept of "warm demander pedagogy" (p. 427) and situated the qualities of effective and exemplary Black teachers historically and culturally. As I pointed out in Chapter 3, I was a racial learner while I was studying issues of educational culture that are inextricably wrapped up with Black culture and a history of racial oppression. Finding research similar to mine was a challenge because ethnographies of schools with the veteran teacher angle are otherwise nonexistent. Cross-cultural and racial studies with the mismatch between researcher and participants are also (seemingly) rare. I must have missed a lot, given my lack of full exposure to Black educational culture. I believe a replication of this study of veteran Black teachers who have sustained careers in urban, race-segregated schools would offer a valuable layer and possibly a more valid perspective. But I believe an additional question would be worth asking: given the rich cultural history of Black education, and given the work of researchers like Siddle-Walker (1996) who identified the rich relationships and value of the "positive ex-

periences in segregated schools, for Black teachers and students" (p. 429), how do segregated schools today reflect, either consciously or unconsciously, those values of segregated schools of the past? Perhaps shift the perspective from mine, which tows a relatively safe line in its critique of segregated schooling and unequal opportunities that affect economic and neighborhood constructions in seemingly imperturbable ways. Shift the perspective to something different, perhaps like 'we either have to fight against segregation or we have to fight against unequal outcomes. If we are to educate children in de facto/de jure segregation (does it actually matter), then let us learn again what the best ways to educate are in segregation. And is segregation of children in schools the problem, or is it something else?'

Recommendation 3: Examining what it means to be "in poverty"

Statistical factors inform the descriptions we offer of various spaces. We know, for example, that in 2013, approximately 55% of public school students in large cities in the United States were eligible for free and/or reduced-price school lunch (NCES, 2013b). Since mid-poverty schools are defined as those with 50-75% of students eligible for free and/or reduced price lunch, then it follows that schools in large cities are in general mid-poverty schools. Clement would be considered high poverty. For classification purposes this seemed important as I was developing the study. However, as it developed and as I read the literature on poverty and geographic construction, for example the food desert literature (Deener, 2017), it became clearer that it is not difficult to understand geographic, community exclusion as a social and economic construct.

Critical researchers are concerned with examining and understanding inequities faced in marginalized communities. The common association is poverty equates with at-risk for academic underachievement. Below-average test scores seem to verify this, and therefore the poverty/risk

association sticks. There appears to be, based on widely accessible statistics, a cause-effect relationship between poverty and school achievement.

However, this may not be so simple. Each participant in this research had a different relationship to the idea of poverty and its influence or effect on their work with their students. Lyric, who had grown up in a low-income household, had no patience with poverty as an excuse for anything, because she had witnessed her own mother work hard to make sure she and her siblings were clean and fed, even when the water in their house was turned off. Allecia commented on more than one occasion that the students did not know they lived in poverty. She questioned the construct and did not seem to believe it was a valid focus of energy for research. Like the idea of the failing school, which she outright rejected, the notion that poverty as a cause for what the school struggled to achieve was not part of her discourse.

Dr. C., however, did consider poverty as a factor. She cited Payne's (2005) *Framework for Understanding Poverty* when she spoke about mediating for poverty, and this framework influenced her to some extent. She believed that educators needed to take income and class factors into consideration when considering how to teach kids at Clement. Payne's framework has been broadly critiqued for being grounded in a deficit perspective and for failing to recognize structural elements that perpetuate inequities (Boucher & Helfenbein, 2015). Critics might agree, however, that Dr. C. was not the typical Payne proponent, because that is a White, middle class educator trying to assimilate low-income children of color into majoritarian norms. I did not probe deeply into Dr. C.'s use of the Payne framework; I know that something about it made sense to her, and I know that she never spoke about Clement's students as if something were wrong with them. She wanted them to be academically successful, she believed their backgrounds played a role in how school worked for them, and she believed Payne to be a useful resource.

These different perspectives indicate that there are variations in how teachers perceive the connections between income status and learning in school. Considering the amount of judgment involved in observing someone else's social class and the stigma associated with the poverty label, it would be worthwhile for deeper investigations into teacher's perceptions of the effects of poverty on their teaching to take place. For this study, a non-deficit view meant remaining wary of any thinking that could result in marginalization. Thinking of poverty as the cause or catalyst for problems with school does exactly that, and several participants had thought this through.

Recommendation 4: Qualitative examinations of pedagogical craft

One of the approaches I took in this project was to gather data on teachers' practices of teaching through hours of observation, which I intended to inform a sense of embodied methods. While I did not sustain this focus on the body or embodiment in this presentation of data, I did attempt to use observational data to draw conclusions about teachers' knowledge of pedagogical craft. As explained, data coded as craft usually took place in situations when the participant was in charge of a group of students directly instructing or leading, but craft knowledge was also found in interview data and when teachers were in settings with other adults. Craft included teaching reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and social-emotional learning. It included theoretical knowledge shared with me during our formal and informal talks and with colleagues in meetings.

Now that the study is complete, I recognize several shortcomings of these data, some of which is represented in the theme "Policy-adaptive pedagogy." Firstly, much of what I report is teacher-centered behavior, or direct instruction, which provides no insight into how teachers also used groups to advance learning goals. This is partially because the district placed heavy emphasis on the gradual release model (Pearson & Gallager, 1983). This model asked teachers to begin

each instructional process with direct instruction ("I do"), followed by guided practice, collaborative practice, and then, finally, independent practice. Students were ideally supposed to learn to take responsibility for learning through each instructional process. What happened in my observations was often that students were not ready for the collaborative or independent practice parts of the model before the teacher was pressured by a pacing guide to move on to the next standard. In Allecia's class, certain processes, like annotations of texts, became so familiar students could do it independently, but the gradual release model seemed to compete with the pace of delivery. Still, given competing demands, teachers adapted.

When media outlets claim that teachers are bad based on student achievement scores, there should be observable data to *show* that there is something decidedly wrong with the teaching in each classroom. If teachers are really to blame for the condition of low achievement in high poverty schools then perhaps narrative data should be available to offset quantitative data. But there is virtually none. There is little observation data in research on teaching at all, much less any data from challenged schools where teachers are determined to be in the lower ranks. And obviously, this sounds like a ridiculous prospect. No researcher will be approved to spend hours in a teacher's classroom to determine whether teaching practices are as bad as test score data claim they are.

What I said, and what probably contributed to the approval of my study, was that I wanted to observe the odd trilogy of skills, accumulated practices, and wisdom of veteran teachers whom I assumed, despite any testing data, to likely have much to offer to those interested in studying the teaching profession. However, when I searched, I found few recent examples in research literature to use to help me shape the methodological approach to these observations. Ladson-Billings (1994/2009) and Foster (1997) produced seminal works about effective Black

teachers and effective teachers of Black children in the 1990s. Work in the 2000s takes up their ideas, but intensive studies of teachers do not seem common today. However, texts about how to make better teachers are easily accessible.

There is a book, Green (2014), full of observations of teaching that claims to be able to outline a process whereby good teaching can be taught. Its intention is to undermine the belief that being a good teacher is inborn, and its author is a journalist who offers no methodological processes for researchers to emulate or further develop. Ware (2006), already cited numerous times in this paper, observed two teachers and offered that data to operationalize the concept of warm demander pedagogy. Ware's data did include specifics about how participants taught content, some of which correlate with Emdin (2016) who promoted a form he called reality pedagogy drawing from traditions found in Black churches. I would like to have found more examples of descriptive data on teachers engaged in teaching academic content. I found this to be oddly limited.

This recommendation is a call for more observational research on teaching in today's public schools that takes into account the challenges facing teachers in marginalized schools. In what ways are warm demander pedagogy or reality pedagogy utilized in schools? But, additionally, what are other ways other teachers are adapting to what seems like a constant tide of new approaches, standards, and reforms?

Clement was a fairly ordinary school in the scheme of things. Teachers tried to teach the content they were contracted to teach. Because the participants were experienced, it did not matter what that was necessarily, even though they were being thrown new initiatives all year long. School-level coaches and district-level administrators introduced new requirements and implemented new solutions to problems (usually related to low outcomes/test scores). Though this did

overwhelm some (D.J. and Jewell, for example), participants called upon coping tools and teaching tools to do what they believed would work to teach what they were supposed to teach.

Participants understood how children learned at different paces. They knew their content and knew how to make it relevant to their students. Allecia understood critical pedagogy and how to help students own their own ideas. She taught with democracy in mind. D.J. understood critical thinking and how to expose children to the politics of their lives. Dr. C. understood civil and human rights and how to make reading relevant to children's needs in society. Brooklyn understood the connections of the curriculum to art. Lyric made cross-curricular connections and chose technological applications to reinforce what kids were learning. Lucca knew the Orff methodology so thoroughly she could quote it, and her lessons were always full and layered and got kids singing and dancing. Jewell got her kindergartners writing numbers and letters, and even those who enrolled in October and missed months of school, or who had never held a pencil before walking in the door of her classroom, made gains. The code "group craft" and the resulting theme, policy-adaptive pedagogy, encompass all of this, all the ways I observed expert teachers teaching expertly.

A highly offensive myth persists that that veteran teachers just stick around for a check (this attitude toward some teachers pervaded even in my observations at Clement) and that mounds of craft knowledge are not developed by those who return to teach year after year after year. It seems of critical importance to encourage and facilitate more observation research in classrooms of veteran teachers to record their wealth of knowledge. It is likely that a huge wealth of knowledge is lost in the current climate of teacher isolation. D.J. retired at the end of the 2017 school year. I feel like I captured a small fraction of what she was able to do to make the second grade curriculum accessible to learners.

Recommendation 5: Resistance to typification and evaluation

This ethnography created a question it cannot answer. Each educator's practice was mediated through her own background, culture, and set of values. Though they shared common goals; they were individuals who had imitated, reiterated, and recreated in order to make their teaching their own. This catalyzed the question. Are educators cultural actors or culture makers? If they are actors, then their habits can be transferred and taught. They can create models for particular types of teachers, like the teachers in Haberman, Gillette, and Hill's (2018) *Star Teachers of Children in Poverty.* Haberman developed the trope of the star teacher over 20 years ago as an aspirational model for preservice or aspiring, inservice educators to follow. There are particular behaviors he outlines. Star teachers function in particular ways, and if you want to be one, you can follow the model. When I consider the participants in this research alongside this model of 'star' teacher, it does not quite come together. Not that they were not 'star' teachers. They all had elements of stardom. The point is that I am not describing the work of these seven women in order to offer types that others can emulate. This ethnographic research does not do that. So what does it do, and what is worth further doing?

I think the greatest benefit further studies of this nature might offer colleges of education, in the fields of social foundations or teacher education, is support for the thesis that teachers are culture makers. Teachers who remain engaged and develop in the profession over time grow both as teachers and as human beings. I suggest that further research could show how the growth over time of the humanity of educators, both within and outside the classroom, gives them valuable depths of knowledge. Better understanding of this knowledge could improve education by showing us more clearly how to harness veteran teachers' ethical positions, educational values,

and teaching techniques. Veteran teachers embody valuable knowledge, and this makes a difference in concrete ways. Printing these words on memes and magnets is not enough.

Recommendation 6: Examine "adverse behavior" from a different lens

When children walked into their classrooms, participants intended to begin the day's lessons. There were always plans; goals were set and materials were collected. Sometimes this was meticulous, sometimes it was hastily organized, but it was always there. They planned to review and cover academic material and to further the intellectual growth for students. Yet sometimes things happened that required teachers to pause the curricular plan and solve problems. Children's physical and emotional needs needed attention. Someone was hungry. Someone else was very tired. A girl felt that another was bothering her too much. A boy brought his mother's cell phone and another boy took it. A student decided this was the day to take down the kid who picked on him too much. Or instead of taking him down, the child just walked out of class, leaving the teacher to decide what to do and how hard to look. Perhaps he would just walk the halls until he felt better. Perhaps another educator would pick him up and talk it out.

The educators in this study could have attempted to ignore all these issues and remain fully focused on teaching content from morning to afternoon, and that never happened. That was not in their framework. They did not blame the children for these problems, unless they were in the children's power to change. For many issues, these educators strove to teach the children how to transform them. They collectively believed in the adage that it was more important to teach a man to fish than to give him one. For example, I heard children as young as 7 instructed to make sure they got out of bed and out of the house to arrive at school on time. Children were often given direct instruction in values and in the necessity of hard work. The effects of these lessons were not measured.

A school day is a zero sum game, and attention paid to social, emotional, and self-care topics drew attention from academics. Trends have come and go that claim to solve this problem of inefficiency. Currently social-emotional interventions have been found to have positive effects on children's academic achievement (Center for Health and Health Care in Schools, 2014). However, such interventions fail in very basic ways to account for the social reality we all face: until progressive legislation is the norm, the conditions in the world that create income inequality, marginalization, and disenfranchisement and its consequent stressors (for children, see above) are not changing much.

These educators were educators because they believed in children's potential. However, what seems true for teachers and administrators in most U.S. schools, each day is constrained by a to-do list that can often be partially accomplished and challenges that can be partially overcome. In the case of this research, acquiring a new pair of shoes for a kindergartener and seeing the little boy who enrolled in kindergarten in October never having written a letter of the alphabet write most of them in order by March were both achievements.

In some ways, one might view these educators as nascent critical ethnographers. Madison (2005) wrote that critical ethnographers do their work on the ground so that they can then "probe other possibilities that will challenge institutions, regimes of knowledge, and social practices that limit choices, constrain meaning, and denigrate identities and communities" (p 25). They do this work while keeping children safe and teaching them. The educators in this study knew what was needed. Unfortunately, few besides Dr. C. and to an extent Lyric had the ability to leverage their time to challenge the system that helped to perpetuate the issues the community faced.

Conclusion: Where credit is due

The findings of this study are not that different from the findings of numerous researchers before me whose work centers on the teaching expertise of socially conscious and social justice-oriented educators. We have known for decades that there are practices educators of color utilize that have transformative effects on children of color (and that can be taught and replicated by White teachers) (Foster, 1997; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Dixson, 2003; Mungo, 2013; Milner, 2006; Siddle-Walker, 1996; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009; Ware, 2006; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Emdin, 2016; Lewis, 2016; Paris, 2012; Farinde-Wu, Glover, & Williams, 2017). Perhaps the contribution of this study cannot be terribly unique, and perhaps it should not be, when it comes to the first research question. The research indicates that Black educators who dedicate their lives to Black children in segregated school spaces have been making similar adaptations and helping to sustain Black culture for decades. The teachers whom I observed knew the tensions between the children's needs and the school district and state's demands and worked to mediate those tensions with and through their teaching. For most of the educators, that meant establishing intimate interactions with parents. For example, Brooklyn had a history of making close friendships with students' parents, had acted as a surrogate family member for some children, and had offered temporary housing for others. Allecia had established the practice of continuous communication with parents and had accumulated stores of knowledge about their histories and family trees. D.J. kept some of the moms of her students on speed dial, and once reported talking to a mom at 2 a.m.. Jewell called parents all the time, too, always keeping parents and caregivers involved in what was happening with their children. These seemed to be comfortable, friendly, and non-judgmental relationships. These connections, which may seem simple, created loops between home and school that were intended to make children's school life better.

Again, this observation upholds findings from previous research, that effective teachers of Black children embrace the community and intentionally integrate the community into the school (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). This was found to be true of segregated Black schools in the past (Siddle-Walker, 1996), suggesting that these teachers strive to strengthen interconnectedness within Black communities.

In the end, the attempts to bring community and school together may be one of the most salient findings of the research. My immersion in the research site and the opportunity I had to gain specific knowledge of how the school conducted its practices as a whole to try to connect to and improve the community led me to see things that no individual participant working within a school usually has the opportunity to see, because they are navigating the constraints of policies and negotiating those constraints alongside what they believe to be right.

Educators in this striving, urban school were under continuous pressure to increase test scores, to increase students' social-emotional health and well being, and to make sure they had what they needed on a daily basis. All the participants in this study had been doing this work for at least 15 years, rejuvenating their commitments year after year. As of this writing, only D.J. had retired. Lyric had left Clement to become an instructional coach. The other teachers remained at Clement. For two years it had sustained its position on the border of what the state had deemed 'failing.' The neighborhood had not changed, though by some reports, several of the students I had met during 2016-2017 had taken up increasingly destructive behaviors the following year that the faculty was trying hard to understand and reverse.

The beat of society marches on, and since these data were collected there are few if any changes in the policies that create the segregation in society that created segregated schools like Clement. There is some evidence that teachers are fed up with their working conditions in vari-

ous low-paying states throughout the nation. That is promising. Dr. C. told me, “You have to have hope.” That was the guiding star of many educators’ work at Clement.

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