EFFECTS AS PRECURSORS TO EFFECTIVENESS: THE PERSONAL AND
PROFESSIONAL IMPACTS OF TITLE I SCHOOL TURNAROUND REFORMS ON URBAN
TEACHERS

By

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ABSTRACT

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This case study acknowledges the multidimensionality of educational policy, teacher practice, and discourses about school reform. The need for improved learning environments from the perspectives of and for the benefit of teachers as integral parts of the school improvement process was an impetus for this study which advances the need for teacher-based educational policy analyses. The study's purpose was to examine perceptions, and evaluations associated with the discourses and implementation of the Title I School Improvement Grant (SIG) Program's Transformation and Turnaround Models using a theoretical and conceptual framework that combined educational policy as discourse and Critical Race Theory with an ecological view of the contexts in which the policy rests. Findings showed that teacher-based policy analyses accounted for multiple figures, processes, sociocultural conditions, discourses, and the impact of time and timing when explaining teachers' lived experiences under the grant and the meaning they associated with those experiences. The potential of the SIG program was found to be impacted by district-teacher relationships, the sociocultural contexts of learning and teaching, and district-principal relationships, which in turn, effected the teachers by enhancing and weakening their professional capacity, strengthening cohesion within the school, and by fostering divisive and chaotic school climates. The variations among those effects was closely associated with the leadership of superintendents, the alignment of policy interpretation, a focused sense of vision for the school and district, as well the sequencing of key policy

decisions. Final analyses indicated that the teachers benefitted from the capacity-building initiatives and personnel associated with the SIG program but found (1) its assumptions to be flawed, (2) the localized processes of implementation inhibited their roles as teachers and stakeholders in the school's success while also holding them accountable for sociocultural conditions beyond their control, (3) the mandated replacement of principals and teachers to be lacking in flexibility and contextualization, and (4) the contributions made by the mandated replacements to dominant discourses about teacher inadequacy to be troubling. Analyses of teachers' narratives revealed varying levels of sociocultural knowledge about their students and students' families such that teachers (1) were pleased to work in a racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse school, (2) defended the provision of quality education to critics of urban schools, (3) and yet re-inscribed discourses of Whiteness.

This dissertation is humbly dedicated to Carol Roberts, my mother. She was an educator wherever she went- dedicating her spiritual and professional work to ensuring children felt loved, protected, and confident that they indeed held a special place in this world. I experienced that unwavering dedication first-hand for thirty-five years and am a better educator, woman, and human being because of her love.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Overview

Although schools function as microcosms and vehicles of preparation for the greater society, they do not operate isolation. Teachers are effected by dominant ideologies concerning teacher excellence and actions taken at multiple levels of the educational structure (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001; Desimone, Finn-Stevenson, & Henrich, 2000; Milner IV, 2013b; Valli & Buese, 2007). Likewise, when teachers are effected by educational policies, their experiences and responses to those policies (Ball, Maguire, Braun, & Hoskins, 2011; Mirra & Morrell, 2011; Walker, 2013) affect the local educational structure, students, and the community at large. Therefore, analyses of policies developed to improve student outcomes must take into account the intended and unintended effects on those most proximally responsible within the schooling structure for students' education- teachers. This study focuses on a particular time and a particular location within the history of educational reform. We have recently entered into a time when stringent federal reforms expect the dismissal of teachers as part and parcel of school improvement, particularly in urban contexts. This study asks experienced urban teachers to name and consider the nuances they recognize and even create as they make meaning of their schools' improvement plans. Asking teachers to reflect on those plans, the people, processes, school/district climates, and specific events that have informed their sense of professionalism and role within school reform policies was done to consider the content of their narratives as necessary and useful features of educational policy analysis.

The ever-narrowing view of teachers' roles and contributions to students' success stemming from value-added teacher assessments and the over-reliance on standardized tests (Kumashiro, 2012; Milner IV, 2008c; Sloan, 2006), has called for more robust considerations of the social and institutional factors with which teachers grapple as they seek to maintain their

professional and ideological stances. I approach this study with a belief that the heightened urge to monitor and assess teachers stems, in part, from the same myopia that reduces the complex work of teachers to labels of either good or bad because we stop short of examining teachers' perceptions of and reactions to educational policies (Cochran-Smith, 2003; E. S. Johnson, 2008). In so doing, we fail to acknowledge the impact felt by teachers in the messy and personal spaces which rest between input and output, between value and value-added.

Recognizing the personal, interpersonal and sociocultural worlds through which teachers maneuver is one aspect of this study. Sedivy-Benton spoke to the expansiveness of teachers' worlds by highlighting the political, institutional, and community factors that affect teachers and claimed;

> further exploration needs to be conducted to fully determine the policy impact on teachers themselves and how they are withstanding the increased pressure on their chosen profession. The policies around K-20 education are creating a high-stress environment on teachers and stand the chance of having a negative effect on the retention of good teachers at all levels (2013, p. 106).

This study responded to Sedivy-Benton's call by using ecological and sociocultural theoretical viewpoints to frame the meaning-making teachers do in regards to educational reform policies. Urban schools represent one of the most structured, frequent, and earliest formal interaction marginalized youth have with sanctioned social authority figures who teach them society's cannon of knowledge en tandem with the hidden curriculum of who they are and how they ought to or can be in society. Urban schools also represent places where many poor and/or racially/ethnically diverse students, and adults representing dominant and target social groups consistently interact with each other in ways that link teacher and student excellence as joint

ventures in the preparation of tomorrow's social actors. These reasons position studies

highlighting the experiences and understandings of urban teachers as precursors to equity-

oriented educational policy analyses, not antagonistic or tangential concerns. By focusing on the

federally-funded brand of school reform embodied in the Title I School Improvement (SIG)

program, this study attended to the professional and personal consequences as experienced by six

urban teachers in order to gain a better sense of the effects educational policies exert on teachers

en route to effecting change in student outcomes.

In Chapter 1, I discuss the purposes of the study within the context of Title I school

reforms. I also discuss the coupling of ecological views of educational policies with policies as

discourse to form the study's theoretical framework. Chapter II provides a review of literature

based on key elements undergirding the scope and purpose of the study including, prior literature

featuring urban teachers as social and policy analysts and the disenfranchisement of local

stakeholders by educational reforms. Chapter III describes the rationale for conducting this

research in the form of a case study, descriptions of the research sample, means of data collection

and analysis, and how issues of bias and trustworthiness were addressed. Information about the

district, school, teacher, and the six participants comprise Chapter IV. Chapter V offers a

representation of how the various teachers surmised the school reached a point of academic

crisis. In Chapter VI, the SIG Transformation and Turnaround Models are presented as discrete

periods for policy analysis- each with their own concerns, benefits, and critiques. Chapter VII,

on the other hand, considers the value of educational policy analyses that consider the

cumulative, compounded, and intertwined natures of policy decisions, stagnation, growth,

optimism for sustained improvement, and the role of school principals in policy implementation.

Although the teachers involved in this study primarily spoke to their direct experiences at a SIG

school, they analyzed their experiences in relation to public opinion, the impact of present policies on future conditions, the value of inclusivity and transparency in educational policies and the relationships between educational policy and professional dignity. Those concerns, which permeate all educational policy, are discussed in Chapter VIII. Finally, Chapter IX presents the two primary lessons learned through the teachers' sharing of their policy analyses, some lingering questions, final thoughts, and implications for administrators and educational researchers.

Purpose of Study

Recent revisions in the funding and stipulations associated with Title I of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), also known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), represent a shift in what is considered as instrumental to a school's ability to turnaround persistent student underperformance. The subtitle of Title I has been amended to read; "Improving The Academic Achievement Of The Disadvantaged" and one of its stated purposes is that it is "significantly elevating the quality of instruction by providing staff in participating schools with substantial opportunities for professional development" (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Although this revision references teacher professional development, a common hallmark for professionalism, the new description makes no mention of the SIG program's reliance on school closure, the increased presence school privatization, and large-scale teacher dismissal. There are four options in the SIG program from which local education agencies can choose- Closure, Restart, Transformation, and Turnaround. Turnaround schools must fire the current principal and at least 50% of the staff. "Staff" can be any school employee but can also be interpreted solely as instructional staff (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2009). Clearly, teachers will lose their jobs if the school is closed outright. When a

school is restarted under the supervision of a charter school operator, a charter management organization (CMO), or an education management organization (EMO), it too can implement any activity required under the Turnaround Model- including the dismissal of at least 50% of the school's teachers. Teachers employed at schools placed under the Transformation Model, then, enjoy the highest degree of workplace stability and job security in exchange for funds needed to improve student outcomes because the model does not require their dismissal.

As implied in Title I's SIG models of reform, the process of improving academic outcomes for students in schools with persistently lower-than-average standardized test scores must be preceded by an expectation and acceptance of teachers' professional vulnerability and volatility. Research on prior versions of No Child Left Behind (recently revised under the name Every Student Succeeds Act) has focused on gaps and contradictions between the policy's promises and its ability to translate those promises into demonstrable results (Gay, 2007; Tyack, 1991), reports by teachers of limitations of their instructional autonomy and the narrowing of curriculum (Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Dee & Jacob, 2010; Murnane & Papay, 2010), and the policy's failure to consider the socio-economic contexts in which students live and in which both students and teachers work (Leonardo, 2007; Olsen & Sexton, 2009; Rogers-Chapman, 2013; Sleeter, 2007). This study builds upon these studies by investigating the most recent iteration of No Child Left Behind's Title I school reform brand. Site-specific explorations of how reform plans developed in compliance with the SIG program are communicated and implemented are necessary to better understand the policy's effects on teachers as they work towards improving student outcomes. A distinguishing aspect of the study is to center analysis of this heavily-funded policy on the accounts of teachers present both before and after the grant's

implementation , thus contributing to a historicized account describing the ecological elements they encountered and to which they responded.

This methodological and analytical approach is necessary given the SIG program's reliance on models that place teachers in professionally and rhetorically vulnerable positions even though the effectiveness of any school improvement plan greatly hinges on teachers' responses to the ideologies, interpretations, and implementation of those models. This case study acknowledged the same multidimensionality and the same need for authentic learning environments but from the perspective of and for the benefit of teachers as integral parts of the school improvement process. The purpose of this study was to examine highly qualified urban teachers' experiences, perceptions, and evaluations of the discourses and implementation of the SIG Transformation and Turnaround Models. "Experience" was operationalized in two ways: (1) by considering teachers' evaluation of the SIG process, what is gained and lost, as well as the policy's embedded assumptions and (2) the values, attitudes and beliefs teachers hold concerning the contextual factors of school reform- school environment, relationships with other teachers, school and district officials, students and students' families, and teacher excellence.

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This study was framed by a sociopolitical, ecological educational policy analysis of the Title I School Improvement Grant program. The models and implementation associated with the SIG program, which is largely premised on the dismissal of educators as a means towards improved student outcomes, were analyzed based on the perspectives of urban teachers. Six teachers' meaning-making of and responses to the implementation of this federal grant at the local level were centralized within a theoretical framework according to the teachers'

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relationships with and perceptions of students, their families, the local community, as well as the district and state-level educational structures. This cross-sectional consideration of the teachers' experiences and meaning-making represented multiple levels of mutual discourse as described in Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model. An adaptation of the bioecological model was coupled with a reimagining of conceptual elements of Policy as Discourse (Bacchi, 2000, 2004; de Clercq, 1997; Goodwin, 2011; Peters, 2007) The incorporation of these theoretical approaches was done in acknowledgement of (1) teachers' perceptions and contextualized roles, (2) the mutual and bounded natures of educational policies, their implementation and consequences, and (3) the tangled relationships between schools, social inequities and the historicity of contemporary educational reforms.

I used a community-based methodology (Foster, 1997) to select participants and to (de)construct the school context. Teacher participant selection was based on a blend of formal teacher evaluation and community nomination in order to acknowledge the district-sanctioned evaluation categories of "Ineffective, Minimally Effective, Effective, and Highly Effective" without sacrificing the personalized and complex teacher evaluations done by students, their families, local residents and the school's administrators every day. Semi-structured individual and focus group interviews with teachers were conducted in an effort to understand their recollections and meaning-meaning about the school's history with educational policies, the Transformation and Turnaround SIG models as implemented at their school, and their views on educational policies that are premised on teacher dismissals. Document analyses were also conducted to delineate critical changes in policy and leadership and to confirm or question teachers' narratives in order to provide a robust description of the effects of educational policies on teachers.

The central research question guiding this study was: How do successful urban teachers describe their experiences working in a school operating under the Title I School Improvement Grant program? Secondary questions included;

(1) What factors do teachers believe contribute to the school's history of student achievement?

(2) How do teachers' experiences with localized interpretations and forms of policy implementation impact their understanding of school reform efforts?

(3) How do the time periods under the Transformation and Turnaround Models enhance or inhibit teachers' capacity to improve student outcomes?

(4) How, if at all, do the teachers understand their experiences as a SIG school in relation to larger trends of educational policies related to urban schools?

School histories are not limited to the layer of administration that developed or passed a specific educational policy. As such, the theoretical frameworks used in this study recognized educational policies as administrative actions taken by key figures at specific points in local and national history that are then interpreted, implemented and analyzed across multiple levels within the structural organization of schooling. These actions are bound to historical, political, and social contexts that are maintained and challenged by formal and informal means of governance, relationship building, and even by the ways in which individuals within the structure of schooling understand policies or other stakeholders. The theoretical framework I have employed in this study is consistent with this view of schooling and educational policy.

Ecology of Teachers and Education Policy

I drew from three theoretical and conceptual frameworks to account for the multiple figures within the educational structure who, with various levels of authority, are associated

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educational policy. These frameworks have allowed me to bring the impacts of time, personal

meaning-making, multiple degrees of involvement with policy-decision making, and larger

social and economic considerations into the analysis of the SIG program's effects on urban

teachers' personal and professional experiences. Figure 1 illustrates how an adaptation of

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Hamilton, 1978; Bronfenbrenner &

Morris, 2007), the use of educational policy as a form of discourse (Bacchi, 2004; Foucault,

1982; Goodwin,

Figure 1: Conceptual and Theoretical Framework
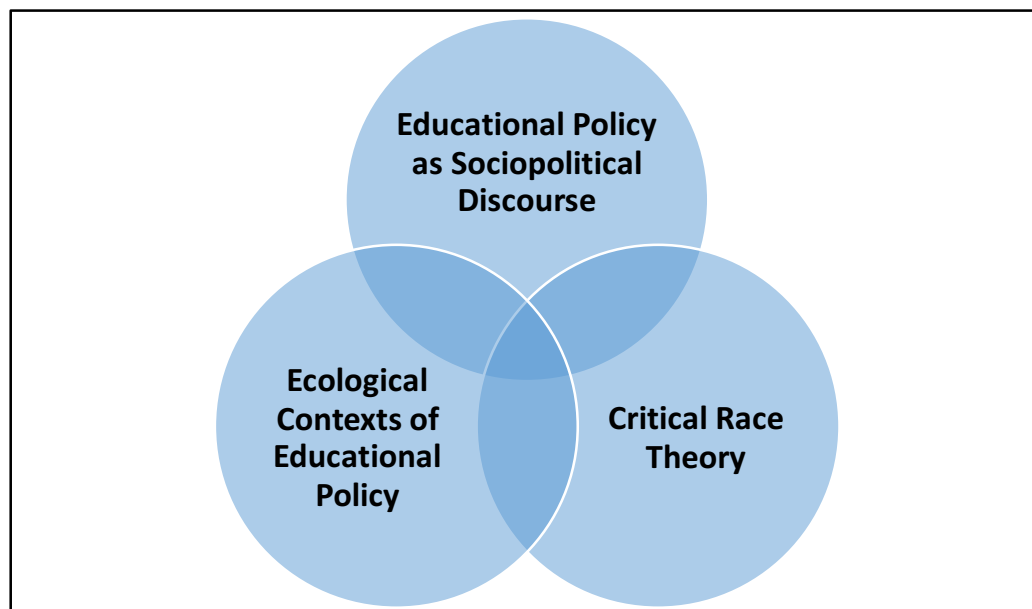
2011), in conjunction with Critical Race Theory (K. D. Brown & Kraehe, 2010; Kimberlé

Crenshaw, Gotanda, & Peller, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2000) come together to constitute

the theoretical framework employed in this study.

Bioecological Model

The contribution of the bioecological model to the blended theoretical and conceptual

framework of this study rests in its duality of attention and influence. The embedded system

levels imply the need and use of examinations that name and classify individuals, social

institutions, and ideologies without compromising the need to consider the historical importance of social and historical processes that connect each of those system levels (see Appendix A). Social policies, including those in the field of education, simultaneously influence the development of individuals and social groups while also being influenced by both. Given one of the purposes of this study, to center urban teachers' understandings of and opinions about the impacts of educational reform, the research design and data analysis were better served by considering the teachers' narratives and commentaries about the professional contexts and implementation of educational policies as they understand it in both their immediate and more distant contexts. My adaptation of the bioecological model to educational policies can be seen in Appendix B. Within this adaptation, educational policy stakeholders are situated at different system levels, as are the systems, social conditions, narratives, ideologies, and time-related factors that impact not only the institution of education but the larger social contexts within which that institution functions.

Originally proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, the bioecological model (previously, Ecological Systems Theory) described human development as a multi-layered, mutually interactive, ongoing set of processes between individuals and their contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989, 1995; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). Central to this model are the concepts of *process*, *person*, *context* and, *time*. *Processes* are the mechanisms through which individuals come to understand how they are both effected by and able to affect their immediate surroundings and the contexts beyond their proximal worlds. These processes are varyingly complex, exert different degrees of power on individuals, are reciprocal, occur over extended periods of time and are affected by an individual's personal characteristics. According to this theory, *person* describes the types of characteristics one represents and brings with them as they

interact with others and larger systems. Age, temperament, skin color, past experiences,

motivation, mental, and emotional resources represent a sample of personal characteristics that

influence their activities, interpersonal, and symbolic processes.

Each person is involved in bi-directional processes across the five related systems which

represent *context*. The most immediate system a person engages in are microsystems which

include family, neighborhood, school, etc. In an updated articulation of the definition of a

microsystem, Bronfenbrenner stated;

> A microsystem is a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations
>
> experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with
>
> particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit,
>
> engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and
>
> activity in, the immediate environment (1993, p. 39).

Based on that definition, teachers, principals, students, and students' families are included in the

microsystem level of this study because they are the persons in teachers' most immediate

educational contexts. The mesosystem represents interactions between microsystems. In this

way, teachers are not seen as existing and acting independently of students, students' families

nor the multiple levels of school administration. I also posit that the mesosystem is

representative of the interactional processes which inherently link policy considerations of

student outcomes with the professional contexts of teachers.

The exo-system includes formal and informal social institutions that overarch the

mesosystem including government agencies, mass media, informal social networks, and policy.

Government agencies, relations between schools and communities, law enforcement practices,

social mobility, urban renewal, school consolidation, and "the existence and character of an

explicit national policy on the children and families" are all named as elements of an ecology's exosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1976, p. 12). Within the ecology of teacher-based educational policy analyses, this ecological level includes the policies themselves as well as the persons that influence the development and implementation of those policies. The linkages and processes within the exosystem, that in turn influence and are influenced by the mesosytem, are not directly present in the immediate setting of the developing person but nonetheless exert indirect influences upon that person (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007).

Bronfenbrenner described macrosystems as "belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, life-styles, opportunity structures, hazards, and life course options… The macrosystem may be thought of as a societal blueprint for a particular culture or subculture" (1993, p. 40). The model's active consideration of processes and ideologies that undergird the development of individuals allows for the methodological and analytical incorporation of interrelated political, historical, and social evolution of educational policies. Reminiscing about a conversation he held with University of Moscow professor A. N. Leontiev, Bronfenbrenner claimed;

> For rather different reasons, 'transforming experiments' in the real world are
> equally rare in American educational research. As Leontiev implied, most of our
> scientific ventures into social reality perpetuate the status quo; to the extent that
> we include ecological contexts in our research, we select and treat them as
> sociological givens rather than as evolving systems susceptible to significant and
> novel transformation. Thus we study social class differences, rural-urban
> differences… as if the nature of those structures, and their developmental
> consequences, were eternally fixed and unalterable, except, perhaps, by violent

revolution... this precept underlies our national stance on social and educational

policy, and much of our educational science as well (1976, p. 14).

In this way, the bioecological model, provides room and even a call to consider the institution of

schooling not only as a significant narrator in the lives of individuals but also in the macrosystem

level of society. Both systems and people evolve over time- chronologically and ideologically.

The final system in the model, which was a later development, accounts for both.

A chronosystem "encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the

characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives"

(Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 40). In short, personal characteristics operate in relation to a person's

chronological age as well as the historical period in which they live because systemic contexts

and processes change. Bronfenbrenner's contemporary development of this model included an

expanded view on the role of time and timing. Admittedly drawing from Elder's work (Elder,

1996, 1998), Bronfenrenner revised the role of time in the bioecological model by encompassing

the entire ecology within the chronosystem. Elder's four principles of time and timing included;

(1) an individual's life course is embedded in historical time and place, (2) the timing of

successive life transitions or events will impact individuals differently depending on when those

transitions or events happen, (3) historical and social influences are manifested through the

linked networks each person has with others, and (4) one's choices and actions, which occur with

the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstances, construct their life course

(Elder, 1998; Elder, Wu, & Jihui, 1993). To these four principles, Bronfenbrenner added the

principal that historical changes not only occur because of the four elements of human

development (person, process, context and time) but also have a productive effect on human

development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). The developmental impact of Process, Person

and Context is associated with the stability, rigidity, disorganization, consistency, flexibility and predictability of the entire ecological system over time. Within an ecological model of teacher-based educational policy analyses, I argue the chronosystem includes issues related to time and timing such as individual teachers' personal and professional trajectories, historical patterns as well as changes in social and political conditions.

Bronfenbrenner's model has since been adapted to address the interconnected, multi-layered environment of social systems which surround and are embedded within schools (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; Bronfenbrenner & Hamilton, 1978; Christens & Peterson, 2012; Cross & Hong, 2012a; Tissington, 2008). Chistens and Peterson (2012), used the model to explore youth's perceptions of their sociopolitical control as a developmental outcome in relation to the risks and supports present in their social environments. Cross and Hong (2012) discussed the psychological characteristics and emotions related to teachers' daily work in high-poverty, high-minority schools, and Tissington (2008) explored the needs of alternately-certified teaching candidates across the systems as they transitioned into their work as formal teachers.   Although each of these either mention implications for improving relevant policies or name considerations of educational policies as a potential for future research, they all focus on the needs or perceptions of the individual in relation to their immediate environments. This tendency to focus on the microsystem underscores the intra-personal and closest social contexts of students and teachers, while leaving the broader realms of the social ecology of educational actors and actions largely unaccounted for. Educational policies originate and are translated at various levels within the educational institution and beyond. Regardless of their origins, educational policies are driven by and effect figures explicitly named in their official narrative. These policies are also developed in relationship with the ideologies and power of those whose presence is

negligible within or absent from the policy's sanctioned articulation. It is for these reasons that the use of a teacher-based adaption of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model was a necessary and beneficial theoretical decision.

Policy as Discourse

The second portion of this study's theoretical framework, Policy as Discourse, represents a more focused way to incorporate the sociopolitical histories and conditions as well as dominant ideologies that undergird educational polices. In this way, the more distant systems related to teachers and the impact of policy on their personal experiences and professional roles are still considered for their ecological impact even at the micro and mesosystem levels. Before detailing the major components of Policy as Discourse, I outline various types of educational policies, offer the definition of policy I employ in this study and, provide an overview of discourse in order to describe the contributory elements of this approach to policy analysis.

The legacy of expecting transformative, equitable, and lasting improvements in educational outcomes without addressing the meso, exo, or macro-levels of society has been a plaguing consequence of the approach taken by many educational policies in the U.S. context (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Guinier, 2004; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; Reese, 2011; Rushing, 2001). Jean Anyon (2005), for example, argued that educational policies have and continue to be stymied in their effectiveness due to their failure to address underlying political and social inequities. She specifically named policies at the federal, state and local government levels including the Smith-Hughes Act, Head Start, the 1954 *Brown* court decision, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as examples of federal-level policies with stated purposes of improving the education of the poor and/or racially marginalized. She critiqued the benevolent tone of their stated purposes, however, and claimed; "It is important to note that federal

educational policies intended to improve urban schools did not take aim at the economic

arrangement and practices that themselves produced the poverty in which city schools were

embedded" (Anyon, 2005, p. 67). As have other scholars concerned with social and economic

politics of educational policies (Allen, 2009; Berliner, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Noguera

& Wells, 2011; J. J. Smith & Stovall, 2008a), Anyon criticized school privatization policies,

busing, curriculum-based policies, standardized testing, school-based feeding programs, and

school consolidation as state and local educational policies that address issues within schooling

without actively addressing the contextual factors that have been shown to significantly impact

the sustained improvement of youth. The examples employed by Anyon to make this point

demonstrate, in part, the wide array of possibilities when identifying what is and what is not a

policy.

In this study, I rely on Goodwin's definition of policy and description of its

accompanying examinations;

> Policy consists of a range of actions- and inactions- including, but not limited to,
> laws policy statements, programs, statements of principle, processes and
> performance. As such, the objects of policy research and policy analysis are also
> various. Policy researchers analyse texts, institutions and institutional processes,
> as well as interactions between policy players. They also interrogate values and
> principles and evaluate outcomes (2011, p. 168)

This perspective of policy compliments a sociopolitical, ecological approach in that it

acknowledges multiple significant figures (policy players and institutions), the inclusion of

symbols as additional significant figures (texts and performance), and the interactional nature of

the processes between those figures all while keeping an eye towards the role of ideologies. An

ecological, bidirectional consideration of teachers and educational policies provides the theoretical space to consider the utility of teachers' experiences and perspectives in working towards a more complete understanding of present policies and the formulation of future policies in terms of both their effects and their effectiveness.

Educational research concerned with policy discourses has roots in critical policy analysis (Henry, 1993; Taylor, 1997) and policy sociology (Ball, 1990; Ozga, 1987). This tradition within education policy analysis is concerned with the artefacts, actors, contexts and language of educational policies in a way that disputes claims that policies are best analyzed as products of government authorities. In similar fashion to Bronfenbrenner's call for considerations of bidirectional processes between micro and macro-systems, Ozga stated:

> Education policy is not confined to the formal relationships and processes of government, nor only to schools and teachers and legislation affecting them. The broad definition requires that we understand it in its political, social and economic contexts, so that they also require study because of the ways in which they shape education policy (1987, p. 113).

Other research concerned with the relationships between educational policies and teachers' work lives have focused on the effects of policies on teachers' mental and emotional health (Darby, 2008; Kelchtermans, 1996), and sense of job satisfaction (Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005; Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, & Harrington, 2014). I build upon their teacher-centered approaches by responding to Ozga's call for educational research to examine teachers' experiences [how they are affected] as well as their analyses of policies [as building blocks to understanding policies]. This dual focus on teacher experience and analysis is consistent with policy as

discourse in education because of its focus on examining policies' language, embedded values and real-world consequences.

As do other researchers viewing educational policies as discourse (Bacchi, 2000, 2004; Ball, 1994; de Clercq, 1997; Goodwin, 2011; Maguire, Hoskins, Ball, & Braun, 2011; Peters, 2007), I draw upon Foucault's description of discourse to distinguish reading policy as both text and policy as discourse. When calling for an extension beyond language and lexicon into an exploration of discursive practices, Foucault explained;

> [This is] a task that consists of not- of no longer- treating discourse as group of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this more that renders them irreducible to the language (langue) and to speech. It is this 'more' that we must reveal and describe (1982, p. 49).

Educational policy as discourse, then, considers the articulation of policies as artifacts to be analyzed as well as the political, social and professional discourses that occur as processes within and among micro and macro-systems. Educational policies have been researched as multilevel, contextualized processes that consider meso and exosystem influences including neighborhood effects, district-level reform efforts, federal mandates such as No Child Left Behind (Arum, 2000; Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 1998; Grissom et al., 2014; Jiang, Sporte, & Luppescu, 2015; G. M. Johnson, 1994). This study continues that vein of inquiry by considering teachers' meaning-making and experiences with school and district-level interpretations, and the implementation of a contemporary provision of the NCLB's Title I School Improvement Grants. In contrast to teacher-centered research that positions educational structures as the primary

influencing factor, I employ a sociopolitical ecological approach with a policy as discourse stance to consider the actual and potential impact of teachers on those structures, current or future educational policies.

Critical Race Theory

An adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; Bronfenbrenner & Hamilton, 1978), the conceptual framework of Policy as Discourse (Bacchi, 2000, 2004; de Clercq, 1997; Goodwin, 2011; Peters, 2007) and Critical Race Theory (D. A. Bell, 1995; Kimberlé Crenshaw et al., 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998) constitute the intersectional theoretical framework of this study. Critical Race Theory (CRT) in Education is particularly informative and complimentary to the framework because Foucault's position on discourse acknowledged the differential impact of processes and contexts upon individuals and social groups. He claimed "discourse can be both an instrument and effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (Foucault, 1998, p. 101). With roots in Critical Legal Studies, CRT augments my sociopolitical ecology approach to this Policy as Discourse analysis by further contextualizing the institution of schools. In his description of CRT as oppositional scholarship, Calmore (1995) explained that because "race" is not a fixed term, the challenge of CRT is to "examine how individual and group identities, under broadly disparate circumstances, as well as the racial institutions and social practices linked to those identities, are formed and transformed historically by actors who politically contest the social meanings of race" (p. 318). At the interpersonal and microsystem levels, those contestations have implications for the social identities, positionalities, and sociopolitical issues with which all students, families, and educators enter educational spaces. Those contestations about the social (including educational) meanings of race are also evident in

the ideologies, organizational structures and interconnected relationships between multiple social institutions.

Consider, for example Gillborn's argument that the tendency of educational policy, including school reform, to perpetuate White supremacy maintains racial equity as a marginal issue by failing to critically attend to (a) the social groups or ideologies that are prioritized by educational policies, (b) who benefits from the priorities advanced by educational policies, and (c) the social and educational outcomes of educational policies (2005). The use of educational policy as an institutional tool to maintain racial oppression warrants acute attention not only because policy reinforces historically embedded norms and priorities, but because educational policy has the potential to restore or create socially just educational experiences and outcomes for all children. Robert P. Moses spoke to this linkage between education and justice in his claim:

> In the eighteenth century we laid our constitution down with the concept of a constitutional person thick enough to obligate the federal government to track down IRS, insurgent runaway slaves, as constitutional property, to be shackled, and shipped to constitutional persons. In the twenty-first century we should pick our constitution up with the concept of a constitutional person thick enough to obligate the nation to secure for all its children a quality public school education as a matter of course, a matter of history, and a matter of our constitutional democracy" (2008, p. 90).

The Title I School Improvement Grant is a twenty-first century revision and not a novel policy in that prior instantiations of the Elementary and Secondary School Act were similarly (a) written in language that communicated a commitment to the poor, and (b) introduced in times of

political and social shifts characterized by rhetoric that at once addressed but did not name the historical precedents that made them necessary. The policy's historical and contemporary relationship to the social and racial hierarchies of the United States of America makes CRT a necessary part of the framework due to the its prioritization of intersecting forms of oppression. Its inclusion aids in the avoidance of decontextualized analyses of teachers' work conditions, the political and social climates in which educational policies are formulated, the sociocultural climates in which students learn, and the consequences of teachers' understanding of policies and students.

Since its introduction in the 1970s, CRT has become a theoretical and methodological framework based on an historicized, interdisciplinary approach that considers and combats intersectional forms of racial, gender, economic, and ethnic oppression among others. At its broadest, CRT consists of the following tenets:

1. the systemic and pervasive nature of racism in American society must be understood according to historical contexts (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Lawrence III, 1987)

2. Whiteness, as structural and intellectual property, as well as interest convergence/divergence function as tools to maintain social oppression (D. A. Bell, 1980; Guinier, 2004; C. Harris, 1993; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013)

3. the inclusion of marginalized voices, in the form of counterstories, elucidates experiential forms knowledge and contradicts essentialized, normative discourses about oppressed peoples (Carrasco, 1996; Delgado, 1989; Montoya, 1994)

4. the intersectional nature of oppression requires an inter and trans-disciplinary perspective (Kimberle Crenshaw, 2009; A. P. Harris, 1994; Valdes & Culp, 2002)

5. critiques of neoliberalism agendas are needed to dismiss the role of racially oppressive norms and practices which favor individualistic, meritocratic, and colorblind bases of social progress (D. Bell, 1987; Guinier & Torres, 2009; Solorzano, 1997)

6. a commitment to social justice that leads to the empowerment of marginalized communities (Freire, 1973; Lawson, 1995; Matsuda, 1997; Solorzano & Yosso, 2000)

These tenets have been applied to a number of fields, including education. Ladson-Billings and Tate, for example, have called for the incorporation of CRT into the ways education is done, researched, and understood (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2000; Tate, 1997). The vein of CRT in Education scholarship has spanned a wide gamut of issues including higher educational policies (Iverson, 2007; Park & Liu, 2014; Teranishi, 2007); teacher education programs (Milner IV, 2008a; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001); the embedded nature of K12 education in larger social inequities (Andrews & Tuitt, 2013; Milner IV, 2013a; J. J. Smith & Stovall, 2008b); research of K12 educational policies (Alemán, 2006; Leonardo, 2007; D. O. Stovall, 2009); and, K12 educational reform efforts (Chapman, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Gillborn, 2014; M. A. Khalifa, Jennings, Briscoe, Oleszweski, & Abdi, 2014).

My use of CRT draws upon Solórzano and Yosso's (2000) definition of CRT in Education as "a framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain the subordination of Students of Color" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 42). I consider this examination of urban teachers' understandings and experiences with the ideologies and implementation of Title I's transformation and turnaround SIG models as an opportunity to counter assumptions of educational policy neutrality in that a policy, by definition, is a way to organize and manage. That is, policy is the legitimization, institutionalization, and norming of

power. My use of CRT does not require teachers to be wholesale supporters nor critics of SIG policies. Rather, it seeks to understand and analyze how teachers' conceptualizations of schooling do or do not include sociocultural considerations of how they and their students are situated within the ecology of educational policy and the larger ecology of social organization. Given the drastic shift in who educates racially, ethnically, and linguistically marginalized since the implementation of school desegregation, the inclusion of White teachers as units of analysis- even in considerations of urban youth's educational outcomes is timely and necessary. Their racialized professional standing and political treatment is a window not only into the teaching conditions/futures of the largest category of teachers but also of the learning conditions/futures of the marginalized youth to whom they have dedicated their professional lives.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

Urban Teachers as Social and Policy Analysts

Though not inherently bound, race and place within the U.S. American context has been persistently characterized by residential and school segregation. This structurally-driven link often means that research dedicated to teachers working in urban schools may be coded by terminology such as inner-city, Latin@[1], Black[2], at-risk, and diverse. I use the word "urban" specifically in reference to large-city school districts where the majority of students are Black/African-American, Chicano/Latin@, Asian/Pacific Islander or members of other racialized social groups. "Urban" is also utilized with an acknowledgement of the intersecting nature of race with class, language, ethnicity, and other elements commonly used as the bases of social stratification and oppression. In this review of relevant literature, I cast my net wide to include classic and more contemporary studies that foregrounded urban teachers and policy-oriented reports that discuss urban schools. By doing so, I accounted for public and political narratives that essentialize urban teachers (A. L. Brown, 2012) while still honoring the theorizing work they do regarding the intersecting realms of their professional lives.

Michele Foster's *Black Teachers on Teaching* is a classic text based on the life histories of twenty Black teachers in an "effort to explore and document the constraints and supports in their professional lives and to examine how their experiences changed over their careers and over the years" (1997). Due to a shrinking presence of Black teachers, Foster interviewed teachers

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[1] The words Latino and Latina have been replaced by Latin@ as a form of typographical advocacy of gender equality or inclusiveness. "Hispanic" is only sparingly used for the sake of consistency with pre-existing data sources that relied on that term.

[2] The term "Black" is employed here as a diasporic reference to people of African descent which includes, among others, African-Americans, Black Latin@s, and people of West Indian descent. Terms that are more geographically, linguistically or culturally specific will be used when germane to the discussion.

who worked in large cities including Washington, D.C., New York City, Los Angeles, Flint and St. Louis. Foster noted the literature gap to which the book responded when she explained;

> Black teachers' unique historical experiences are either completely overlooked or amalgamated with those of white teachers. In those few instances where black teachers are visible, their cultural representations are biased by society's overarching racism. For the most part, these cultural representations continue to render black teachers invisible as teachers of students of their own or other ethnic backgrounds, while casting white female teachers as heroic figures (1997, p. XLIX).

In her study, Foster inquired about teachers' philosophies against the backdrop of school desegregation, threats of schools being closed down by the local district, school reformations, and the rise of high-stakes testing between 1988 and 1996. Identified through what she termed as community nomination, the teachers often expressed similar philosophies about teaching Black students. For them, teaching Black children meant educating the whole individual (intellectual, social, physical) for a type of personal success that was always connected to the advancement of the collective Black community. How they carried out that shared philosophy may have differed, but a common theme was that the classrooms, and the school at large, were sites of social justice where individuals (teachers and students alike) were obligated to participate through their push for excellence. The participant selection process employed by Foster was replicated in this study by my going directly into the school and seeking direct input and nominations from stakeholders about the teachers they felt represented excellence in teaching. Nominating stakeholders in the Community Nomination process, outside of the two administrators, were not privy to teachers' official classifications based on the district's teacher

evaluation system. It should be noted however, when nominations from students, parents, and administrators were combined, only one of the six most highly-ranked teachers had been classified as Effective while the remaining five were Highly Effective. The results of the Community Nomination process indicate that Foster's approach to participant selection was instrumental in identifying teachers whom both the district and the school's constituents found to be high qualified.

Ladson-Billings' *The Dreamkeepers* is in line with Foster's work but has significant points of difference (2009). Although both were directly concerned with teachers of Black children, Ladson-Billings expanded the basis of inclusion for her sample group to include teachers of any race identified as effective using Foster's selection process of Community Nomination. This was a significant difference because it acknowledged the fact that the majority of teachers Black children are likely to encounter in their academic experiences will, in fact, be White. This distinction was also important in that it complicated assumptions that students are only best served by teachers from their same racial or ethnic community. Another difference is found in the authors' methodologies. Whereas Foster employed a life history approach to her study that privileged the teachers' stories to be narrated by them and to stand with minimal theoretical propping, Ladson-Billings' ethnographic interviews involved analyses of the teachers' histories not only for the content but for the meaning-making each teacher did around their classroom practices, their ideologies about students' roles, and their own roles as teachers. This methodological difference was, in part, reliant upon her use of Afrocentric feminist epistemology as a theoretical underpinning of her participant selection process and data collection. Furthermore, Ladson-Billings' use of the ethnographic interview (Spradley, 1979), better explained her production of a thematically-driven concept, Culturally Relevant Teaching

as a part of the research/writing process which Foster's life history approach neither required nor encouraged.

Bartlett and García 's *Additive Schooling in Subtractive Times* represents a significant shift in scope and method from Foster and Ladson-Billings (Bartlett & García, 2011). The authors described their research in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City as a case study with an ethnographic approach. They too took up the issue of teachers in urban contexts but the role of classroom teacher was expanded because the teachers adapted official roles as administrators, collaborators, advocates, and curriculum writers during the creation of Gregorio Luperón High School. Spurred by the ways in which Spanish-speaking students were failed by their school, Latin@ and immigrant teachers proposed and came to run the school as a response to inequitable learning opportunities.

State, district and school-specific politics are used to contextualize this multiple-participant case study to consider how teachers' philosophies and practices are intertwined with social and political environments. As in the previously discussed studies, Bartlett & García observed that strong beliefs about social justice and critical pedagogy played significant roles in teachers' ideologies about education and their conceptualizations of the youth with whom they shared ethnic or linguistic ties. A point of departure in this text, however, was the greater attention given to the teachers' understanding of and participation at multiple levels of school governance in order to exert more control over the students' education- especially as the school was forced to respond to changing structural and accountability policies. Another difference was the substantial amount of attention given to the ways in which the school and teachers responded to the issues of immigration and language the Latin@ (mostly Dominican) students faced within and outside of the school.

These three books represent prior efforts to describe the larger and localized social contexts and educational structures from the perspective of urban teachers. Each text foregrounded the philosophies, work lives and practices of teachers who demonstrated a commitment to educating Black and Latin@ students in urban centers. All three of three studies underscored the importance of an expanded view of teachers and teaching by accounting for the local and national ideological and political contexts in which the profession operates. Furthermore, they presented urban teachers as theorizers of and participants in the social and political realms of education across different moments in United States of America's history. The shared strength of these studies lies in the undergirding argument that teachers' critical pedagogy, cultural acuity, agency, and social justice-inflected approaches to education were central to (a) their relationships with students, (b) their recognition by community members as being successful with students, and (c) their commitment to urban schools and to Black and Latin@ students. In short, these teachers were successful because their teaching praxes operated en tandem with their critical views of social and political practices as well as their liberatory ideologies and epistemologies.

Gauging the Success of Educational Reforms

Responses to the concentration of heavy-handed reform efforts in urban centers span a wide range including those that accept the changes as necessary and beneficial to those that consider those same changes to be indicative of inequitable social mores. Smarick (2010), for example, called for a re-visioning of narratives that critique school closures and charter schools by emphasizing the unlikelihood of turnaround efforts to yield substantial improvement. The call to close schools, according to Smarick, is not out of place because;

Closing America's worst urban schools doesn't indict public education nor does it

suggest a lack of commitment to disadvantaged students. On the contrary, it

reflects our insistence on finally taking the steps necessary to build city school

systems that work for the boys and girls most in need (2010, p. 26).

Other scholars interpret the clustering of closures and other forms of restructuring as ineffective

efforts to repackage failed turnaround policies from other industries (Cuban, 2004; Vasquez

Heilig, Young, & Williams, 2012) with inequitable damages being visited upon geographic and

social communities that have been historically marginalized (Duke, 2012; Fenwick, 2013;

Noguera & Wells, 2011; Rogers-Chapman, 2013).

Large-scale, comprehensive reform policies have also been discussed in terms the

bottom-line improvement (or not) of student achievement (Borman, Hewes, Overman, & Brown,

2003; Carnoy & Loeb, 2002; Stringfield, 2007). Substantial research, for example, has been

done to assess the effects and effectiveness of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) as well as

questions it raises concerning how we understand student success and teacher quality. Although

multiple studies have addressed reading and math achievement gains made in association with

NCLB, many caveats have been made about those gains including the faultiness of relying

primarily on test scores as indicators of successful/failing schools, the lack of improvement for

racially marginalized students, the inability to directly link the gains to NCLB, the shifting of

resources within schools and the difficulty of making claims due to variability of the key

indicators' definitions across states (Chiang, 2009; Elmore, 2002; Hanushek & Raymond, 2005;

Reback, 2008). This study, turns its gaze to the lived experiences of teachers who are not only

charged with the daily implementation of school reform but may find themselves professionally

vulnerable to the consequences of the reforms in spite of contextual and social factors that are beyond their control.

Educational Reform and the Disenfranchisement of Local Stakeholders

Duke (2012) delineated trends among state departments of education, institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations and their adoption of organizational turnaround models. His description of co-mingling between public and private sectors corresponds to Noguera and Wells' review (2011) of educational reform efforts in that privatized, capitalistic approaches to school turnaround were presented as inherently distanced from the class and race-based issues which complicate the very nature of schooling in the U.S. context. Dr. Leslie T. Fenwick (2013) critiqued this same distance in her claims that urban school closures and the increasing use of mayoral control, external education management organizations, charter schools, and alternative routes to teaching threaten the public interests of poor and Black communities. Families' trust in schooling structures and the intentions behind educational reforms, she argued, are weakened due to their beliefs that the changes are surreptitiously grounded in private industries' desire to boost their control of urban communities' fiscal and real estate interests. The interrelated functions and outcomes of public and private spheres and the equitable social advancement of our nation raised in these studies call for research that acknowledges multiple stakeholders within the processes of schooling.

Research considering the multiple stakeholders who are either directly engaged in implementing educational policies or indirectly affected by the policies has highlighted the impact of local governing boards, families, teachers and students. Trujillo's 2013 examination educational policies' effects highlighted threats to autonomy as perceived by urban school boards and shifts in their leadership behaviors in the wake of high-stakes accountability policies. These

shifts included establishing goals rooted in individual outcomes in teaching and learning that were almost exclusively based on test scores, the restriction of local participation in critical decision-making processes and the promotion of practices that emphasized standardization and a managerial approach to effectiveness. Trujillo asserted;

> Accountability policies that are framed in terms of their potential to further
>
> democratic aims by granting greater liberty in exchange for results, and by
>
> holding all districts to the same high standards, risk exacerbating the same racial
>
> and socioeconomic segregation that they presumably exist to transform. Policy
>
> making that does not account for powerful contextual differences across more and
>
> less privileged districts leaves urban school boards disproportionately vulnerable
>
> to reduced democratic control and participation (2013, p. 21).

The reduction of local entities' democratic participation in the processes of schooling has also been addressed by Berry and Harrington (2013) who considered the engagement of teachers, students, and parents via social media in response to new instructional mandates. Their findings revealed shared goals of improving student achievement with policymakers but divergent opinions concerning the most appropriate means to reach those goals.

When speaking of the tension between policymakers' and local stakeholders' priorities, Berry and Harrington claimed;

> If this tension is to be overcome, accountability policy will have to incorporate a
>
> better balance between higher-level intervention and professional knowledge and
>
> be implemented in a manner that does not insult professional educators and
>
> parents or be viewed as shortchanging students. Interventions that polarize
>
> various actors run the risk of creating further upheaval and turmoil in schools

between district and school-level personnel and between parents and educators

(2013, p. 406).

Parents and teachers, they found, became distrustful of the districts' sincerity, the district's

confidence in reasonable levels of teacher autonomy and questioned the district's level of

awareness of what actually took place in the classroom. There were also indications that

teachers and students used social media to exercise agency by protesting their treatment and the

decisions made at school board meetings. The distance and tension described in these studies

were prevalent between schools and communities of color prior to the de-segregation of schools

(Anderson, 1988; Walker, 1993) and contemporary research concerning urban schools have

proposed alternative accountability frameworks that are community-based through which local

stakeholders' input and needs are more authentically operationalized. Khalifa (2012), for

example, spoke to the need to eliminate the disenfranchisement of schools' communities in his

ethnographic work highlighting the Principal as Community Leader leadership style which he

showed assuaged feelings of mistrust between schools and communities with an additional

benefit of students' improved academic achievement. Lipman (2003) called for greater inclusion

of those most marginalized by educational policy decision-making processes due to the passage

of policies that have undermined schools, teachers, students, and local communities, including

the increased use of militaristic responses to Black and Latin@ youth. Stovall (2013), in his

critique of exclusionary residential and educational practices, encouraged the use of grassroots

and university-community efforts to combat the concentration of school closures and

turnarounds in predominately racially marginalized communities. Although these three studies

focused on different significant figures and relationships within educational structures, they all

signaled a political context wherein the "public' within public education are finding themselves

increasingly disenfranchised- even as accountability and reform policies with stated purposes of improving public education abound.

Title I School Improvement Grants

With each reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Title I funding provision has provided "…federal aid for educationally deprived children" (U.S Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1969, p. 1) with varying levels of emphasis on compliance, standardized accountability, and increased state control (Riddle & Library of Congress, 2001). The 2001 reauthorization, commonly referred to as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), has been critiqued as being motivated by greater levels of international economic competition and the government's concerns about studies reminiscent of *A Nation At Risk* which suggest the United States of America's diminishing international educational standing (Barrett, 2009). NCLB not only increased the amount of federal influence leveraged at state and local levels but also the extent of standardized accountability measures for schools, students and teachers (Wong, 2013a). The policy's funding and accountability measures have been associated with teachers' heightened anxiety over changes in their professional roles (Barrett, 2009; Valli & Buese, 2007) and their perceptions of an overly narrow curriculum (Hursh, 2007) which is accompanied by pressure to "teach to the test" (Darling-Hammond, 2007, p. 326).

Substantial research has been done to assess the effects and effectiveness of NCLB as well as the questions it raises concerning how we understand student success and teacher quality. The U.S. Department of Education's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 significantly bolstered the amount of Title I money made available to state education agencies, and by extension local education agencies, through the provision an additional $4.6 billion to school improvement grants to be used between 2010-2013 (Federal Register, 2010; U.S.

Department of Education, 2011). Most of those grant awards were applied to urban schools

(Peck & Reitzug, 2013). When asked to identify how the funds were used to support districts

and schools, 87% of state Title I leaders indicated they had used the funds to increase monitoring

and data review in schools receiving School Improvement Grants while 100% applied funds to

technical support. On the other hand, roughly 43% used the funds to provide professional

development for SIG teachers, 22% of the state leaders used the funds to identify and recruit

effective principals, and a mere 17% used the money to garner assistance in identifying and

recruiting effective teachers (McMurrer & McIntosh, 2012). This lack of attention to teachers

becomes particularly acute considering the demographic imperative that touches schools across

the nation and the concentration of Black and Latino teachers in urban settings because only 4 of

the 27 states indicating a need for more racial minority teacher candidates actually established

incentive programs to meet that area of need (Meyer, 2002). The paltry level of attention given

to identifying and supporting current teachers, the absence of purposeful recruitment of effective

new teachers and the lackluster effort applied to diversifying teaching staffs suggest a low-level

confidence in the ability of teachers, in general, to be a significant part of schools' success. As

the bulk of these grants are awarded to urban districts, urban school teachers are

disproportionately at risk of being socially and politically rendered as ineffective, incapable of

improvement and disposable.

Research dedicated to examining more contemporary models of school reform, like those

dedicated to the early years of NCLB (of which the Title I SIGs are a part), point to several

paradoxes between their consequences and the conditions the policies were designed to address.

Darling-Hammond argued that even though NCLB legitimately emphasized ensuring students'

ability to excel under the care of highly qualified teachers, the policy failed to take into account

the already-existent surplus of certified teachers, the benefits of early-career mentors, interstate mobility of teachers and the discouraging effects of disparate pay and work conditions (Darling-Hammond, 2006a). Likewise, the mandated dismissal of teachers in an effort to increase the quality of schools' teaching staff has been shown to work in opposition to the well-established knowledge that urban schools are severely impacted by staffing inconsistencies stemming from high teacher turnover and high percentages of inexperienced teachers (Peck & Reitzug, 2013; T. Trujillo, 2012). The body of literature addressing the latest version of Title I SIGS is limited due to its 2009 introduction and the fact that the first SIG cohort reached the end of the grant period in 2013; however, this policy shift is certainly not going unnoticed by educational researchers. The *Journal for Education of Students Placed at Risk,* for example, recently published a special issue dedicated to factors contributing to the emergence of the school turnaround agenda (Berkeley, 2012; Stuit & Stringfield, 2012).   Hochbein, et al's research also represents early literature on School Improvement Grants with findings that point to an over-identification of high schools as Persistently Low-Achieving Schools because of variance among states' definitions of Annual Yearly Progress and to the general inability of threats of being labeled as Low-Performing to spur student outcome gains (Hochbein, Mitchell, & Pollio, 2013). As educational researchers continue to craft studies to better understand the statistical impact of Title I SIG reform models on student outcomes and the implications of teachers' dismissals, this proposed study stands poised to contribute to the emerging body of literature by acknowledging what Cochran-Smith states so clearly; "Teaching is unforgivingly complex" (Cochran-Smith, 2003, p. 4).

In light of changes to requirements associated with Title I School Improvement Grants which leave urban teachers particularly vulnerable to loss of employment, this study is a timely effort to

reassert the significance of the complex professional identities and work of teachers. The linking

of federal monies to reforms that mandate the removal of principals and dismissal of no less than

50% of a school's current staff represents a significant shift in the era of accountability-

especially for urban schools. States applying for these grants choose between four models

according to the type of reform deemed best suited for each school. The four options available

under the SIG Program are as follows:

- *Closure Model*: the entire student body is moved to higher performing schools

- *Restart Model:* the school is converted or reopened as a charter school or is placed under
  an education management organization

- *Turnaround Model*: requires the school to adopt strategies that increase flexibility in
  operations along with the replacement of the principal and at least 50% of the school staff

- *Transformation Model:* requires strategies for increased connection to the community,
  instructional reform, operational flexibility and replacing the principal

Although the data reflected in Figure 1 supports assertions of a general preference for the

Transformation Model which emphasizes the role of the local community and individual

schools' operational flexibility to improve student outcomes (Klein, 2011; Wong, 2013b), this

trend does not hold true concerning the future of urban schools. Consequently, families in urban

centers are being disproportionately distanced (physically and politically) from schools in their

communities due to closures, the assumption of authority by external entities and the dismissal of

teachers and principals. This distancing would be particularly acute for Families of Color since

73% of the students affected by SIGs are not White (Steven Hurlburt, Floch, Carlson, Therriault,

& Cole, 2011). Urban teachers, and by extension Black, Latin@ and Asian teachers who are

primarily employed in urban schools, are also disproportionately affected by this brand of reform (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009).

Table 1: *Overall Distribution of SIG Reform Models According to Urbanicity*

SIG Reform Model	All SIG Awarded Schools	Urban Schools
Closure	2.5%	78%
Restart	5%	81%
Turnaround	21%	74%
Transformation	71%	53%
Data Source: Klein, A. (2011, January 12). Turnaround-Program Data Seen as Promising, Though Preliminary. Education Week. Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/01/12/15turnaround-2.h30.html.		

Teacher Identities, Self-understanding, and Vulnerability

The explicit requirement of the Turnaround SIG model to remove no less than 50% of a school's staff paradoxically positions teachers as prominent contributors to a school's failure and to its reformation. The lack of resources allocated by SIG funding administrators to identify and/or retain successful teachers makes this mandated removal all the more significant in that teachers' perceptions of themselves, how they perform multiple roles and even their perceptions of how they are perceived by others can play a significant role in hiring decisions. Nias explained;

> the teacher as a person is held by many within the profession and outside it to be
> at the centre of not only the classroom but also the educational process. By
> implication, therefore, it matters to teachers themselves, as well as to their pupils,

who and what they are. Their self-image is more important to them as

practitioners than is the case in occupation where the person can easily be

separated from the craft" (1989, pp. 202–203).

Considerations of the self in relation to the varied stakeholders in the educational system, the

nature of the teaching profession, and even considerations of identity as a self-reflexive act, then,

become essential when asking teachers to reflect on the lived experiences of working at a SIG

school.

In similar fashion to Kelchtermans' personal interpretative framework (Kelchtermans,

1993, 1996; Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1998) which highlighted the developed beliefs and

representations of teachers, this ecological case study considers both teachers' professional and

personal selves. In Kelchtermans' framework, self-understanding is represented as "both the

understanding one has of one's self at a certain moment in time (*product*), as well as to the fact

that this product results from an ongoing *process* of making sense of one's experiences and their

impact on the 'self' (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 1000). Teachers' selves, in this study are

understood in relation to the systems governing educational policy so as to make a distinction

between how the teachers view themselves and how they perceive being understood by the

general public and policymakers. This ecological view of teachers and educational systems

includes teachers' work conditions, their perceptions about the intentions of educational policies,

and their sense of professional security or well-being.

The relationship between teachers' professional self-understanding and external norms is

described by Kelchtermans' notion of vulnerability "as a structural condition of being a teacher"

because "the lack of control, the fact that accountability procedures either neglect or

instrumentalize (and thus reduce) the interpersonal dimension in teaching, the absence of an

ultimate ground for justifying one's actions as a teacher…is a reality teachers have to *endure*: there is no escape from it" (2005, p. 999). The enduring nature of teachers' professional vulnerability, then, can be exacerbated by school reform policies. School reform as operationalized by Title I SIGs, however, could facilitate a different type of professional vulnerability in that teachers remain professionally vulnerable to excessive levels of external control or outright dismissals regardless of their policy buy-in and beliefs about student achievement simply because the SIG program's brand of reform funds models that put their employment at risk through the Restart, Closure and Turnaround Models. How teachers make sense of professional vulnerability and any action they take in response to it would involve not only aspects of personal self-understanding but teachers' understandings of themselves as professionals in social, political, and cultural contexts which is consistent with this study's theoretical and conceptual framework.

Kelchertmans, for instance, spoke to the relationship between teachers' self-understanding, their perceptions of ideologies concerning teacher accountability, educational systems, and vulnerability;

> [the] basic structure in vulnerability is always one of feeling that one's
> professional identity and moral integrity, as part of being 'a proper teacher,' are
> questioned and that valued workplace conditions are thereby threatened or lost.
> Coping with the vulnerability therefore implies political actions, aimed at
> (re)gaining the social recognition of one's professional self and restoring the
> necessary workplace conditions for good job performance (1996, p. 319).

Blase offered a different possibility when teachers are confronted with professional vulnerability in that the teachers could engage in conservative micropolitical actions stemming from

protective coping strategies in order to leave the status quo intact (Blase, 1988). In either case, the inextricable nature of the sociopolitical context, including political tones and structures, from the teaching profession, as well as the enmeshed natures of personal and professional selves are two dynamics that undergird discussions of the implications of educational reforms on teachers.

Structure and Agency

My perspective of mutually influencing actors and forces within an educational policy ecology is related to Archer's analytical dualism (Archer, 2007; Sawyer, 2002) which recognized individuals' understanding of themselves and their context not as polarized elements but as interrelated sociocultural elements. Archer argued that (1) agents bring into their contexts "the beliefs they seek to uphold, the theories they wish to vindicate, the propositions they want to be able to deem true," and (2) that when confronted with relationships that contradict or complement their material and ideal interests, people exercise multiple forms of agency via sociocultural interactions that reinforce opportunity, pluralism, correction, elimination, reproduction, and systematization among other possibilities (2007, p. 25). Those sociocultural forms of interaction then culminate in what she called cultural morphogenesis (transformation) or morphostasis (reproduction). The possibility that teachers consciously or unconsciously act in ways that transform or reproduce material or ideological projects is an important aspect of this study because it views all teachers- regardless of the result or motivation behind their action, as agents who have the potential to act on behalf of themselves, their students, their profession, and the ideological convictions they hold.

Teachers, then, function as both political and social actors and enactors within the formal structures of schooling. Wertsch and Rupert noted the need to expand upon Vygotsky's notion of mediated agency such that agency is not only mediated by intermental and intramental

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cognitive constraints but also by the values and authority structures in operation within both types of cognition (Wertsch & Rupert, 1993). In light of this, teachers' agency, albeit mediated by ideological, material, professional, and social constraints, can be levied in the face of educational reform- and that exercising of agency can be explored in relation to the interplay of the teachers' educational values and the specific authority structures to which they are subject. Values are as variable as the individuals who hold them. Professional acts of agency, therefore, are best described as non-singular responses done by individuals in response to mutually influential relationships between a person's private values, public structures, and social narratives. Clarke explained that; "identity is at once a complex matter of the social and the individual, of discourse and practice, of reification and participation, of similarity and difference, of agency and structure, of fixity and transgression, of the singular and the multiple, and of the synoptic and the dynamic" (2009, p. 189). Coping, transgressing, actively accepting an educational policy, and all points between and beyond are consistent with the multitude of possibilities an ecological approach to understanding teacher agency allows. Although Archer noted that inaction is still worthy of examination because it could speak to environmental factors that encourage compliance or constraining contradictions which require the elimination of certain ideologies (2007), it should be noted that past studies on student behavior have emphasized the exercise of agency that results in social reproduction (MacLeod, 2009; Willis, 1977). As such, inaction, omission, and decontextualization were included as factors of analysis in this study.

Since teachers are not the only persons within an educational policy ecology, the words, decisions, and other forms of taking up discourses as done by policymakers, state and local administrators, and even families are related to teachers' understanding of themselves as

professionals and the forms of agency they deem as appropriately responsive. In Lasky's

sociocultural approach to agency, she argued; "Individual agency to change a context is possible

in the ways people act to affect their immediate settings through using resources that are

culturally, socially, and historically developed (2005, p. 900). Discussions of teachers' personal

and professional selves, then, can be enhanced by considering them not as sole by-products of

the environments in which they work but also as participants within structurally and

ideologically complex environments. For example, a teacher's ability to implement a policy

with fidelity is a matter not only of their qualification or willingness, but is also a matter of how

their agency to do so is supported or inhibited by the structural conditions in which they work. A

highly trained, experienced teacher with a demonstrated record of facilitating high levels of

student success can find it difficult to enact a policy if their professional agency to utilize

instructional resources and to exert agency on behalf of their students is stymied. Conversely,

open communication between teachers and administrators, policies that are both locally and

ideologically responsive to students' and teachers' needs or even grassroots level efforts to

exercise civic engagement can result in teachers being seen as rightful actors within educational

policy. I acknowledge both directions of influence within the sociocultural ecology of

educational policy.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to make central the perspectives of urban teachers working in a school operating under the Title I School Improvement Grant concerning. In particular, the study focused on the grant's implementation, its effects on their personal and professional understandings of self, and the meaning-making they did around the grant's approach to school reform. The original research question guiding the study was "What effects does the implementation of Title I School Improvement Grant's Turnaround Model in urban high schools have on successful urban teachers' personal and professional selves and/or the forms of agency they employ?" Due to unanticipated changes in the research process, the site and scope of the study shifted which required an adjustment to that research question.

After securing administrative permission to conduct the study in a particular city and after visiting the two agreed upon schools, all efforts to communicate with site-specific administrators, and the point of contact at the school district were met with silence. The timing of the district's effectual withdrawal from the research agreement precluded my immediate ability to secure a different site and complete all research activity according to my anticipated timeframe. While I was never informed why I could no longer conduct the study at this initial research site, the punitive political contexts surrounding this initial site were the same ones described by the eventual participants. Districts and the general public were aware of the pilot implementation of a policy whereby the state assumed emergency control of one district with plans to expand said policy to the entire state. State surveillance, threats to local control, and the pressure to prove the worth of state takeover policies understandably contribute to an atmosphere of mistrust, especially mistrust of outsiders such as myself. I am of the strong opinion that a localized fear of surveillance and the impact of becoming a byword for government overreach

played a role in the loss of those original research sites. Nevertheless, I am grateful to those

district administrators and principals. Despite having to experience the fallout of losing this site,

I wish great measures of success to them, their students, and the communities they serve. In

hindsight, the experience solidified my conviction that the policies and cultural politics of urban

education are of interest (for multiple reasons) and consequence to the entire institution of

education.

When negotiations were initiated with a second school district, Hamilton Mills Public

Schools, two Turnaround sites were made available which would have allowed the original two-

site research design to remain intact. However, after confirming participation with both the

district and principal of one site, conducting an interview with that principal, and attending a pre-

school orientation where completed student and parent surveys were collected, efforts to further

negotiate data collection were not reciprocated. It was at this point I decided to concentrate all

research efforts on the remaining site, Riverview High School. The core concern embedded in

the original research question- the relationship between educational policies and teacher's sense

of self was left intact, however, the research question was revised to account for Riverview's

history as a school that was placed under both the Transformation and Turnaround SIG models.

The research question was revised to read; How do successful urban teachers describe their

experiences working in a school operating under the Title I School Improvement Grant program?

Supporting questions were retooled in order to account for the shift from a multiple-site case

study to a descriptive case study. These supporting questions included;

(1) What factors do teachers believe contributed to the school's history of student

achievement?

(2) How do teachers' experiences with localized interpretations and forms of policy

implementation impact their understanding of school reform efforts?

(3) How did the time periods under the Transformation Model and then the Turnaround

Model enhance or inhibit the teachers' capacity to improve student outcomes?

(4) How, if at all, do the teachers understand their experiences as a SIG school in relation

to larger trends of educational policies related to urban schools?

Together, these questions are consistent with what Wong (2013) called "witnessing policy in action" because they shift educational research towards the meaning-making urban teachers do in response to reform models that have only been funded and implemented since the 2010-2011 academic year. In this chapter, I describe the research design and methodology guiding this study. Specifically, the discussion in this chapter will address the following issues: (1) the rationale for a case study approach, (2) the construction of the research sample, (3) the types of data needed and means of data collection, (4) data analysis and, (5) the study's trustworthiness and limitations.

Rationale for a Case Study Methodology

Using a qualitative approach to address these questions is appropriate because "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). The centrality of the human experience in the world and the socially-embedded construction of meaning are consistent with the study's purpose to explore successful urban teachers' experiences within and meaning-making of the SIG program. My decision to avoid deficit-based rhetoric of urban teachers and to view teachers as educational policy analysts and actors in the research design are reflective of Denzin, Lincoln, and Giardina's description of

critical qualitative research that is concerned with "learning how to dismantle, deconstruct and decolonize traditional ways of doing science, learning that research is always already both moral and political…" (2006, p. 770). In this study, political and social actions as well as discourses concerning schooling, teachers, learners, and communities are equally open for analysis.

This study was conducted as a descriptive single case study with embedded units of analysis to (1) acknowledge each teachers' professional trajectories and meaning-making, and (2) honor the unique histories and contexts of the school district and state while maintaining a focus on the larger social and political contexts in which schools and schooling are situated. Yin (2014) explained that "as a research method, the case study is used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena" (2014, p. 4). In this study, a specific educational policy was examined as a phenomena teachers experience as individuals and as members of a profession whose work is contextualized at multiple levels. The view of teachers as policy analysts was an intentional research design decision taken to acknowledge teachers' multiple roles in schooling and the blurred lines that would work to designate them either as implementers of policy or as educational figures with the expertise needed to be involved in policy decisions. This move was consistent with the definition of a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon ('the case') in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (Yin, 2014, p. 16). Each teacher, then, represents a unit of study whose experiences and meaning-making contribute to the description a localized experience with an educational policy that is implemented across this country.

Research Sample

Utilizing information from the Department of Education's Office of School Turnaround, I identified five schools within the district that had been placed under either the Transformation or Turnaround SIG Model. All six teacher participants in this study worked at the same high school. Teachers were primarily identified using the process of Community Nomination (Foster, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2009) whereby Riverview High School students, parents/guardians, and administrators, in recognition of the formal and informal modes of teacher assessment, first ranked teacher qualities according to their conceptualization of teacher excellence and then named teachers they felt represented those top-ranked qualities. The volatility in teacher retention among urban schools made Community Nomination a useful means of identifying a sample group because the recognition of excellence in teaching by students and family members, whose interests are enmeshed in the overall condition of the school community, was a more productive and authentic sampling method than random or convenience sampling.

To account for the effect of typical levels of teacher turnover and the replacement of staff required by the SIG Turnaround Model, only students and the parents/guardians of students who had been enrolled at Riverview for a minimum of two years. The two-year eligibility requirement restricted student and parent/guardian nominations to those who could, if they chose to do so, nominate teachers who would have been employed at Riverview prior to the Turnaround Model. Parent/guardian and student survey-takers were recruited during the school's open house and orientation meetings with student recruitment also taking place during five class periods after the school year begun. School administrators represented (1) the sanctioned authority figures who have been tasked with identifying high-performing teachers, (2) those who exercised a measure of authority in the hiring and dismissal of teachers, and (3) the authority

figures whose employment status was directly bounded with the improvement of student outcomes. The two-year eligibility requirement was not applied to administrators because their inclusion was primarily based on their roles as teacher evaluators and facilitators of teacher support efforts. Based on a total of 63 student surveys, 15 parent surveys and 3 school administrator surveys, 52 teachers were nominated.

A tally was taken for every teacher named in that list and four teachers were identified as having the highest number of nominations. Their length of service at Riverview was learned during the initial contact to confirm that each teacher had been at employed there since 2012 in order to be certain they could speak from experience concerning, at least, the Turnaround Model. Two of those community-nominated teachers, Liv and Barbara were designated as Nominated Beginners because they have taught at Riverview High School for less than 5 years. Mike and Claire, the other two community-nominated teachers, were designated as Nominated Historians because they have taught at Riverview High School for more than 5 years. The significance of having taught at this specific site for five or more years draws from the timeline of the SIG process. Riverview High School was officially placed under the Transformation Model during the 2010-2011 academic year. Five years, then, would be the indication that the teacher participant was able to share reflections about the introduction, implementation and effects of the reform efforts as well as the school/district dynamics directly prior to the grant from personal experience. Two additional teachers were included in this study even though the community-nomination process did not result in their receiving the highest number of votes. Sarah and Morgan both received a high number of nominations and were directly referred for participation by administrators and teachers based on their longevity at Riverview and involvement in the school's infrastructure. In this way, they would be able to speak about changes in the school

across time and the implementation of the SIG models particularly. Finally, Sarah and Morgan, were designated as Un-Nominated Historians and have taught at Riverview for 15 and 19 years, respectively.

Data Collection

As stated, the purpose of this study was to explore a sample of urban teachers' perceptions of the Title I School Improvement Grant, the effects of the grant's implementation on their personal and professional selves, and their meaning-making around the grant's approach to school reform. To that end, it was necessary to analyze official documentation describing the grant's structure, regulations, and interpretations at the federal and district levels. School improvement plans and data reports were reviewed to consider the district's areas of academic concern prior to the grant and in the years since to contextualize teachers' narratives about school improvement efforts. Local newspaper articles were analyzed in light of the district and school's roles as the managers and providers of a public good. These articles were used to confirm dates, the names and actions of figures cited by the participants, and to glean the tone of public narratives concerning the district, school, and teachers (see Appendix C). This use of documentation as a source of evidence is consistent with Yin's assertion that; "For case study research the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from others sources" (2014, p. 107). This was accomplished by confirming spellings for titles and organizations, highlighting areas that needed greater probing because the documents corroborated or contradicted information from other data sources, and by utilizing the information contained in those documents to create methodological and analytical notes to inform later phases of data collection. Finally, surveys completed by administrators, students, and parents were primarily reviewed for the teachers they nominated to participate in the core

part of the study. Federal and district-provided school data was a final source of data analysis conducted to describe the school and district context.

Each teacher participant completed the portion of the community-nomination survey that asked them to rank teacher qualities and participated in a series of three semi-structured interviews. Teachers were interviewed twice as individuals and then participated in a focus group interview. One teacher was unavailable for either of the focus group interview dates and stated they were unavailable for any after-school interview. This teacher agreed to participate in a third individual interview in order to answer the questions posed during the focus group interview. The individual semi-structured teacher interviews were conducted based on two interview protocols. The first individual interview protocol included the completion of the survey and focused on grand tour questions constructed in order to prompt discussion about the teachers' path into the teaching profession, their general teaching tenure, their experiences and activities at Riverview High School and their general recollections about the specific time period during which the Turnaround and Transformation Models were implemented. The second individual interview protocol circled back to points raised during the initial interview that needed clarification and then shifted to questions centered on the teachers' professional goals, perceived aids and hindrances to reaching those goals during the grant period, additional questions concerning the Transformation and Turnaround processes and, their motivations for staying at Riverview High School.

The final interview with teachers represented a shift from the teachers' opinions about themselves and their perceptions of the Transformation's and Turnaround's impact on their work as individuals to broader questions about teacher quality, support and accountability, urban school reform writ large, and considerations about the utility of school reform models that

require the dismissal of administrators and at least 50% of teachers. In so doing, the focus group interview protocol functioned as a discursive space where the teacher participants considered nuances of school reform beyond the specific context of their school and district. Their focus group responses contributed to the overall study by providing insight into the teachers' views on the assumptions and structure of school reform models constructed similarly to the SIG program. A total of 15.7 hours of teacher interview data were collected (13 hours of personal interviews and 2.7 hours of focus group interviews).

Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis occurred in simultaneous and iterative cycles. School data reports, grant applications, and school improvement plans were analyzed for trends in academic outcomes, significant figures at various points in the application and implementation processes, grant requirements, and localized decisions taken to comply with those requirements. Local newspapers were instrumental in assessing the tone, across time, between superintendents and multiple levels of the school structure, including teachers. They were also analyzed to determine policy decisions as they varied according to district leadership and time. These documents were used in conjunction with interview data to identify gaps, points of contradiction, and to confirm teacher narrative content.

Recorded interviews were reviewed immediately for topics or narratives needing clarification or greater detail and for appropriate adjustments to the subsequent interview with each individual. After the first round of interviews was finalized, questions related to the chronologies presented in the narratives and specific school or district initiatives were analyzed across interviews in search of patterns and points of divergence. The second round of individual interviews included questions not posed during the first interview, questions for clarification or

more detail around the Title I SIG implementation specific to the site and district, and questions designed to elicit narratives about the significance of SIG policy interpretation and implementation. Audio recordings of the focus group interviews were immediately reviewed for consistencies and inconsistencies between the descriptions and meaning-making done by participants during their individual interviews in order to consider the effect of group dynamics on what individuals choose to co-sign, counter, share or not. Throughout the interviews, teachers were presented with alternative explanations in order to gauge reactions to contrasting perceptions as expressed by other participants and alternative explanations related to dominant narratives about teacher accountability.

Interview transcripts were coded using the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software program, Dedoose. Initial codes were created and defined using Descriptive (Topic) Coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994). This Cycle of coding focused on events related to the SIG implementation, authority figures, work setting descriptions, relationships with school and district administrators, students and fellow teachers, emotional states, and perceived causes/effects of the grant. Examples of those codes included School or District Changes across Time, Support and Resources for Teachers, Notification, Loss, and Trauma. These codes were applied to the pre-SIG, Transformation, Turnaround, and post-SIG time periods in order to review narratives chronologically regardless of whether or not they contributed to a particular pattern. A second cycle of coding was then done according to Evaluation Coding which Patton describes as "the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgements about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming. Policies, organizations, and personnel can also be evaluated" (2002, p. 2). This coding cycle focused on arranging policy decisions in

relation to figures and dates, the perceived consequences of the SIG program as implemented at Riverview- intended or unintended, positive or negative, the circumstances teachers associated with the school's declining academic profile, and teachers' perceptions concerning the presumed necessity of mandated removals of principals and teachers in school reform policy writ large. Ultimately, two themes emerged: (1) Teachers' Ecological Understanding of SIG Brands' Assumptions, and (2) Personal, Professional and Sociocultural Consequences of SIG Brands of Reform. These themes and accompanying codes were then (1) delineated chronologically to consider their relations to discrete grant periods, (2) compared to specific aspects of policy including notification, implementation, key figures, and processes. In order to consider the themes' and codes' relevance to teachers' experiences outside of the official grant period, additional analyses were done to identify potential patterns in the ways teachers discussed how their experiences may have been connected to their descriptions of the school both prior to and after the grant.

Issues of Bias and Trustworthiness

Efforts to protect the rights and privacy of all participants were of utmost importance. All participants were informed their participation was completely voluntary. All survey-takers were informed verbally and in the written consent form that their responses would not be shared with any school administrator or teacher. They were also informed they only needed to share their name and contact information if they were willing to be contacted at a later date for an interview. Teachers were informed that I would not share with them the names of nominating individuals and that the content of the audio recordings and anything discussed "off-record" would not be shared or relayed to the administrators. Transcripts were written and pseudonyms

were assigned to all named parties and organizations. Audio files, interview transcripts, and the master pseudonym list have been securely stored and are accessible only to the researcher.

I do not claim to enter this study completely unbiased. My academic training has consistently been in the field of education and I have consistently chosen to work in urban school districts. My training and academic trajectory have made urban schools an obvious and rewarding choice for this study. To account for biases I consciously or unconsciously bring to bear, I employed three forms of searching for discrepant evidence and negative cases. Maxwell explained the value of these attempts to reduce researcher bias in his claim that there is a "need to rigorously examine both the supporting and discrepant data to assess whether it is more plausible to retain or modify the conclusion" (2012, p. 127). I consulted with others at multiple points during data collection and analysis to receive feedback about my methods, logic, and analyses. Conducting ongoing reviews of teacher narratives in order to test one participant's recollection and/or meaning-making against those of others allowed instances of contradictions and confirmation to arise- even if those contradictions occurred across interviews with the same participant. Finally, I conducted member checks by sharing written transcripts with participants and inviting them to correct, clarify, or expound on specific excerpts.

I sought narratives that stood in direct contrast to emerging patterns in order to consider each teacher's individual personal and professional histories. Patton noted;

> "triangulation of data sources within qualitative methods will seldom lead to a single, totally consistent picture. The point is to study and understand when and why there are differences… At the same time, consistency in overall patterns of data from different sources, and reasonable explanations for differences in data

from divergent sources, contribute significantly to the overall credibility of

findings (1999, p. 1195).

In light of this, data that was not related to the research questions was considered to be beyond

the scope of personal or professional reactions to the grant were set aside. Furthermore,

contextual data such as the recollection of specific dates or figures that could not be confirmed

by documentation analyses or other participant were not included. There was no effort, however,

to suppress differences of opinions in either direction in regards to the policy itself, its

implementation, nor in regards to local figures.

Chapter IV: Research Context and Teacher Participant Profiles

Introduction

National trends representing schools that have received SIG funding indicate over 45% of the awards were applied to high schools, and that 56% of those high schools were located in cities (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, p. 9). This study relied on data collected from and about teachers employed in a single high school located in a large Midwestern city which adopted a school improvement plan under the guidelines of the SIG program. The Department of Education distinguishes between small, mid-sized and large cities but the terms urban and inner-city are terms also used, interchangeably, to describe geographic locales and school districts such as the one featured in this study. According to the US Census Bureau, just over 80% of the U.S. population lives in "urbanized areas," which are described as densely developed areas with at least 50,000 residents. The site from which the high school for this study was chosen is one of those 486 urbanized (US Census Bureau Public Information, 2012). I intentionally used the term "urban" to not only describe a densely populated geographic locale but in full recognition of the subtle, sometimes racist use of coded language that employs the term to signify poor, majority-minority areas. In this way, I have left theoretical and empirical room to represent the school as a site embedded in a community of flesh-and-blood people (versus mere statistics) with a unique history of complex social and political influences.

District

Hamilton Mills Public Schools (HMPS) is located in the Midwest and is situated in the city of Fordham. Fordham is home to several universities and serves as the base for nationally-recognized companies. The city's median family income falls just below $40,000 and there is a 13.2% unemployment rate among its residents (U. S. Census Bureau, 2013). The city

experienced a nearly 5% decrease in overall population between the 2000 and 2010 Census but still boasts a population well over 150,000 people. Table 2 outlines this population shift, specifically highlighting a general decrease in all racial/ethnic communities with the exception of Asian and Latin@ residents which grew by 9.39% and 13.34 % respectively (U. S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2010).

Table 2: *Fordham Population Shifts 2000-2010*

	2000	**2010**	**% Change**
White (Non-Latin@)	133,116	121,411	-8.8%
Black/African American	40,373	39,251	-2.78%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1,454	1,390	-4.40%
Asian	3,195	3,495	+9.39%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	238	116	-51.20%
Hispanic/Latino	25,818	29,261	+13.34%
TOTAL	197,800	188,040	-4.93%

The district oversees the education of well over 15,000 students and offers the greatest number of school choices in the state.   In similar fashion to its host city, HMPS is experiencing declining enrollment. Beginning in the early 2000s, the district saw a loss of 7,000 students and closed 25 schools and programs. More recently, HMPS lost nearly 8.5% of its student population between the 2010-2011 and 2012-2013 academic years but it should be noted the year-to-year losses have steadily declined with only a 1.04% loss between the 2013-2014 and

2014-2015 academic years ("Student Summary," n.d.). Table 3 provides greater detail about

racial/ethnic shifts within that general decline in student population as experienced at Riverview

High School. This table is consistent with teachers' recollections of historical changes at the

school and the population shifts experienced in the city of Fordham. HMPS also

Table 3: *Riverview High School Students: Racial/Ethnic Demographic Trends*

	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
African American	22	23	22	22	22
Hispanic/Latino	36	29	48	51	52
White	31	26	21	17	16
2 or More Races	9	20	7	8	8
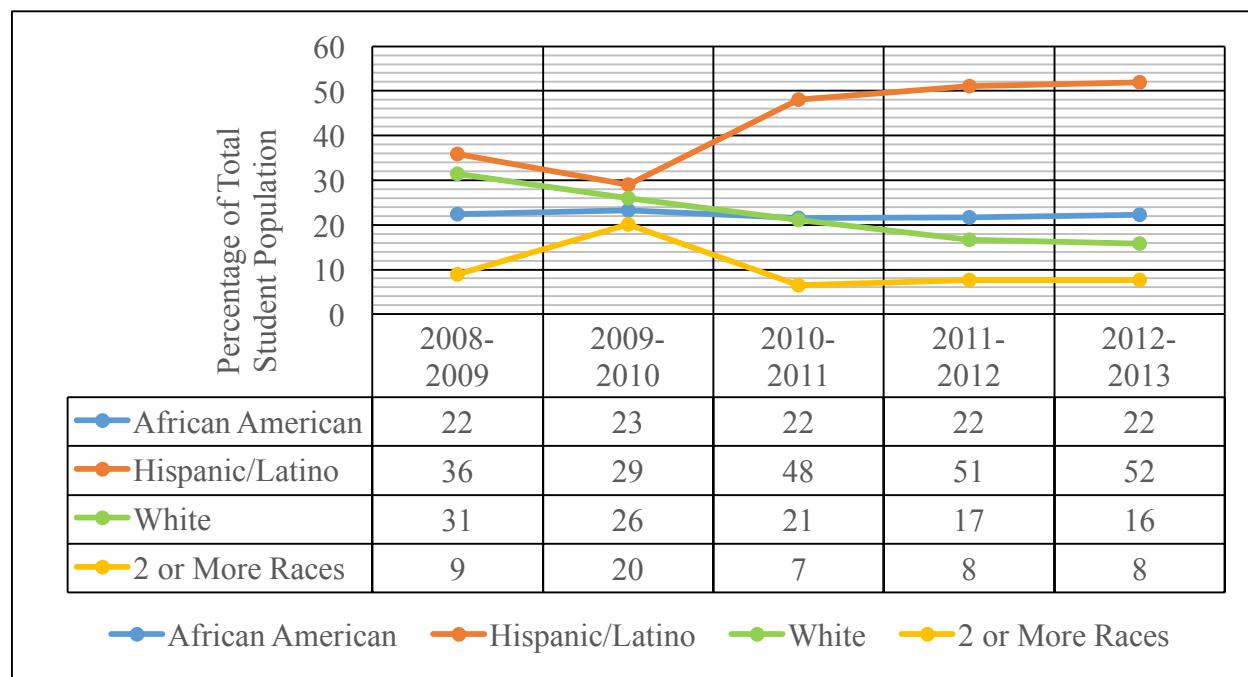
experienced an overall decline in teacher employment. In 2007, the district implemented

systemic changes developed in partnership with a university and non-profit organization. Since

2007, teachers have experienced different levels of employment loss with distinct lines along

racial categories. Table 4 ("Staffing Summary," n.d.) shows staffing levels by race have

remained relatively stable with the exception of Black/African-American teachers whose

representation decreased by 31.5%. During the same time period, the total number of teachers

employed by the district has decreased by 11.7% with a 6.4% decrease in the number of White

teachers.

Table 4: *Hamilton Mills Public Schools' Teachers by Race 2007-2013*

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
■ American Indian/ Alaskan Native	9	7	7	7	7	7	8
■ Asian	19	22	21	20	20	19	19
■ African-American/Black	165	152	136	104	100	113	113
■ Hispanic/ Latino	61	61	60	61	55	60	60
■ Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
■ Multi-Racial	15	0	0	0	0	0	0
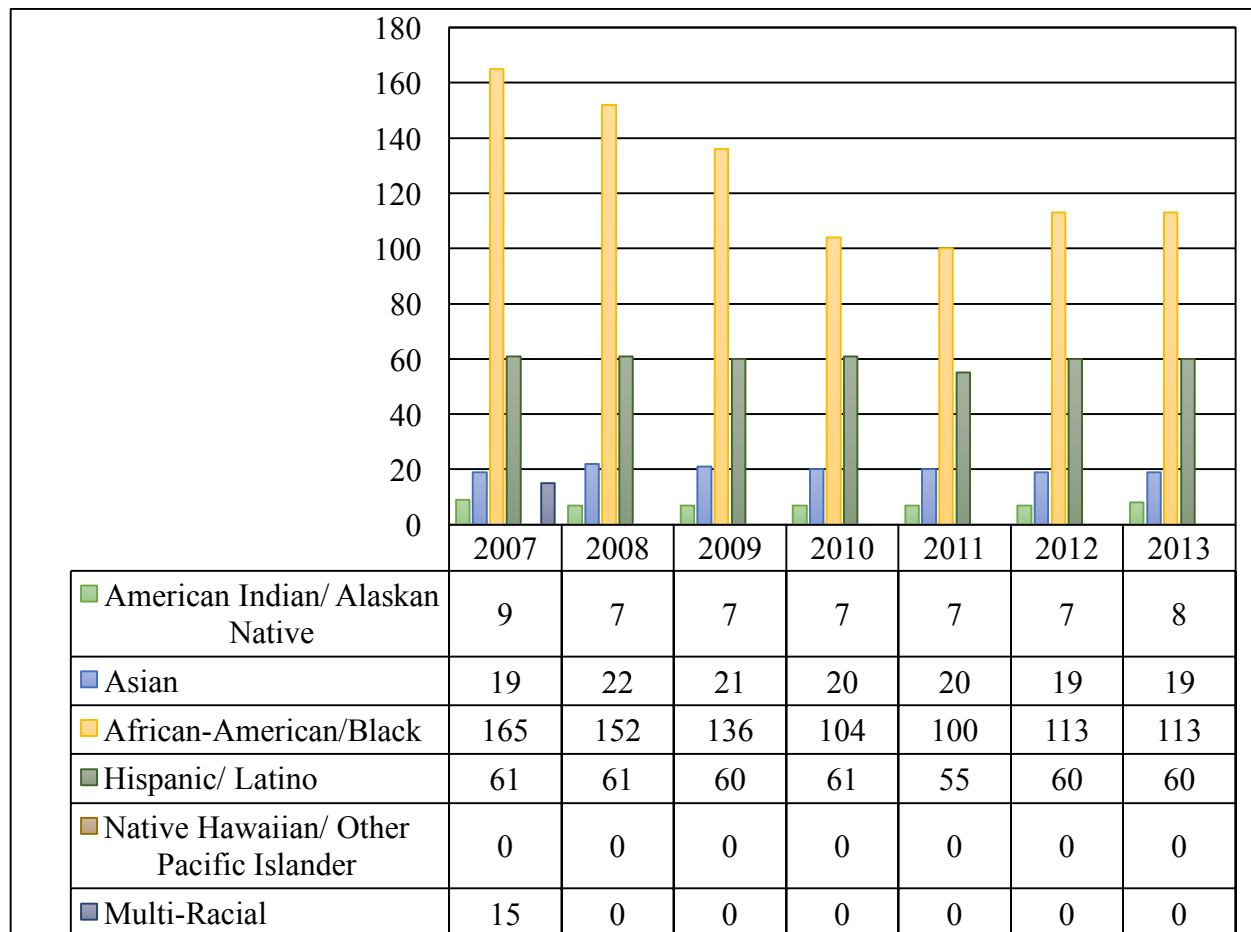
In 2012, the district's superintendent revealed a transformation plan based on community forums, student achievement, fiscal gains and challenges, and feedback stemming from an external consultant's quality report. The plan called for the closure of ten schools, modifications to the district's in-progress use of Title I School Improvement Grant funds, an expansion of its International Baccalaureate offerings, the closure/re-opening of schools, and an exploration of district-authorized use of non-profit charter schools among other actions. The introduction of this district-wide plan was significant for Riverview High School because one component of the plan called for the school's transition from the SIG Transformation Model to the Turnaround Model.

School

Based on fall 2009 enrollment data, Riverview High School's student body hovered above 950 students. This represents a loss of nearly a quarter of the school's 2005-2006 enrollment. 83% of students (up from 66% in 2005-2006) receive free/reduced lunch. The school has experienced a dramatic and consistent decrease in White student enrollment since 2005 (42% down to 26%) with moderate increases in Black/African American representation (16% to 23%). According to the school's data profile for the year following the district's application for SIG funding, there was a consistent five-year decrease in the Latino/Hispanic student population with the stipulation that many who had previously been classified as Latino/Hispanic were later reported as Multiracial. At the time of the district's SIG application submission, 27% of Riverview's students were considered to have limited proficiency in English.

During this time period, Riverview High School was considered one of the state's persistently lowest-performing schools. Even with a graduation rate topping 70% for the 2009 cohort, Riverview struggled to bring its students to satisfactory proficiency levels across multiple content areas. The state's merit-based standardized test scores, seen in Table 5, demonstrate the school's need for an intervention. Across all subject areas, there was a consistent pattern of underperformance regardless of race. For example, only 19% of Riverview students demonstrated Math proficiency. Although 0% of the school's Black/African-American students were proficient in Math, and only 22% of its English Language Learners were proficient in Math, only 48% of highest-performing group, White students, were proficient that year.

Statistics such as these show the very serious need for changes at Riverview. Even as the host of a self-contained newcomers program for students with limited English proficiency, Riverview experienced clear difficulty in facilitating their success- at least as measured by

Table 5: *2010 Percentages of Student Proficiency by Subject Area*

	Math	Reading	Writing	Science	English Language Arts
White	48%	57%	46%	51%	48%
Black/African-American	0%	32%	11%	4%	18%
Hispanic/Latino	19%	23%	15%	13%	17%
English Language Learners	11%	6%	6%	4%	3%
Economically Disadvantaged	21%	36%	23%	22%	26%
All Subgroups	19%	45%	20%	15%	22%

standardized tests. When articulating goals based on student performance on this same test, an executive summary authored by the school noted, "In all assessment areas, the African American, Hispanic, ELL, and Economically Disadvantaged subgroups need improvement in reading and writing in the content areas as well as math." Riverview students' overall proficiency levels and that of the White subgroup, however, clearly show that the racialized minority and poor students were not the only ones having difficulty achieving academic success. This view of the school's goals overlooks (minimizes) the White students' underperformance

and highlights the academic gaps in a way that, even if the school was completely closed, would still leave the school in dire need of a systematic overhaul

Teachers

82% of Riverview teachers during the 2009-2010 school year held at least a master's degree. The vast majority were White (94%, 3% Black/African American and 3% Asian), and there was a nearly even divide between male and female representation. One-third of the teaching staff had been employed at Riverview for one year or less. Even though 18% of the teaching staff had been at Riverview for 2-3 years, the combined 51% of those with 3 years of less experience at the school belies the teachers' overall level of experience. Table 6 compares the teachers' tenure at Riverview and their overall number of years in the profession. This table shows that although the teaching staff had many years of experience within the teaching profession, the majority were relatively new to the specific contextual history of Riverview.

Table 6: *Riverview High School Teachers' Years and Locale of Professional Experience- 2009*

	3 years or less	**4-10 Years**	**11+ years**
Years of Teaching at Riverview	51%	33%	15%
Years of Overall Teaching Experience	6%	39%	54%

Teacher Profiles

Six Riverview teachers, representing a range of years within the profession as well as a range in their tenure specifically at Riverview, constituted the individual cases of this collective case study. What follows are brief profiles of each teacher with descriptions of their professional background, content areas, school life participation, and personal identity markers.

Liv

Liv was a White female, fifteen-year teaching veteran with three of those years in service at Riverview High School. Although her tenure at Riverview had been relatively short, it represented her second teaching stint in an urban district grappling with persistently low-performing schools. Liv strongly identified herself as an urban teacher and declared, "working in an urban setting is my calling, honestly. And, Riverview is the most rewarding place I've ever worked" (Mike, Liv, & Sarah, 2014). Over her fifteen years of experience, she had taught Business Technology, and Biology courses. She previously taught in Washington Mills Public Schools which fell into over ten million dollars of debt and became the first district in the state to be completely converted into a charter district under the management of a for-profit company. That conversion was in part characterized by nearly all of the district's teachers receiving pink slips. Her next post was Hamilton Mills Public School District's Riverview High School initially as an after-school teacher for a credit recovery course. Her first year at Riverview was the same semester full-time teachers were notified of the district's decision to move from the Transformation into the Turnaround Model. At the time of this study, she taught Academic Strategies and served as a Capturing Kids' Heart coach and member of the school's attendance and retention team.

Barbara

Barbara Taylor was a White female teacher who became a member of Riverview's teaching staff four and a half years ago. She was the school's resident French teacher but had also taught Ethics and credit recovery courses over her twenty years of teaching service. Barbara was the advisor for Riverview's French Club and Junior Class, the head volleyball coach, a member of the Instructional Leadership Team and was the department head for the school's

foreign language, English as a Second Language, Physical Education, Health, Music, and other elective teachers. With a double bachelor's degree in Political Studies and International Relations, a year-long study abroad stint in France bolstering her content area expertise, she pursued Master's and PhD level studies in Second Language Acquisition. After serving as a visiting and adjunct university instructor, she began working in HMPS. When reflecting on the transition from working at a top-ranked university to using her teaching license to become a high school French teacher, Barbara shared:

> I mean, kids who get to that level probably have figured out how to learn. When I got to [HMPS], I just… wow. You feel needed and if you, you know, care half at all about the kids, they're going to care back about you and I just, I don't know. I just got sucked in and I've loved it ever since and every time I think this job is too difficult or too frustrating, I think about my students. And it always brings me back and I just think, 'Would I really love another job as much as I love this one?' (personal communication, Barbara & Morgan, November 19, 2014).

Mike

Mike Williams was Riverview's resident historian of sorts because he had the most years of teaching service among the entire staff. Although Mike said he was actively considering retiring in the near future, his commitment to being part of Riverview's success was evident when he shared; "I started here twenty-two years ago and have always been *determined* to finish here…with the goal of leaving this place in a better situation than what it had been during our 'dark days'" (personal communication, November 11, 2014). All of his twenty-two years of teaching have been at Riverview and, with a STEM collegiate background, he had alternately taught Biology, Geometry and Algebra II and Financial Literacy. He did not serve on any of the

school's committees or student clubs at the time of this study but was quite excited when discussing the time spent outside of the classroom as the manager of his wife's veterinary practice and as an avid outdoorsman. He cited his heritage (Mexican mother, White Father) as being helpful in connecting with Riverview's Chican@/Latin@ students and was also careful to note that he used his personal story of financial independence to help students learn how to interrupt generational patterns of living at or near poverty levels.

Claire

Claire Lewis described herself as a caring, passionate, yet strict teacher. She credited the formation of teacher-student relationships via the establishment of a controlled, supportive classroom as a reason why many students had a positive learning experience with her. Claire had been a teacher twenty-one years, eight of which had been dedicated to teaching 9th grade and AP levels of English at Riverview. The confidence she had, based on her successful instructional record at Riverview, was coupled with a sense of pride in establishing a challenging but supportive learning environment:

> The fact that they come back and talk to me, I think is powerful. It's part of the reason why I'm here. I love that I can walk down the hallway and get stopped fifty times for a hug from kids, from former students. It's just, that's why I'm here. They energize me and I feel like there's a trust factor, that they know that I care about them. Aside from what I teach, I think they know that and that's why I'm here (Claire, 2014b)

Claire completed her student teaching in the Hamilton Mills Public School District and chose to remain in that district for her entire career. With so many years of experience in an urban school district, she felt confident in her ability to build relationships with students across areas of difference and bristled at what she perceived to be a stereotype communicated by a former

HMPS superintendent when they suggested White teachers, like herself, could not identify or build relationships with Black students.

Sarah

Sarah Richardson was a third-generation, White teacher who double majored in English and Political Science and did her student teaching at Riverview while earning her teaching license. She had been at Riverview for fifteen years but had taught for a total of seventeen years. When asked what had kept her at Riverview for so long, she replied, "I love the diversity of the students at Riverview, and I like the relationships with the students. Our students are real and caring people. We make a difference in each other's lives" (Personal communication, Mike, Liv, and Sarah, December 2, 2014). Sarah had taught English for grades 8-12 and had served as both a classroom teacher and an instructional coach. Her two-year term as an instructional coach at Riverview came during the school's transition between the Transformation and Turnaround Models. That role positioned her to interact with the teaching staff, administrators, other instructional coaches and district representatives. As a member of the school's current Instructional Leadership team, she helped develop plans to boost student achievement and school-parent relationships.

Morgan

Morgan Myers was a White female math teacher who had spent nineteen of her twenty years of teaching at Riverview. She had taught Algebra I/II, Geometry and Math for Sports and was an active participant in the school's infrastructure as the Senior Class Advisor and a member of the Instructional Leadership Team. In the past, she was the advisor for the Freshman, Sophomore and Junior Classes as well as the yearbook staff. Although she was not raised in an

urban center, Morgan expressed feeling frustrated when community members indicated they did not appreciate their tax monies being used to support low-performing schools:

> You're either going to put that money into helping develop a solid educational system for these students, so that when they graduate, well, first of all, they *can* graduate and they *can* become productive members of society, that pay taxes, that, you know, that help society. They perform a role in society. Or you're going to pay for them to sit in jail or you're going to pay for them to be on public assistance. You're going to pay. What would you rather pay for (Morgan, 2014)?

Morgan was inspired to pursue a career as a mathematics teacher by a college professor and referenced him when explaining that her goal is to help her students to become self-directed learners who are willing to persist in their studies even when the material does not come to them easily.

Chapter V: Findings: Factors Contributing to Riverview's Underperformance

Introduction

Learning environments spatially and contextually coincide with teaching environments, therefore, understanding the events, figures, and contextual factors of schools and districts from the viewpoints of teachers would contribute to determining which policies are responsive to local needs and how to tailor implementation plans of those policies to address institutional and systemic issues. In this case, these Riverview teachers described an interplay of concerns that necessitated a school improvement plan to address perceived ineptitude and a lack of consistency across multiple levels. The teachers cited the combined effects of population changes, teacher turnover (or push-out) at Riverview, a contentious relationship with a former superintendent, punitive educational policies, the fast-paced adoption and abandoning of multiple reform policies, and a perceived lack of support from school-level administrators as factors that degraded the school's stability. What follows are their views on factors that contributed to the need for interventions such as those outlined in the Title I School Improvement Grant program.

Student Demographics and Educational Policies Associated with Student Diversity

Losses and shifts, according to the teachers, were evident in school leadership and in student demographics. When asked about his opinion of the sudden and significant loss of teachers due to the Turnaround Model's requirements, Mike provided a complex, longitudinal view of what otherwise may have only been seen as a recent issue.

    Mike: Not huge to me. I've watched teachers come and go. I've watched

              administrators come and go. It, we always have a turnover. The first few

              years I was here, we didn't. We had the old guard, I call it. They were

              hardened, older, 'This is what's going to go on' and our, our kids were

less of the poverty-stricken kids. The student parking lot was evident of that. Not that those parents weren't in debt out the wazoo but they were struggling lower middle class to middle class parents.

Tuesda: So the demographics have changed?

Mike: Oh, yeah. We called it White Flight. Called it White Flight. Our White kids that were from the Polish Catholic predominant west side area, they just left and left and left and left and there went our wrestling team and there went our whatever teams that those kids excelled at. And went to St. Peter's and they went to Gilchrist and those families that I knew for the first five or six years, when they saw things going bad, they got out.

Tuesda: So the old guard must not have been in place or something must've happened.

Mike: The old guard, well…

Tuesda: What happened to precipitate that?

Mike: It was so little by little, our leadership changed and the building started to get out of control. And I watched, I watched, I mean, I told you I watched our school fall into an abyss. I used to take pictures of the office with the lights off.

Tuesda: What do you mean?

Mike: Like there's no one in the office. There'd be like twenty, thirty kids, just creating like the worst behavior in the whole school was in front, on the bench in front of that office (personal communication, Mike, November 13, 2014).

The more stable years, according to Mike, were characterized by a predominately White student body who hailed from middle class families and "the old guard-" whom he described as seasoned educators with a clear vision of classroom management and instructional goals. At first glance, his narrative reads as though the exodus of White families was followed by a decline in the quality of education available at Riverview. But, his recollection actually explained that White families began to leave in droves "when they saw things going bad" which suggests that a less engaged, less competent, less stable leadership core precipitated the White Flight. What actually went bad, though, remains unclear because although Mike made a clear connection between the quality of administrative leadership and White Flight, he also mentioned an influx of lesser affluent families within the communities served by Riverview.

While Mike could not speak as a representative of those families that left the district, his understandings of the shifting economic demographics and the district-level monitoring of the school occurring within the microsystem reflected the influence of sociocultural conditions and ideologies that may or may not change over time. White Flight, for example, is not a spontaneous phenomenon. It occurs in response to not only which persons are and are not present in the microsystem but also in response to the ideological assumptions and sociocultural discourses associated with those persons at the macrosystem level. Johnson in his review of neighborhood-institution relationships offered an ecologically-derived "bidirectional flow framework" to describe research that posited an interactional process of influence between schools, educational policies, and the decisions families made concerning where they live (2012). Although prior studies have focused on unidirectional patterns of influence (see Arum's 2000 review of how the field of sociology of education has expanded its conceptualization of community), Mike's description of an intermingled relationship between class, race, residential

patterns, and schooling conditions confirmed prior research that described schools and society as co-creators in other urban centers (Arum, 2000; Hughes, 2006; Leonardo & Hunter, 2007; Sugrue, 2005). This distinction in the processes characterizing relationships between sociocultural shifts and the processes at Riverview to ensure the provision of a physically safe and academically challenging educational context is critical. What Mike described were the interactional influences occurring at the mesosystem level whereby families, teachers, and students act and are acted upon by each other. Mike also described the "abyss" or "dark years" at Riverview as years during which school leaders had contentious relationships with teachers, in part due to the public shaming of teachers. He identified these years as the only time in his tenure that issues of security reached a crisis point, such that he reported having conversations with former superintendents and the union president specifically about teachers' physical safety (personal communication, November 11, 2014).

Sarah, another one of the three long-term Riverview veterans in this study, offered a similar longitudinal view of Riverview. She too spoke of how the school had been effected by the city's population shifts, superintendent choices, and parental choices she ultimately associated with those made by the superintendent.

> **Sarah:** Yeah, we used to have, west side of Fordham was very Polish, very traditional. We drew from, lots of the kids would go from the Catholic schools, K-8 and then they would either go to St. Peter's, Holy Trinity or come here. Lots and lots of students would end up coming here. Parents didn't want to pay the high school tuition by that point. So if you were to ask me, you know, fifteen years ago, what the classroom makeup was, it was predominantly White. Things started to change probably… just

trying to think. I did, I was an educational specialist, assistant principal here for four years. So that was when my kids were young. Probably around that time, so that would've been about 2002-2006 or so… started to change. And then as the city changed, of course, it started to be predominantly Hispanic population and now, obviously, predominantly Hispanic population. Smithfield High School was definitely African American. Wilson, African American. Buckley High School, Hispanic. And so of those, those four traditional high schools at the time, the students did not want to cross the river so that's part of the reason why Riverview looks the way that it does as far as the demographic and so on. Hispanic families tended to come to the west side of Fordham as they started to come to Fordham. And so we're the only west side school, west side high school. When they closed Smithfield that was a big issue because, you know, here Smithfield was a successful school but they couldn't close Riverview because they would've probably lost a whole population of Hispanic students. So yeah, it's, it's really changed over, really, fifteen years is not that long for a school to change and it's dramatically changed.

…

Tuesda: What have been some of the consequences?

Sarah: We, we lost, we used to have a very successful small school art program here and that went away. Band, orchestra, choir, some of those things went away when Dr. Johnson was here and we did the hubs. We lost, we

had art classes here but then the music stuff was over in another building.

So after school, their last, their 6th hour class, if they were in an elective,

they had to trans- go to another school (personal communication,

November 13, 2014).

According to Sarah's account, the Polish, White families who typically paid for a private, Catholic education enrolled their children at Riverview. Sarah and Mike both accurately perceived a shift in the school's racial demographics. Sarah noted, however, that the population shift was not solely one of economic class. The early-mid 2000's marked what she saw as a shift towards the majority of students being of Latin@/Chican@ heritage. According to recent school data analysis reports, 50% of Riverview's White student population left within a five year period (2007/2008- 2010/2011). Within this same time period, the Latin@/Chican@ student population increased from 36% to 49%. These statistics confirm Mike and Sarah's comments even though the timeframe of the student population shift was slightly different than that which they recalled.

In keeping with the influence sociocultural conditions and discourses exert on educational policies, the Policy as Discourse theory argues educational policies can be considered as social artifacts (Gillborn, 2009; Peters, 2007). Sarah's narrative reflected the intersectional nature of those issues in that she discussed demographic shifts in Riverview's student population as being connected to district policy decisions made in response to those shifts. The hubs Sarah spoke of were put into place under the leadership of Superintendent Johnson. Riverview High School was designated and the district's visual arts hub but was converted to a small school of design and construction in 2009. The school of design and construction was then moved to a different school beginning in the fall of 2013. According to the hub plan, students were transported during the day from their home school to one of five

hubs in order to take elective courses. Sarah explained that the district's decision to convert schools into hubs was in place for three years during which the loss of a vibrant musical arts department frustrated parents and students who were not interested in the school's new emphasis on visual arts. According to local newspaper articles, HMPS parents became very disgruntled with the hub policy not only because their children would have to be transported to and from their home school (which essentially lengthened the school day) but also because the policy did not afford students with the flexibility to easily take classes in different categories of electives (both visual and performing arts, for example) or participate in an athletic program at their home school if they chose to take an elective housed at a different building. The timing of this policy, according to Sarah, coincided with Riverview families transferring their children to other Hamilton Mills Public Schools or other districts altogether due to the additional time students spent in transit, the hub policy's curricular inflexibility, and because of severed partnerships for the arts with a local college and the city's art council. As an artifact of a specific superintendent's vision, the hub policy was an administrative practice that over a period of time contributed to a lower overall enrollment level at Riverview, and the loss of choir, band, and orchestra teachers. Although the district's interpretation of the SIG Turnaround Model which required the removal of half of Riverview's teachers was in compliance with the policy's guidelines, the timing of the required dismissal of teachers came on the heels of declines in both student enrollment and academic achievement.

While administrative decisions expressly based on sociocultural shifts are not inherently problematic, they can prove to be a contentious political move in that inaction or a specific action may detrimentally tip the scales between what research describes as corrective and equitable attention for certain student populations and the popular demand for an emphasis on

collective, public goods grounded in meritocracy, and patriotism (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2004; Labaree, 1997). All six of the teacher participants cited the ethnic, racial, and linguistic diversity of Riverview as a point of pride. They often said it was part of the reason they enjoyed working at Riverview but also claimed that district decisions and the structural organization of federal school accountability either failed to offer proper support, or worse yet, penalized the school for being diverse. 27% of the students enrolled at Riverview during the year immediately preceding receipt of SIG funds were considered to be English Language Learners. This is likely due to the fact that Riverview was the district's designated cultural center meaning any high school student in the district who needs language services can be enrolled at Riverview. The school housed the district's only Newcomers program designed to acclimate students to U.S. American culture and to meet graduation requirements. Students were eligible for the Newcomers program if they; (1) were fifteen years or older, (2) met the WIDA English language proficiency level of Entering, (3) were newly arrived to the United States, and (4) had an interrupted, minimal or no formal education background. Students stayed in the program for one year and were then placed in mainstream courses with ESL support. Although the teachers were proud to work in such a racially, linguistically, and ethnically diverse school, they also noted that the school was placed under a greater level of scrutiny than other schools because Riverview was the district's primary destination for English Language Learners.

Barbara and Morgan discussed what they considered to be a punitive overlapping of NCLB accountability measures and a district organizational structure that responded to the district's growing levels of ethnic and linguistic diversity. They discussed what they saw as the unfair requirement to enroll a Haitian student in mainstream classes. According to them, the young lady was very much an Emergent English Language Learner who was ineligible to be a

part of the school's Newcomers program, which would have provided intensive language instruction and support, because she had received some formal K-8 education prior to coming to the United States of America. This student was discussed in context of the larger issue of the district's requirement that students could only be in the Newcomers Program for one year before being placed in mainstream classrooms where their standardized test scores would be incorporated into the school's overall evaluation. The inclusion of ELLs with lower levels of proficiency, who were often refugees, in mainstream classes was problematic because Barbara and Morgan felt the students were not receiving enough language support and because they felt the inclusion of their test scores contributed to an inaccurate portrayal of student achievement at Riverview. Here, Barbara and Morgan extended their critique of the policy structure by discussing flaws in its implementation and what they considered to be NCLB's restrictive view of teacher accountability and student achievement:

> **Barbara:** And that's if they show up in September. If they're, if they come in, like in January, they're in that freshman cohort or that first year cohort…
>
> **Tuesda:** For the remainder of that school year and then they have to be…
>
> **Barbara:** …they can be exited out of it. Very next, the very following September, they're in regular classes.
>
> **Tuesda:** Interesting.
>
> **Barbara:** With ESL support. We have kids show up June 1st and they're still in the same year as the kids who showed up in September.
>
> **Morgan:** So you know, like I said, the idea of No Child Left Behind, the ultimate heart behind it is good. None of us want to see children left behind.

But that looks different for different students in different places. And

so that's, you know, that's an example (personal communication

November 19, 2014).

Although they were speaking about a current student, Barbara and Morgan described a student

support structure they felt continued to punish English Language Learners in that regardless of

how much prior formal education a student may have had or the quality of that education, they

would be deemed ineligible to participate in the Newcomers Program. The structure was also

described as detrimental to students' growth because regardless of when the student was enrolled

at Riverview during the academic year, the remainder of that academic year was considered to be

their only eligible year to receive concentrated language support.

　　　　Structures and policies that are considered as punitive to students are likely to be

considered as punitive to teachers because of the shared physical, political, social and

institutional contexts. This was the case in Morgan and Barbara's assessment of the

Newcomer's Program. The consequences they described for Riverview's teachers pivoted on the

school-specific effects of reducing needed language support for English Language Learners

while requiring them to meet standardized test score expectations at the same pace as other

students.

Morgan: Whether it's language or whether it is, you know, a learning disability

or whatever, why is it wrong then for them to take a little extra time to

get to those same goals? But the way it's set up now, our school is

penalized. If they don't finish in the same time and take the test at the

same rate.

Barbara: And get the same benchmark score in that timeframe, we're penalized.

Tuesda: What are the associated penalties for teachers?

Morgan: You get put on the priority list which then if you're on the priority list long enough, turns into your 50% turnover.

Barbara: Yup.

Morgan: Which could then turn into the state coming in and taking over your school.

Barbara: Or you have to go to more professional development. The implication being that you're a poorer teacher. That's the impression, right? If you work in a priority school that means you're not doing a good enough job. And that's not true. And you're penalizing everybody in the building based on something that's really not their fault, you know.

Morgan: I mean, we've had more professional development in the last six to eight years in this building.

Barbara: Oh, God, it's terrible.

…

Morgan: But yeah, the implication is, you know, and again, they don't want to take into account. The system is skewed against urban education because if you… They look at your scores based on subgroups and if you go out to a Hillside [a nearby suburban school district], they have male/female, maybe they have enough students to make a special ed subgroup. Maybe. And maybe they have one minority subgroup. Maybe. We have male/female, we have ESL, we have special ed, we

have African American, Hispanic, Asian. I think there's another

subgroup in there, too (personal communication November 19, 2014).

Morgan and Barbara did not express disagreement with the district's decision to house the

Newcomer's Program at Riverview. They did not criticize the students as being uncommitted to

learning. They did, however, cite structural and institutional inadequacies that failed to support

the demographically changing student population and the concentrated risks of professional

vulnerability and damaging public narratives as experienced by urban teachers. Specifically,

they expressed disapproval of educational policies that resulted in schools like Riverview, which

have higher concentrations of racially and linguistically marginalized or special education

students, being more susceptible to policy sanctions. What they described was an NCLB

accountability element that allows states to determine the sample size of subgroups to be

included in Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) results (U.S. Department of Education, Office of

Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, & Policy and Program Studies Service, 2010).

Because high poverty, majority minority schools are more likely to exceed the minimum sample

size threshold, the teachers felt it was harder for their school to meet AYP than it was for schools

with fewer English Language Learners, Black or Latin@ or special education students. A 2007

quantitative study of 202 high schools, for example, found that the latitude afforded to states to

determine subgroup sample sizes for special education, Economically Disadvantaged Students,

etc. contributed to large, diverse schools being less likely to reach AYP. On average, the schools

that met AYP requirements in that study had 25% fewer subgroups than schools that did not

meet AYP requirements (Balfanz, Legters, West, & Weber, 2007). Barbara and Morgan's

concerns for special education students also appear to be founded in that a recent report of school

data stated staffing for Special Education students would be decreased in the 2013-2014 school

year. Perceptions of being insufficiently supported to properly educate not only the students from their feeder zones, but also any youth in the city who were eligible for the Newcomers Program were strongly associated with NCLB and district requirements the teachers felt were established with little sensitivity to the role of time in the processes of improving teacher capacity and student learning.

The population shift to Riverview, in combination with their perceptions of NCLB's errant discursive assumptions, was frustrating to Barbara and Morgan because it rendered them and their school as ineffective since the factors of social conditions and educational contexts were not critically considered. These analyses highlighted the value of sociocultural and ecological views on educational policies because they communicated a domino effect of district responses to student population shifts contributing to policy designs that undercut the provision of critical student supports, which ultimately, left certain schools and teachers in inequitably difficult positions to reach performance standards.

Sarah also spoke to the shortcomings of how the Newcomers Program effected Riverview's students and teachers. This excerpt followed a discussion among Sarah, Mike and Liv about a need for more school-level control of student scheduling and the need for a school-level plan to monitor and track ELL students' progress:

Sarah: You know, we have a newcomers' program in the building that just kind of got put in the building. So what are we doing with those kids? Are we just sticking them in classes after they've been in the Newcomer Program for one year? They don't know the language but let's put them in English class?

Liv: Unh hunh.

Sarah: You know, there's no plan. There's not a plan for those kids. There's not

a plan to implement the policies that help the kids… (personal

communication, December 2, 2014).

Here too, the perception of a district decision without a perception of sufficient district support was evident. A 2013 school data analysis report reinforced Sarah's assertions in that it cited attendance challenges primarily stemming from the Newcomers students having to travel long distances. This report also stated that the pace and level of growth among the school's ELL students had not been met with the same level of district support systems. Sarah not only criticized the rapidity with which the school was required to place students into mainstream courses who came to Riverview with not even an Emerging level of English proficiency, she also criticized the district's expectation that Riverview's teachers would be able to meet policy expectations of student achievement absent a more attuned and coherent plan. Teachers' assessments of student demographics and student achievement at Riverview were most closely associated with school, district, and federal-level leadership or policy decisions than with students' diversity. They noted perceptions of an abdication of school-level leadership. They also addressed the district-level response to student population shift- the Newcomers Program, which was housed exclusively at Riverview. The teachers did not complain about the location of the program, rather what they considered as a lack of proper support to accompany that decision. That perceived lack of district support for teacher/student success coincided with the federal policy of NCLB in that the success of specific student populations, in their opinion, disproportionately on Riverview and urban districts in general.

Perceived Effects of District Leadership

Decisions as to which educational policies are most appropriate for a given need or population do not occur in a vacuum. The determination of which policies are to be introduced into which parts of the educational landscape are associated with time in that economic, social, and political contexts vary by both individuals, space, and time. The influence of time on residential shifts, the time period within Riverview's history of multiple policies, and the timing of SIG policy implementation were all points of discussion raised by teachers in this study. While districts may change feeder zones for schools, they do not select the people who choose to live within that district. Likewise, district administrators may be able to predict and even encourage teacher retirement to some degree but cannot ensure rates of retirement will be balanced by teacher hiring not can they predict the types of professional capacity the district would lose due to teacher retirement. Teachers in this study not only recognized changes in student population but the qualities of teachers lost due to retirement, voluntary transfers, and SIG teacher dismissals. Though they did not blame the students, teacher retirees, nor district for the existence of either shift, they did not report observing a robust response from the district to account for either. By extension, decisions made by district administrators and their contribution to the tone of district-teacher relationships were often cited as precursors to Riverview's crisis point.

As described earlier, Mike's early years at Riverview appear to have been relatively stable. Then, changes in school and district administration, the retirement of teachers with twenty or more years of service dedicated specifically to Riverview, and a change in student demographics lead to what he called "the dark years." More recently, he described a second period of instability which differed from the "dark years" in that it was one during which he

perceived a domino effect between district relations, teacher morale, school improvement policies, and teacher effectiveness. This exchange followed comments from Mike that this second troubled era effected teachers, principals, and assistant principals alike:

Tuesda: So what did that look like for teachers?

Mike: Even worse because it's a trickledown effect. It's, it's the waste water runs downstream effect, basically. So we're often, it comes, everything that comes down from the school improvement side of it is like, is punitive. It's the whole 'we're doing this to you instead of for you.' And that's how it looked in the beginning.

Tuesda: Under, under Dr. Johnson?

Mike: Unh hunh.

Tuesda: What was being done to you?

Mike: It's a combination of blame, right? Like the reason that we have these bad scores and the reason kids are misbehaving and the reason that kids are leaving HMPS is because we have 'bad teachers.' It's, that's the feel of it anyway. And that feeling is promoted by like the HR person or not the HR, the PR person. I misspoke. The PR person is sending our union members little things about how the union just lost a fight. Or the union, that we're trying to get things for the teachers, the contract, the equal pay- anything that we're trying to get in our contract, we're being shown daily how that's not going well and how, yeah, in emails to the point where I actually asked to get off the email list. Because I was having a hard time showing up and being positive in front of my kids when I'm reading

83

negative stuff that's being promoted via PR under the superintendent,

yeah.

Tuesda: Wow.

Mike: Yeah. And I would never have been an administrator. That's why I've

never been one in this system.

Tuesda: Because?

Mike: Because I won't be mistreated like that. At least, and I'm not a union guy.

I'm not a pro-union person… but I belong to this union and I'm, I've been

somewhat safer because of it. I've always felt like if you just do a good

job, you're safe anyway so that's kind of been my little safeguard, like I'll

just kill it in the classroom. Who could, who could argue with 3000 kids,

right? That I was their favorite teacher? Or most impactful teacher? Or

teacher that helped them raise their scores the most? Who could argue

with that? It's always been my premise but when you're being mistreated

by a group of your bosses, I'll just call them, then you always feel like

you're just under, you're under scrutiny and there's never any positives.

Tuesda: What does that do for your instruction? Your…

Mike: Oh, just destroys it. It destroys morale. And then initiatives come in to

try to help those things but when you've got morale that's been down

because of being mistreated, then you're pushing water uphill. Feels bad

(personal communication November 11, 2014).

Here, Mike reflected on factors that contributed to Riverview teachers' success, morale, buy-in

and sense of self. Under Superintendent Johnson's leadership, he felt as though the district was

unjustly linking declining district enrollment, the downward turn of test scores, and students'

disruptive behaviors to a narrative of teacher inadequacy. In his estimation, a contentious district

environment between a former superintendent and teachers was exemplified by the

superintendent's belief that 'bad teachers' lead to of declining enrollment and student

misbehavior. In Mike's estimation it was a district culture where principals were not treated with

professionalism (hence his lack of desire to ever go into administration) and teacher harassment

via email about the erosion of their collective bargaining unit that eroded teachers' instructional

effectiveness and morale. He cited the existence of initiatives (processes) to repair the damaged

relationship between teachers and district administration and to address perceived mistrust about

teacher quality but also described efforts to respond to those initiatives as generating feelings of

teacher futility and frustration. All of this cycled back to the beginning of the exchange where he

associated school improvement initiatives with feelings of teachers being excluded from policy

decision-making such that the initiatives were understood as punitive and one-sided.

Research based on the relationship between school principals and teachers has addressed

the bi-directional establishment of trust, staff cohesion and shared sense of expectations-

including the factor of race within these relationships (Price, 2012). Other studies have found

varying degrees and ways by which principals deviate from technocratic roles and become

political actors (or not) to advocate for and foster positive relationships with teachers

(O'Laughlin & Lindle, 2015; Scribner & Crow, 2012). Superintendents, though have not been as

extensively researched for their role in the affective aspects of teacher buy-in nor for the impact

of their policy decisions within the ecology of schools and teachers. Cuban noted:

> Concentration upon the local school site and the principal's leadership dominates
>
> the research. This implicitly ignores the pivotal role that school boards and

superintendents play in mobilizing limited resources, giving legitimacy to a

reform effort and the crucial interplay between central office and school site that

can spell the difference between implementation success and failure (1984, p.

130).

This is especially troubling given Bredeson and Kose's findings that state mandates were the

most influential factor in superintendents' involvement in curriculum development and

instructional leadership (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). Mike's account of the impacts he felt due to

the superintendent's leadership style and decisions contribute to filling this gap in the literature

due to the intertwined relationships between leadership, ideologies, policy, and teacher work.

Within the mesosystem described here, interactions between teachers, school administrators, and

district leaders were perceived as tense and counter-productive to both the day-to-day work of

teachers and their ability to trust district-level policy decisions as being fair and responsive to

teachers' working conditions. Furthermore, the impact of specific individuals within teachers'

ecology of educational policies are seen here as having reverberating impacts on multiple

stakeholders.

Demoralized or not, teachers' implementation of educational policies is most visibly

evident at the classroom and building levels. Likewise, the most tangible, observable aspects of

educational policies are most visibly evident in the ways in which they impact the daily work of

learning and teaching. When asked to share what she considered to be pivotal moments in

Riverview's history, Sarah's focused on the timing and effects of teacher turnover,

superintendent decisions, and the introduction of multiple and overlapping policies. Like Mike,

she mentioned an "old guard" of teachers: "There were a lot of teachers at that time that were

kind of the, the pillars here, the stability for Riverview" (personal communication, November 19,

2014). According to her, many of those pillars retired in very close succession which introduced new teachers, including herself, to Riverview. In addition to the introduction of many new teachers to Riverview, Sarah explained that a 2007 district-university partnership based on "effort-based learning" lead to the introduction of what she considered to be an intrusive instructional model:

> They came in with an instructional model that everybody had to do this
>
> instructional model, including some language that we were supposed to be using
>
> in the classrooms. So almost kind of like this, you know, use this language or else
>
> type of thing came into play. So that, that part, the culture was not good because
>
> now you're telling me how, how I have to teach and what I have to say [in order]
>
> to teach (personal communication, November 19, 2014).

This change in the district's expectations of teachers' work was one of many Sarah cited as occurring roughly within a five-year period.

In addition to this instructional model and the dissolution of small schools and hubs, a new grading schema was introduced by Dr. Johnson in 2008 allowing high school students who would have otherwise received an F in a core course to instead receive a "held" grade. The held grade was valid for one trimester during which they could go to summer school, enroll in Saturday school, an after-school program or an online course, take the course for a second time, or use the following trimester to retake portions of the course with a teacher in order to redeem their course grade *as* they completed the next course in the curricular sequence. The subsequent superintendent, Dr. Patrick ended that grading policy in 2012 when a review revealed not only a low rate of students attempting to remedy their "held' grade but also a low rate of students

successfully converting the "held," failing grade to a passing grade. Sarah recalled that time

period as one that was difficult for teachers and students alike.

> **Sarah:** It was not a good time. I mean, there were lots of staff members that
> were very down, very… So that went on for two or three years, where we
> had that and it was very chaotic. It was chaotic for the students because
> now you've got, you've failed this marking period, or this semester (sic
> trimester). Now you're in the next semester, plus you're doing the class
> from last semester.   It was just this con- it was this cycle that the kids
> really didn't realize that it wasn't good for them. You know, they would
> put things off, put things off- 'I'll take the H grade' and then realizing
> that oh, now, they've got two classes that they've got to finish.

> **Tuesda:** True. What was the rationale though? I mean, behind doing that?

> **Sarah:** To raise student achievement, to give them a second chance. There was a
> whole lot of rationale. Not a whole lot that we agreed with. We, meaning
> teachers. And even building principals, quite frankly. You know, but it
> was one of those things, well, they told you downtown that you have to
> do this, so you have to do this. So that, that culture was, 'Oh, downtown
> said I had to do it. Downtown did this. Downtown did this to us.
> Down…' You know, so that started to be kind of this dividing of
> downtown and the schools. Downtown is now scheduling for the schools
> and they don't understand what's going on in the schools. Downtown is
> telling us we have to change the grades. We also ended up having to do a
> district grading program during that time and so they created it and it was

kind of, they created it as we were going so we would click on the

suggestion box and, say I need to be able to scroll down to the bottom of

the page. I need to be able to put grades in this way. I need to be… So

they were creating it as we were going. So that, it was just this constant

change (personal communication November 19, 2014).

Sarah's description of the changes Riverview underwent reflect decisions made in the name of

district organization and even, for the purpose of improving student achievement. The removal

of day-to-day decisions such as the creation and adjustment of student schedules, entering and

adjusting of student grades, the required preparation of course packets to allow any student who

failed a course to still receive credit, and what Sarah perceived to be the scripting of instruction

detrimentally interacted with the introduction and soon retraction of the blended learning model

and multiple scheduling schemes. The incredulity expressed by Sarah concerning the district's

clear overall vision for student achievement as well as the vision of how policy elements would

work in sync towards that overall vision is consistent with findings that superintendents and

principals alike struggled to articulate a clear theory of change or a clear plan for school

improvement under the SIG program's constricted timeline (Yatsko, Lake, Nelson, & Bowen,

2012). That 2012 study also found one-third of the surveyed districts employed a "kitchen sink"

approach to reform policy (stacking new interventions on old ones without a clear strategy to

bring the interventions into alignment) and that one-half of the districts employed a "scattershot"

approach (instituting multiple interventions without critically considering individual schools'

needs and without a clearly understood theory as to how those interventions would enhance

student outcomes). The timeline described by Sarah where multiple and short-lived policies

were layered upon each other began prior to the SIG award. This would suggest that HMPS used

both the "kitchen sink" and "scattershot" approach with the result being a chaotic work environment for teachers who were increasingly feeling disenfranchised from critical day-to-day decisions concerning the processes related to instruction, student scheduling, and student evaluation.

The timing of district policy decisions was perceived as a lack of wait time and was reported as making it difficult to precisely name what contributed to Riverview's troubled school climate and low levels of student achievement. The "constant change" Sarah described appears to have happened in the five years directly preceding the introduction of the SIG models at Riverview:

So there were, definitely things that got put in place that worked and then there were things that should've been in place that worked. The sad part of it is that there were things that were tried. So I think about blended learning. That was tried. For a year into a second year. Wasn't implemented correctly and then we just did away with it. So last year's senior class, we said they've been through block scheduling, they've been through trimester scheduling. They've been back to semesters. They've had all four of their core classes, or I'm sorry, all three of their core classes except for English in blended learning. Then they had social studies only in blended learning the next year. Then we went back to no blended learning. So there were lots of initiatives during that time period of, you know, we had a school improvement grant, we had a small learning community grant, we had Title I funds all during that period of time. So it's hard to say, you can't necessarily blame one particular thing because we certainly had some benefits from all of those things, too. But the chaos part of it hurt. Hurt the students.

Hurt, you know, things that were going on. Yeah, there was definitely a good and

a bad part of it (personal communication, November 13, 2014).

Riverview was placed under the trimester schedule beginning in the 2008/2009 academic year

but was placed back on the semester schedule in 2012. Blended learning was instituted in 2010

but later ended in 2012. The district received the Small Learning Community Grant in

2008/2009. The instability of working in a district and school that asked teachers to implement

and adjust to frequent and overlapping policies, according to Sarah, made it difficult to identify

what lead to the school's decline prior to the SIG program. The lack of time afforded to teachers

(and consequently, students) to prove themselves as capable, caused hurt and clouded judgement

as to what was actually occurring within Riverview as initiatves after initiatives were introduced.

As a factor of the ecology's chronosystem, time and timing were consistent factors in Sarah's

longitudinal analysis of Riverview. This was evident by her citing the fast-paced adoption and

abandonment of layered policies as a contributing factor to the difficulty she had in explaining

why the hopeful periods of time where she thought particular policies would have positive results

were interrupted. Furthermore, the chaos she named as a result of implementing so many

policies within such a short period of time but with little expectation of district fidelity to a

vision for improvement was described as hurtful.

Morgan further elucidated how a district's lack of "wait time" and long-term vision for

the policies it enacts was understood by teachers.

Tuesda: How would you describe the history of Riverview when it comes to,

like you said, these different initiatives, these different types of

reforms? How would you describe those initiatives and the progress or

the challenges since you've been here?

Morgan: It was kind of a joke for a while, where we said the district was like a

raccoon. And it was distracted by every shiny object that came along.

Every couple years, the new initiative in education would come out

and the district would drop what they had been doing and 'Now we're

gonna do this!' And it was very frustrating because the teachers who

had really invested a lot of time in, you know, in educating themselves

about this initiative, really trying to implement it with fidelity, would

get frustrated because all of a sudden that wasn't important anymore

and they'd move to something new. So that was frustrating. And then

you'd have teachers that would say 'Well, I'm not going to invest any

time in this because this too shall pass and the next initiative will come

along in a couple years so why would I bother doing this?' So that

was very frustrating. You know, I know for the administration, I know

for the teachers, that every couple of years, you'd get a new

superintendent with a new focus and a new initiative (personal

communication, November 11, 2014).

Here, Morgan also linked a lack of district-level clarity and fidelity in terms of reform policies to

reverberating consequences at the mesosystem level where communication and actions between

the two stakeholders resulted in teacher frustration and a degradation in policy buy-in. Teachers'

critiques about district choices and perceptions of slights against teacher professionalism

demonstrated an understanding of school success and reform as a tethered, multi-level

relationship between their perceptions of professional satisfaction, the ability of school-level

administration to lead both teachers and students, and the district's overall ability to facilitate

students' academic success. Underneath all of those expressed consequences, I perceived a resignation that the role of district superintendents was one teachers felt would consistently and frequently change.

Perceived Effects of Principals on Teacher/Student Success

That multi-leveled view of schools and educational policy analysis also effected the ways in which the teachers interpreted the actions of Riverview's principals. Although the teachers often named specific problematic actions carried out by the school principal, they still associated the quality of school-level leadership with that of district leadership. Teachers' inclusion of principals in their analyses of educational policies was specifically informative in understanding their experiences under the SIG program because, like teachers, the assumption of principal inadequacy is a part of the Transformation and Turnaround Models based on their dismissals as a policy requirement. Riverview received a new principal during the same school year the Transformation Model was implemented, thus satisfying the principal replacement requirement. Similarly, Greg Harris became principal during the same year Riverview was moved to the Turnaround Model which made the principal replacement a moot point of policy compliance. Although neither principal was explicitly hired or fired in order to comply with the SIG program, teachers still considered their performance as being related to the processes and pace of change at Riverview. Teacher evaluation, the amount of time available to provide teacher support, and the perceived authority of principals to intervene by removing low-performing teachers were the primary points of focus. As Mike stated,

> It was bad. It was, it was. But it was bad because of the administration's
> inconsistency. It starts at the top. I've said this before. But ultimately, it starts at
> the top. And I, so that's not to blame my immediate boss. Right? I blame my

boss and his boss and his boss, or her boss, right? So I understand that my boss is

doing his job the best that he can under whatever he's being told. But if he's

being told different things, you know, like 'You're going to be evaluated on this,'

but oops, 'I want you to work on this instead.' Like I know that was going on

because I could see it and hear it and people would even tell me about it. And so

then, that boss comes back from his people in charge and they tell you, 'Well,

here's the deal,' and 'here's how we're going to be doing this' but turns out it's

not going to be funded and you're like, 'Okay, so we are doing this or we're not?'

(personal communication, November 13, 2014).

Mike relayed in this comment a level of uncertainty among teachers as to which direction they

should focus their efforts due to Riverview's former principals being authoritatively constrained

by district's decisions, which he, in turn, acknowledged as being related to the successively

higher levels of decision-makers. The lack of district consistency and commitment to provide

principals the support and authority needed to effectively carry out policies is seen here as a

factor in Mike's analysis of principal effectiveness. His dual focus on principals meeting the

needs of teachers and the inconsistent, yet pressing, demands to which those principals were

subjected was echoed in Sarah's observation of the mesosystem interactions between school and

district officials. She explained,

It was very Us versus Them during that time. Lots of teachers would go to the

school board. Lots of the teachers were trying to get the ear of school board

members. It was definitely a butting heads between teachers and, and

administrators, and not necessarily building administrators but like HMPS campus

administrators. So it was, yeah, it was very, almost kind of watch your back type

of thing, even with the principals. It's like we have to do this in our building

because they're watching us… It was, you better raise your score because this is

going to reflect badly in your evaluation. Or this is going to reflect badly on you.

So it was definitely an Us versus Them during that period of time (personal

communication, November 19, 2014).

Here, Sarah presented a cross-section view of rippling effects within the HMPS mesosystem

whereby a perceived culture of punitive principal surveillance was evident when the percentages

of students with failing grades were shared during at various points during the school year as a

warning or as an indicator of professional standing without support to resolve gaps in

professional capacity. That visitation of principal surveillance on teachers, coupled with a

decontextualization of school or district-specific contributive factors, was experienced by Sarah

as a degradation of the teacher-district relationship. While being upfront about student success

rates is a reasonable part of teacher evaluation, she considered this additional pressure on

teachers to have been uniformly and myopically exerted without discussion of how many special

education or English Language Learners each teacher had in their classrooms or whether the

teachers needed tutors or paraprofessionals in order to provide specialized attention in

accordance with those groups' educational needs. Teacher criticism of principals, then, hinged

on an an awareness of the mutual, direct relationships between the multiple levels and figures

within the educational ecology and were not overarching condemnation of principals.

Furthermore, the criticisms Mike and Sarah presented did not make excuses for poor teaching,

rather they were consistent with; (1) calls for professionalism and professional support, (2) a

critique of deflected responsibility for student outcomes, and (3) the potential for enhanced

teaching contexts via well-aligned and supportive principal-district relationships.

Besides a perceived lack of professionalism and focus at the district level, teachers also described inconsistencies at the school level that contributed to Riverview's decline. Though sympathetic to administrators' demanding schedules, Barbara saw a connection between their availability to be meaningfully present and engaged in the school building and their ultimate ability to preempt the school falling into such a state that takeover or turnaround policies were necessary:

> So the evaluations, if they're done properly and they're done fairly, should get rid of poor teachers. It's been like that all along. This argument that tenure protects teachers is false because there were, there was language in the contract to make it clear that if you weren't doing your job as a teacher, if the documentation was there, and the rationale and the proof was there that you were not a good teacher, you were allowed to be fired and there was no out in the contract for that. Unfortunately, I think that there was not a very good system of evaluation in place and I think that many principals didn't do a good job of evaluating teachers. They weren't in the, they're not in the rooms enough because earlier on in my career here, they were taken out of the building so much to be with the superintendent- the old one, not the current one, that they couldn't control their buildings. They weren't there enough to be in charge. They weren't there enough to come to the classrooms (personal communication, November 14, 2014).

Barbara's insights about Riverview's principals prior to the district's decision to apply for SIG funding reflected a sympathetic view that still held principals accountable for their contribution towards the struggles felt by teachers and students alike. On the one hand, she acknowledged the difficulties of being understaffed as an administrative team and their diminished ability to

promptly identify ineffective teachers due to the district's expectations. That did not, however, dissuade her from placing some of the accountability for Riverview's struggles on what she saw as principals' failure to exercise their authority to evaluate, document and dismiss teachers before the school reached a crisis level. More pointedly, however, Barbara's assessment of Riverview's cadre of teachers critiqued gaps at multiple system levels. She countered broader policy debates about the alleged protection ineffective teachers via tenure with her localized knowledge of HMPS. Her claim of contractual provisions to identify and dismiss teachers through documented and justified evidence of their incompetence was undermined by what she perceived as ineffective processes of governance. In this way, although multiple teachers considered Riverview to have been stymied by the district's misuse or overuse of principals, Riverview's amassing of incompetent teachers was reflective of a misalignment between what was contractually allowed and what was effectively possible. Barbara's attention to the conditions and mechanisms in operation within the mesosystem did not separate teachers or principals from district-level concerns, rather, her comments addressed the interconnected natures of microsystems and the ripple effect of people, policies, and processes.

Morgan provided a slightly different take on the principal's ability to maintain a high-quality teacher staff. Instead of considering their lack of presence or lack of follow-through to remove ineffective teachers, Morgan's analysis spoke to the need for principals to have district support. She shared,

I mean, we had a teacher here a long time ago who the principal did everything

that was required in the contract. I mean, they had a folder this big. They went

through, they evaluated the teacher, they sat down, they put them on, I can't

remember what the plan was called when you had to go through all these steps

and show improvement and the teacher didn't. It was all documented. I mean,

they did, they did the year and a half process. But no one at the district level was

then willing to pick it up and follow through then with the termination of the

teacher. So the principal had done everything they were supposed to do by the

contract, but the district didn't want to do the legal battle (personal

communication, November 19, 2014).

Although Morgan offered evidence that the processes to remove ineffective teachers may have

had several weak spots, her reflection still spoke to misalignments in the district-principal

relationship that negatively impacted Riverview's stability prior to the school being placed under

the SIG program. Her mesosystem assessment of Riverview's history of teacher evaluation and

the record of intervening to execute contractual allowances was consistent with Barbara's

assessment in that microsystem conditions (Riverview High School) were better understood as

both parts of and consequences of the mesosystem's strengths and weaknesses (Riverview High

School and Hamilton Mills Public Schools). Jacob explored principals' decision-making

processes when, under new policies that streamlined and afforded them more autonomy, faced

with decisions about firing teachers (2011). His findings showed that principals considered

teacher attendance rates, observations, and the competitive level of their degree-granting

institution among other factors but still failed to utilize the professional latitude afforded to them

by district policy. While some researchers have focused on the social and political tug-of-war

principals experience between teachers and families and how principals then relate to teachers

(Eden, 2001), others have considered how the professional demands placed on principals at

multiple levels in the schooling ecology compounds the social, political, ideological

undergirding school accountability policies (Cooley & Shen, 2003). These teachers' multi-

leveled analysis of the professional and rhetorical positioning of principal was consistent with Cooley and Shen's more expansive view on the effect of principal leadership by describing them as also being subjected to a district context that placed, in their opinion, excessive demands that distracted from their school-based duties. Although the teachers did not agree on whether or not the district supported or interfered with principals' ability to remove ineffective teachers, their belief that principal leadership was subject to district leadership was consistent. More precisely, in ways similar to their analyses of the district-teacher relationship, the teachers in this study reflected on examples of how the district-principal relationship indicated a lack of mesosystem-level consistency needed to faithfully execute educational policies.

Another common aspect of the teachers' policy analyses, as seen here, was their consideration of accountability as a professional expectation that required a multi-context view. Inconsistencies and misalignments between the district and principals inherently contribute to the working conditions of teachers. This series of reflections made by Claire encapsulated the joint relationships between teacher morale, teacher accountability, and the roles of district and building leadership:

> It just felt like there weren't any expectations. There were about three years that
> went by that were just, what are we doing? I would never send my kid here-
> that's what I thought, because this is not a learning environment. I mean, I can
> conduct what happens in my room but for the school culture as a whole, it was not
> a learning environment (personal communication, October 29, 2014).
> Well, I mean, I guess I would like to see administration in here more. I can think
> my first, I don't know, four or five years here…I never saw an administrator in
> my room. Like I never got feedback. And I like that. I like to get feedback. I

think everyone needs that because we all have areas to work on, I don't care how

long I've been teaching, I have areas I need to improve upon. So it'd be nice to

get some feedback. So I like to see the administrators visible (personal

communication, October 29, 2014)

Even as a teacher who was designated as Highly Effective, she indicated a desire for a clear

sense of direction from principals and support in the form of feedback based on consistent

principal observations. In this light, principal presence, observations, and feedback were seen

as neither punitive nor as a form of "teacher surveillance." In fact, Claire went on to say that

she imagined principals also wanted to have more time to be active at the school site and that

she felt the school's administrative team were understaffed. The intertwining of accountability

and sympathy threaded through these comments indicated that while teacher evaluation could

either be a punitive action or a form of teacher support, Claire viewed teacher evaluation as a

part of system. Without a conducive district context, principals could not be fully effective and

supportive of teachers and yet, the principals' contributions were also needed at the district

level. No single part of the system, in this view, was more integral to the system's wellbeing

than another. Claire's summation of Riverview's state prior to the implementation of the grant

stands as a synopsis of the teachers' perceptions of what brought the school to such a critical

point that the Transformation and Turnaround Models were considered as necessary and fitting

solutions.

Conclusion

The teachers participating in this study were confident in their professional expertise,

and ability to promote student learning; however, they reported feeling as though the school-

level context prior to SIG program-related changes was unsupportive to teaching and learning.

One aspect of that desired teaching environment was the presence and professional support of principals. Although they understood the impact of district-level decisions such as the provision of proper staffing levels and the protection of principals' time to be on-site as being beyond the control of the principals themselves, they still expressed a desire and need for high-quality principal-teacher support systems. These contextualized analyses of accountability were common among the teachers. While their reflections and meaning-making did not name a single or primary figure or process as the culprit that lead to the degradation of Riverview, the teachers did not excuse the shortcomings of any figures or processes as reasonable simply because they depended on another figure or process to reach their full potential. In this way, the path towards the Transformation and Turnaround Models at Riverview was paved by multiple ecological elements including; (1) significant figures at the microsystem level (teachers, principals, superintendents), (2) historical patterns of residential demographics at the chronosystem level with consequences felt at the microsystem level, (3) processes and requirements associated with school reform and teacher accountability policies at the exosystem level at work across time, and (4) political and social ideologies at the macrosystem level that are a part of White flight and assumptions about which types of school reform policies are appropriate. The compounding and mutual relationships between these ecological elements were also seen as having an inequitably damaging effect on urban teachers as policy actors and on urban teachers' professional sense of stability.

Chapter VI: Findings: Teachers' Analyses of the Transformation and Turnaround Models

Introduction

This chapter is based on a chronological description of how the SIG policy was implemented at Riverview High School and the meaning-making the teachers did in relation to matters of (1) how the grant benefitted the school, (2) policy implementation, (3) federal and district-mandated policy elements, (4) district-teacher communication, and (5) key figures associated with each of those issues. Dividing the chapter into a section for the two years the school spent under the Transformation Model, followed by a section specifically for the one year spent under the Turnaround Model allows the roles of time/timing, persons, context, and processes to be more clearly elucidated according to each model's requirements and site-specific implementation. As will be seen, there are points at which teachers presented a greater level of consensus as well as points at which their length of service at Riverview, leadership roles, content area, and even their beliefs about teacher quality contributed to certain issues being perceived as more pertinent than others.

Transformation Model

Improvement Plan with an Unclear Plan for Implementation

Riverview experienced several consecutive years of disappointing standardized test scores, and coupled with the teachers' reports of disruptive students, a variably effective teaching staff, and ineffective school leadership, it is not surprising teachers felt professionally vulnerable even prior to the announcement of the school's placement under the Turnaround Model. Fall 2010 marked the beginning of Riverview's time under the SIG program. Nearly 5.5 million dollars, to be spent over three years, was allocated to the school. Under the Transformation

Model, teachers were required and compensated to complete additional hours of professional development, and were provided additional flexible time during which they worked with other teachers and instructional coaches. Youth advocates, instructional coaches, a leadership coach, data, technology, and family support specialists were also introduced to Riverview as a result of SIG funds. Additionally, each teacher was provided $3,000 to use at their professional discretion concerning what their students needed most to boost learning. Several teachers in the study reported that some departments within Riverview pooled their monies in order to make larger purchases that could would be accessible to all department members. The teachers' perspectives on these requirements and resources reflected an appreciation for the infusion of funds and expertise alongside a critical awareness of missteps that interfered with their potential to spur academic growth and teacher capacity.

The material and human resources afforded to Riverview specifically because of SIG funding was largely seen by the teachers as a necessary injection of tools and expertise that helped to make them as well equipped as more successful schools. Even though he had misgivings about the grant, Mike referenced the impact on students when their teachers have tools and training tools en par with suburban, more academically stable districts. Here, he described what he saw as a dual benefit to students,

> **Tuesda:** What was good?
>
> **Mike:** What was good is that we had extra, we had extra money to buy certain
> things that could help us in our classroom- those calculators.
>
> **Tuesda:** Uh huh.

Mike: [One of the biggest tools.] If training goes well, and if it's used properly,

and becomes a priority, that can impact kids and their scores. And their

morale, and their feeling of a little bit of equality.

Tuesda: Equality?

Mike: Yeah. We have the same stuff that Greenhills [a local suburban district]

has (personal communication, November 13, 2014).

In his estimation, the instructional resources purchased by teachers through the grant not only

improved instruction and learning but also held symbolic value for students because gaining

access to materials they imagined more affluent schools had lifted their morale. The potential of

those materials, however, was not fully actuated because it took nearly a year, and a protracted

dialog with the local teachers' union, before they became available. Furthermore, the infusion of

resources, training, and support personnel was perceived as being short-circuited by the lack of a

fully-articulated plan for their integration into the larger school improvement plan.

The juxtaposition of Mike's valuation of SIG-purchased materials with his skepticism of

the program revealed a critique of policy implementation processes even though those processes

resulted in material gain. The crux of his critique rested in the delayed receipt of materials and

lack of a coherent plan for the grant's implementation. He perceived that the district experienced

a shock to the system due to the sudden influx of such a large amount of money. Mike

explained,

.… and the influx of resources, if misused, which in my opinion it wasn't

necessarily misused but it was too much for the district to handle. Here's $1

million and you have to use it by a certain date and you have to have these people

hired by a certain date and these people have to have this kind of an impact and it

has to be on just this thing. And so, you know, here's ten student advocates. And

boom, we have ten student advocates and they all have a position on the wheel

and the wheel is a good idea but it's complex and it's got its own issues of who's

in charge of what and how often they're going to make certain contacts and what

kind of record they're going to keep to prove it and, oh, my gosh. All this money

that has to be spent in a certain amount of time, it's, it's too much (personal

communication, November 13, 2014).

Here, Mike waded through the school's receipt of much-needed resources, the need for an

effective integration of those resources within a plan for the school's success, and the

complications an administration can face even when they are the beneficiary of a paradigm-

shifting grant. His concerns have been echoed by prior research about SIG schools which

revealed concerns by multiple stakeholders about the sustainability of the program's benefits

(Scott, McMurrer, McIntosh, & Dibner, 2012). Mike later expressed "I'm not a huge fan of the

SIG grant" and explained that he felt "it was a good idea gone astray" (personal communication,

November 13, 2014). The district's inability to carry out its plans under the SIG program did not

appear to come as a surprise to him.

Perceived Effects of Delayed Policy Implementation

Sarah, a fifteen-year veteran Riverview teacher who had a long history of serving as a

school leader, was hired as an instructional coach under the grant. The points she raised in

regards to teachers' ability to understand or buy-in to the new policy and even their ability to

fully tap into those resources spoke to the ripple effects of implementation delays and

deficiencies. Sarah claimed,

That was that first year, that constant, "Well, this is going to be in place and this is

going to be in place," and a lot of, "Well, when is that going to be in place? Or

what does that mean for us? Or what does that mean, what are we going to have,

what resources are we going to have at Riverview High School?" (personal

communication, November 19, 2014).

Sarah's comment described a general feeling of expectancy and uncertainty felt by Riverview's

teachers. In light of Riverview's history of multiple, overlapped, yet short-lived policies, the

uncertainty of what the Transformation Model meant for teachers appeared to have been the

result of both a lack of articulation and a lack of timely implementation. The following excerpts

reflect Sarah's recall of how district leadership, school-level personnel, and teachers were

impacted by these two lacking areas of policy development and implementation:

There were lots of things that weren't being purchased. The money was just kind

of sitting there and so yeah, it was not at all until the union kinda stepped in and

then they made an agreement. That was kind of a pivotal point, too, because I

think the district started to turn things around. Cheryl Patrick became

superintendent. She kind of reorganized because I think she realized that some of

the funds weren't getting used and if they were used, are we using them on the

right things? So she started to kind of say, okay, buildings need to decide these

things. So definitely the second and third year and I think with her saying… She

reorganized even people that were in that department, the grant department then

and we had a specific person, Gwen Brown at the time, we had a specific person

then assigned to Riverview High School. This is our SIG person, purchase person

where if we did have any large purchases, like the iPads that we went through her

and said "Is this going to work? Is this going to fly for school improvement grant

money," and so on (personal communication, November 19, 2014).

Sarah pointed to several key officials as making changes critical to the district's faithful

implementation of the SIG policy. The introduction of a new superintendent, her decision to

make changes to the grants department and the assigning of an employee specifically designated

to monitor and facilitate the purchase and delivery of SIG-funded materials were seen as critical

microsystem level decisions that improved the district's ability to responsibly meet federal

requirements which then allowed the district to be responsive to Riverview's needs. This was an

indication that decisions made within one microsystem (HMPS) can improve both processes and

professional contexts in a different microsystem (Riverview). That mesosystem relationship

illustrates the bounded histories and futures of stakeholders across the ecology of school reform

policies. The school-level benefit of improved mesosystem processes as described by Sarah

included the school's instructional coaches being better able to function as liaisons between the

teachers and district. As an instructional coach (a SIG-funded position introduced in October of

the grant's second year), Sarah assisted in helping teachers investigate their instructional goals

and needs in order to help them determine how best to spend the allocated funds. Although she

was confident in assisting teachers to link their needs to the proper resources that would best

meet those needs, Sarah observed that the influx of resources was not accompanied by a clear

sense of direction until a new superintendent streamlined the administrative process by which the

teachers could spend the funds already dedicated to them. This additional layer of district

support was reported to be a critical step in closing the loop between teachers, instructional

coaches and the district.

The effects of the delays, however, were still felt after the new superintendent made efforts to hasten the delivery of promised resources. Claire, for instance, spoke to the instructional impact felt even after receipt of the materials, saying,

Claire: As far as allocating the funds where they were supposed to go. Like that was the year we got the iPads through the grant and I was piloting, I think I mentioned that to you before, I was piloting the iPads in two classes and those are the only classes they were being used. And we wanted to, the tech person suggested that seeing as you teach AP and you read all these books, let's get the books on iPads. So that was where my $3000 went. We put, I don't know, five books, I think, for the juniors and five books for the seniors on the iPads. iBooks. But it was a real hassle to get like the grant money released to purchase that. And you heard teachers talk about it throughout the building, just getting the money actually to be released from, I don't know if it was [the district]. I'm not sure how that all worked but it was an issue just getting the funding to get the stuff. And I don't think we got the books until, I don't know, towards the end of the year. Like in the spring. And at that point it was, it was kind of senseless, you know. And not only that, my kids read the books at home and they couldn't take the iPads home, so we had all these iBooks.

Tuesda: Interesting.

Claire: The tech person, he suggested it but you know, when I asked if they could take it home, it was like, nope. Well, it's kind of pointless to have these books and spend all this money if… You know, we can't get

through ten books a year if they're reading them, reading them in class.

They need to read them at home. So we ended up just using books. We

didn't even use the iBooks (personal communication, November 5,

2014).

In this way, Sarah and Claire differed in their opinion about the school-level impact of the

changes made by the superintendent. Sarah, as an instructional coach was more optimistic than

Claire about the expedited receipt of SIG-funded resources while Claire, as a classroom teacher,

experienced more protracted complications because of disruptions in the federal to district level

implementation (Datnow & Castellano, 2000). With the delayed delivery of the resources she

ordered and the imposition of unanticipated restrictions, Claire found little opportunity to

execute the improvements to her students' learning as planned. Claire's arrival at a dead-end of

sorts in regards to the utility of iPads in her instructional goals did not occur until the second year

of the grant period. She was not alone in finding Year 2 to be another unfulfilling year under

the Transformation Model.

Sarah, who noted that changes at the district level made it easier for her to more fully

function as an instructional coach, was also critical of policy decisions made by the district to

mandate a new instructional model at the same time the Riverview was placed on the

Transformation Model. The combined effect of these two policy decisions was exacerbated by

delays in the receipt of personnel and curricular materials named in the school improvement plan

upon which the SIG award was based. According to Sarah, a part of the changes made under the

Transformation Model was the implementation of blended learning with the assistance of a

Scholastic program reading intervention program. Two teachers were hired in the fall

specifically to teach those intervention courses but the school did not receive program materials

until April. By this time, the two teachers had been absorbed as English teachers. After discussing the absorption of these teachers due to the delayed receipt of curriculum needed to implement the school improvement plan, Sarah noted that Riverview's team of SIG-funded personnel lacked clear directives. Here, she described a widely-held critique among t he participating teachers about the district's view on policy implementation,

> I know we had talked about resources so it was kind of the tongue-in-cheek joke that we had a whole lot of people in the building but didn't necessarily know what everyone was supposed to be doing in the building. I mean, the teachers knew what they were supposed to be doing but then we had, you know, a school-to-career coordinator. We had an attendance person. We had a data person. We had a tech person. We had four instructional coaches. You know, me being one of them. So I think even the first year of us being instructional coaches, trying to get across to the teachers what our role was supposed to be… So there were a whole lot of extra people, you know, principal coach, so there were a whole lot of extra people that came because we had the money to pay for those people. But not, not real clear who, who was doing what and how they might help teachers, students, the school and even some of the people not knowing exactly what their role was. So you know, we had the money to purchase those people's positions but had not necessarily clearly defined what those positions are supposed to be so… (personal communication, November 19, 2014).

Sarah's perspectives stemmed from her experiences as an instructional coach, coupled with the professional and personal networks she had built as a Riverview teacher. These comments indicated, however, that she observed a reverberating effect of policy implementation flaws.

Like Claire, Sarah noted that even when resources were obtained after an unanticipated delay, the intended enhancement to the school's instructional team was not fully realized. These comments also indicated that Sarah observed a general perception among teachers that the personnel whose expertise they needed were not certain how to apply that expertise within the school improvement plan. The consequence of this uncertainty, according to Sarah, was that support personnel could not meet the needs of teachers or students in a sufficiently effective or timely manner. Sarah and Claire's observations about the flaws and subsequent improvements in the district's implementation of federal policy mandates spoke to the value teachers hold at the microsystem level as policy analysts- especially as those policies are being implemented. Their comments also spoke to the potential at the exosystem level were teachers' field experiences with educational policies meaningfully used to review policy designs.

Riverview was not the only site within Hamilton Mills Public Schools to have had SIG-funded instructional coaches. Sarah reported that when SIG personnel from across the district met, she observed inconsistencies between schools as to how those in the new roles functioned. From her vantage point, she observed that a lack of direction for the use of SIG personnel was not limited to Riverview. Sarah explained,

> It was like, you have these positions for your school. We're going to post them
> and then the people showed up. You know, I was fortunate because I was here
> and knew most of the people, knew the building, that kinda thing, knew the
> principal but for some of those other people, they were brand new to the district in
> some, some cases. Some of them were brand new to the building. Our data
> person and our tech person- our data person was brand new to the building. He
> had taught in the district, in like an intervention room so he was pretty new to

teaching even. And then our data person came from out of state for that position.

So… had ties to Fordham but… So you know, the principal gets these positions in

their building and then no one's really directing what, what are they supposed to

do? Is the principal supposed to be able to tell them? So Wilson High School and

Riverview High School had those people. Matching people, but entirely different

roles that they played in the building. So even though Wilson had a data person

and Riverview had a data person, they did entirely different things in the

buildings. So it's not like that, that was really defined at the district level either

(personal communication, November 19, 2014).

These comments underscore the need for greater planning- or, at least, greater monitoring,

communication, and consistency across administrative levels. She noted, for example, that

openings for SIG instructional coaches were only posted in April of Year 1 of the grant which

meant they were not in place until the second year and were not given equal opportunities as

coaches who were not paid through the grant. Specifically, she was confused as to why she and

other SIG coaches were told by district officials that only coaches who were paid through the

district could conduct professional development sessions with no further explanation connected

to expertise or skill set. Sarah's report of unclear role descriptions for instructional coaches is an

alert to the consistent and efficient provision of support to teachers.

Requirements and Perceived Effects of Mandated Professional Development

Increased allowances for teacher collaboration was a required component of the

Transformation Model. Teacher-based analyses of formal meetings and professional

development is a critical part of understanding the effects the SIG program had on teachers'

professional and personal lives because of the mandated amount of additional time they

dedicated to improving the learning environment. All Hamilton Mills teachers were expected to complete a 36-hour work week but those employed at a school functioning under the Transformation Model were required to work for 45 hours each week. Riverview teachers were also required to complete an additional 36 hours of professional development in the forms of weekly professional learning community team meetings, monthly learning walks, bi-weekly curriculum audits, and weekly content-focused coaching with disciplinary literacy coaches. Furthermore, the teachers were mandated to complete a minimum of 48 hours of participation in a summer institute and 24-36 more hours of professional development during the summer. Department heads coordinated and facilitated these additional weekly meetings prior to the installation of the instructional coaches at Riverview. The magnitude of SIG-required contact hours with other teachers and professional development facilitators made teachers' perceptions of the utility of those hours particularly informative concerning the effects the overall policy.

Claire's comments on teacher collaboration meetings offered insight into how teachers' work within school improvement plans are impacted by delayed receipt of materials, perceptions of a lack of continuity in job descriptions, and perceptions of a poorly articulated plan of how the jobs were expected to work in concert. When asked about the emphasis on teacher collaboration at Riverview, Claire remarked that collaboration became an area of greater focus during the Transformation period. Specifically, she shared,

> **Claire:** It has. Part of the grant is that, you know, we did have more hours that were forced upon us to collaborate. Like that was built in. So we had, you know, not only just our Monday meetings, staff meetings but then we would have these Thursday meetings until like 5:00 where it was just working with your department and collaborating with them. But I've, I

felt, when we had those meetings that they were not used productively.

A lot of times, it felt like a waste of time for many staff people. So I

don't feel like a lot was accomplished.

Tuesda: Okay, because of the way the meetings were run or because you just

prefer to just kind of do your own thing?

Claire: No, I think the collaboration piece is important but I feel like the way the

meetings were run, it was not, it was not set up that way. I just felt like

there was one person that always wants to talk and control it so the

collaborating never really happens. And even now, in our department,

it's always like "Oh, we're going to have time to work as departments,"

but after someone talks for thirty minutes, then we're like, "Oh, we have

fifteen minutes left. Now you can collaborate" (personal

communication November 5, 2014).

Here, Claire's comments spoke to a greater emphasis on teacher collaboration without the

needed structure to make those attempts to collaborate effective. In response to a question about

the inclusion of teacher input into the structure of those collaboration meetings, Claire shared

that teachers were told they could influence the organization of the meetings but she felt

teachers' attempts to do so were not heeded. She also remarked feeling as though the lack of

effective, formal structures of teacher collaboration were not enhanced by the Transformation

Model even though the policy model explicitly addressed collaboration as a part of the school

improvement plan. She explained,

So when I say collaboration is kind of low, it's because maybe I've never seen it

done well and because it just doesn't seem to be such a focus. Even though it's

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talked about and it is part of the grant, it just doesn't seem to be… I don't know,

done correctly. Or facilitated correctly, if that makes sense (personal

communication, November 5, 2014).

Claire's observations indicated that elements of the school improvement plan developed

expressly for the SIG program, which were intended to provide additional teacher support, went

awry even while satisfying compliance requirements. Having lamented the loss of self-initiated

collaboration with another teacher due to changes in their planning periods, Claire's comments

underscore the significance and potential the SIG-required teacher collaborations held in

reference to community and professional enhancement. In her view, the meetings satisfied the

expectations of building administrators but held little practical value to her instruction.

While literature concerning the theoretical, discursive and empirical impacts of teacher

collaboration has not yielded a singular or common result (Friend & Cook, 1990; Goddard,

Goddard, & Megan, 2007; B. Johnson, 2003; Lavié, 2006). Claire's reflection on the quality and

need for productive teacher meetings and collaboration was consistent with survey data collected

at Riverview. Data included in a School Data Profile/Analysis report based on 2010 data showed

that 47% of surveyed teachers/staff members indicated a belief that school meetings did not

address instructional programs and 61% said their needs and concerns were not addressed by

professional development meetings. Within this same report, however, professional

collaboration and interactions among teachers, administrators, and other staff members were

cited as one of Riverview's strengths. The distinction between formal professional development

meetings and the quality of informal collaborations is thus consistent between the 2010 report

and Claire's account.   A similar 2013 report revealed that teachers' perceptions of professional

development is a persistent area of dissatisfaction. In that report, only 34% of surveyed

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Riverview teachers said they were satisfied with the quality of professional development and 44% were satisfied with the time spent carrying out professional community activities. Riverview administration stated in that report that these percentages represented an improvement from the satisfaction levels reported in 2011-2012 and attributed teachers' dissatisfaction, in part, to the SIG-required additional professional development hours which some surveyed teachers interpreted as being a form of punishment.

Turnaround Model

Riverview teachers began the 2012-2013 academic year, the third and final year of the grant, under the Transformation SIG model. Although Hamilton Mills Public Schools named Cheryl Patrick as interim superintendent in January of 2012 and then superintendent in June of the same year, the fall semester marked the beginning of Greg Harris' leadership at Riverview High School. Teachers reflections centered specifically on the processes guiding the Turnaround Model's implementation at Riverview noticeably did not center on their new principal. This is likely because the correction of what the teachers saw as earlier implementation missteps and antagonistic relationships rested at the district level. District figures, actions, and communication were often referred to, supported, and critiqued. Cheryl Patrick is a HMPS alumna and had worked in the district for 35 years at the time of her appointment. The teacher participants indicated approval of Harris' listening tour for what they described as transparency and interest in the community's viewpoints- including those of teachers. Teachers estimated that in October of 2012 they received a letter via email informing them that Riverview would be transitioned into the Turnaround Model.

Perceptions Concerning Notification of Transformation-to-Turnaround Shift

Mike, who strongly believed the district had suffered under what he considered to be incompetent and antagonistic leadership, was encouraged by the leadership of Superintendent Patrick. He, in fact was the most vocal among the teacher participants about his disapproval of district leadership. However, he expressed approval for both Superintendent Harris and Jason Moore, the district's director for secondary and alternative schools. Mike shared,

> At the time of the Turnaround, I sensed we were going to start to support teachers. I sensed it. I didn't believe it until Cheryl Patrick took over. And Jason Moore showed up. And those two people, they had a meeting here at Riverview and we were actually open and honest and frank with each other about what was going on and that's when I realized that they're going to start allowing things to change the way they can or should (personal communication, November 11, 2014).

Mike's perception of improved communication and professionalism originating from district leadership was critical to a shift in his opinions about the overall state of the district and school. Although he expressed a sense of wariness that his professional environment would change with the introduction of a new superintendent, Mike accredited the open communication and flexibility Patrick and Moore afforded to teachers in exercising greater instructional autonomy with an improved sense of stability.

The teacher participants explained that when they were notified about Patrick's decision to shift Riverview from the Transformation to Turnaround Model in the fall of 2012, they were not surprised. The shift was commonly understood among the teachers as an escalated district response to the lack of significant improvement in Riverview's student test scores during the

initial two years of the SIG grant. Claire showed not only an acceptance that the model shift had

to happen but that the timing of the shift could not have been helped. She explained,

> It was somewhat communicated in a meeting but we all received a letter. Like we
>
> all received a formal notification and then it was all over the news about the
>
> superintendent doing the restructuring of our building. And we knew something
>
> had to happen with our building because we were at that year. I mean, it was that
>
> year for us. Something had to, she had to do a plan (personal communication,
>
> October 29, 2014).

Barbara similarly sensed the imminence of a district response and stated,

> There was a huge sense of urgency, too, that we were going to get taken over by
>
> the state if we didn't make changes…Oh, it was clear. It was scary clear. You all
>
> are going to lose your jobs if we don't do this. That's what the staff meetings
>
> sounded like. You will not be, you will not have a job next year if we don't do
>
> this (personal communication, November 14, 2014).

Barbara and Claire's descriptions of how teachers were notified indicated that Riverview's

transition into the Turnaround Model was known amongst the local community and was

frequently discussed among teachers and administrators. Morgan shared that students, too, were

keenly aware that Riverview teachers' jobs were under threat. In this exchange, Morgan

described her perceptions of the impact of teacher dismissals on students,

> **Morgan:** And some of the students were upset because they'd say, 'Well, you
>
> know, Mr. So and So's not coming back. That's not fair. He's a really
>
> good teacher.'
>
> **Tuesda:** How would they know? How would they…

Morgan: Well, but teachers would say, because the kids knew the interview

process was going on. I mean, that wasn't a secret. I mean, you know,

the Turnaround Model was explained to the parents. It was sent home

in newsletters. It was explained to the kids. So I mean, it wasn't kept

a secret. The whole school body knew the process that we were

required to go through. So the students knew that the teachers were

interviewing. So naturally, they're going to ask: 'Are you back? Are

you not back? Are you going to be here?' So you know, it's not…

you didn't want to keep it a secret from the community. I mean,

everybody knew what was going on (personal communication,

November 11, 2014).

The transparent decision to move Riverview into the Turnaround Model was consistent with

Mike's earlier description of how open communication from the district was a hallmark of

Superintendent Patrick's leadership. While the public announcement of this policy shift was

certainly an improvement on the contentious district-teacher relationship Mike described under

Dr. Johnson's leadership, Barbara and Morgan's comments suggested that the announcement

nevertheless provoked feelings of instability, vulnerability among both teachers and students.

Although multiple teachers indicated a transparent notification process for teachers,

students, and families, Barbara and Claire did not indicate a belief that the model shift occurred

as a responsive gesture to Riverview teachers' experiences or needs during the Transformation

Model. Barbara, for example, noted the urgency of the model shift but attributed the shift to the

stagnated student achievement scores and state-level politics. Claire was also clear in her

statements that she felt the decision was based on score data. Barbara explained,

Well, the SIG grant was for three years, I want to say. But the state's requirement

said you had to raise scores within two years or you had to do a Turnaround or

Transformational model. So the state's requirements didn't give us enough time

to actually implement change. The statistic or the research says that it takes three

years but the state only gave us two. So what happened is scores went up the

second year but they didn't, they didn't go up high enough or they didn't go up

enough that we didn't have to do something. The state was fighting to take over

us and get [a governor-created school system to specifically oversee lowest-

performing schools] in here… They really wanted our building and [another

school] because it would be an easy turnaround and so the superintendent

negotiated with the State Department of Ed and the Board of Ed and we could

keep control of the school for the last year of the SIG if we did a Turnaround

Model or whatever (personal communication, November 14, 2014).

Although Barbara was mistaken in her belief that the model conversion was a state mandate, her

analysis of the conversion still indicated an awareness of individual schools' placement within

the ecology of educational policy decisions. She was correct in her understanding that the state

had piloted a plan for state control of the persistently lowest performing schools and was

contemplating expanding the plan to the entire state. Barbara also indicated in this comment an

awareness of educational research concerning school reform, which would be consistent with an

ecological view of educational policies. Claire's understanding about the rationale behind

Riverview's shift from the Transformation to Turnaround was similar to Barbara's in that she too

named the school's struggle to meet AYP and a perceived threat of state takeover as significant

factors. Claire also reported feeling as though, despite clearly understanding the need to raise

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students' test scores, Riverview teachers did not fully understand the import of receiving the grant beyond the school having a record of low student performance. Her perception of teachers not being fully cognizant of the grant's meaning for the school was also coupled by a perception that the district's decision to convert reform models was not in response to a closer understanding of teachers' needs.

Barbara and Claire's reflections on the shift between the Transformation and Turnaround Models indicated lapses in the processes of communication at the mesosystem between teachers and district leaders such that teachers neither felt understood by the district nor did they understand the motivations behind district decisions- even though they reported higher approval of specific leaders and leadership styles. Lapses such as these elucidated the pervasive effects of threats of school takeovers as well as the need for open, bidirectional processes for communication between teachers and districts. In that way, policy decisions can become more informed by and attuned to local teachers' needs and their first-hand understanding of reform policy histories of implementation.

Perceptions Concerning Notification on 50% Teacher Staff Replacement

Although the teachers commonly expressed that the shift to the Turnaround Model was transparently communicated, they also indicated that one aspect of the model shift was not clearly understood. According to SIG guidelines, the Turnaround Model requires a 50% replacement of a school's staff but does not stipulate that the 50% must be restricted to teachers. Sarah, an instructional coach at the time of the model conversion, shared that despite being notified in the fall about the required dismissals, they were surprised to be told in the spring that only teachers would be dismissed. Here, she reflected on how and when teachers became more fully aware about teacher dismissals,

Tuesda: How did you, as an instructional coach, and then how did the teachers find out about this, this move over into the Turnaround Model that required the dismissal of 50%...?

Sarah: We did not know at the beginning of the year. It was not probably until December-ish, January-ish that we got wind that this, this was going to happen and didn't know what that meant. And then it wasn't until…

Tuesda: What was coming?

Sarah: Right. It was, we knew, they kept saying 50% of the staff and so we kept saying, well, what does 50% of the staff mean? We had two meetings with Cheryl Patrick and Jason Moore, the voluntary meetings, you could go and ask questions, listen, that kind of thing. So it wasn't until the second meeting that she talked about interviews, that kind of thing. And even then, we kept questioning, is this 50% of the teaching staff? Is this 50% of staff all around? Does that include custodians, secretaries, principal, that type of thing? By that second year [third year of the grant], we had already changed principals from Eric Lawrence to Greg Harris so she was very upfront with 'No, we're not changing principals again.'

Tuesda: Okay.

Sarah: But the teachers were really unsure of what that meant for them.

Tuesda: Because it wasn't clear if it was teaching staff or building?

Sarah: Right, right. So there was a lot of, 'Did you go to the meeting? What did they say at the meeting' type of thing. Then just before spring break, I think it was, we all got letters that we had to apply for our job.

Tuesda: So like April, May?

Sarah: Unh huh. Yeah. And then during that time, and it might've even been… right around spring… I could probably look it up. Then we had to schedule. We had to apply for the jobs. Then, so then of course, you've got lots of people that are bitter, applying for the jobs but also applying outside the district because, you know, it's like 'Fine. You're not going to respect me. You're going to make me reapply for my job.' So there was a lot of that bitterness. You know, that you're making me leave a building. 'I had a Highly Effective or an Effective evaluation but yet I still have to reapply for my job?' So lots of people applied outside the district. I know, I was one of them. That was the first time that I ever considered leaving and actively applied outside the district was during that time (personal communication, November 19, 2014).

With the exception of Liv, who was then an after-school employee, all of the teacher participants expressed dissatisfaction with the process by which teachers were notified about the 50% dismissal requirement and the process by which those who would be retained were identified. This process required all current Riverview employees who wished to teach there during the 2013-2014 academic year to formally reapply. Teachers who were rated as Highly Effective based on an adaptation of the Charlotte Danielson rubric, Tripod student surveys, and school involvement outside of the classroom were only required to submit an application and complete

an interview. Interviews were done off-site with the building principal, another teacher, a

member of district leadership such as the director for secondary schools, and for some applicants,

Fordham's mayor. Teachers who classified as Effective submitted an application, completed the

panel interview, presented an off-site, 20-minute teaching demonstration with Riverview

students and completed the Haberman Star Pre-Screener Questionnaire. Those who received a

classification of anything lower that Effective were not able to reapply. The Haberman

questionnaire is a tool developed by Professor of Education, Dr. Martin Haberman. According

to The Haberman Foundation website, the instrument evaluates teachers' knowledge and skills to

teach lower income and at-risk students and "boasts a 95% accuracy rate in predicting which

teachers will stay and succeed and which ones will fail of quit" ("Overview," 2006).

The inclusion of teachers in the district's effort to meet the SIG Turnaround Model

requirement of replacing 50% of the staff did not come as a complete surprise. The teachers

indicated they understood some teachers were likely to be dismissed. The restriction of staff

replacements to teachers, however, did spur tension and disappointment. As Liv stated,

> The meetings after school, I wasn't a part of because I did [the after-school
>
> program] and so that was- I didn't have a lot of interaction with the staff. I know
>
> that I could sort of feel like a vibe in the building, just an uneasiness, an
>
> uncertainty and, you know, there was a lot of maybe even like a competitive feel
>
> between teachers in the same subject area because they knew that they all
>
> couldn't return and, I mean, it was… so it was definitely… people were on edge.
>
> I could feel that in the environment although I didn't have a lot of personal
>
> connection to that (personal communication, November 13, 2014).

As did Liv, Barbara sensed a definite shift in the school dynamics when the teachers were informed about the impending Turnaround Model dismissals. She remarked,

> It was a little rough because originally, we were told it was 50% of the building
> staff. Later on, just before final evals came out and just before we had to
> interview for our jobs again, we were told it was 50% of the instructional staff.
> That was very disheartening to a group of people who had banded together, done
> all this extra professional development, worked their butt off to implement the
> EPAS system [testing and practice testing system], because that was the first year
> we implemented EPAS, the practice ACTs and the practice PLANS and the
> practice Explorers for our students. They had worked their tush off and our
> scores went up but we still had to implement this model (personal
> communication, November 14, 2014).

As an after-school teacher, Liv's primary interactions with the larger staff came during professional development meetings and when interacting with the teachers who came into the classroom she shared with a full-time Riverview teacher. In spite of her limited presence, Liv ascertained an anxious and strained work environment as did Barbara. Although Liv did not have the depth of experience at Riverview to name what contributed to that uneasiness, Barbara explained that the feelings were in part due to disappointment stemming from initially being told the dismissals would span the breadth of the entire school staff only to be later told that teachers would be the only stakeholder group to lose their jobs. Furthermore, Barbara reported feelings of disappointment due to the loss of professional camaraderie. The increased sense of cohesion and policy direction which had been established and enjoyed during the Transformation Model via retooling, training, and additional hours of service were decimated by the late announcement

to exclusively replace teachers who had worked to implement the Transformation Model with fidelity.

Conversely, Claire did not understand why the teachers were surprised. In her estimation, the October announcement was not understood as it should have been but conceded that receiving a letter was not the best way to notify teachers. Claire remarked,

I think that even though we knew in October, some teachers, by the time they got another notice in April or whenever it was, some teachers acted like they were like, 'What?' Like really surprised. And maybe it was just because it was reality. In October, it didn't seem so real but when, 'Okay, here we go, we're starting interviews,' maybe it just seemed more real. But some teachers just seemed very surprised. Some teachers thought it was not well communicated. It probably could've been communicated better. I think a lot, it would've made a difference if it came from our head principal meeting with us versus getting a letter (personal communication, October 29, 2014).

Even though Claire noted the October notification about pending staff dismissals, she criticized the devolution of the school climate between October and May. In fact, she named the ensuing competitive and backbiting climate as what stood out to her the most about the SIG program even though she knew the teachers were understandably strivingfor their jobs. Claire's observation that the school climate changed for the worse following the second staff replacement announcement was consistent with other teachers' observations that the school climate became uneasy, competitive, and anxious due to feelings of dejection. Whether teachers critiqued the timing of this second announcement because it interrupted the capacity building teachers had committed themselves to during the Transformation period or because they felt the district was

not being fully upfront, these comments indicated the impacts of time and timing at the chronosytem level had at the microsystem level. Specifically, their reflections highlighted the roles time and timing played in the maintenance of teacher satisfaction and capacity-building in school reform policies. Riverview teachers' experiences and meaning-making around the reform model shift is discussed more extensively in Chapter VII.

Perceptions Concerning the Process of 50% Teacher Staff Replacement

2012-2013 Riverview High School teacher survey results indicated that only 32% were satisfied with the teacher evaluation process which was consistent with the 45% of surveyed teachers who felt the evaluation criteria was clear. This report also stated that 45% of the teachers felt the teacher evaluation process at Riverview was a joke and made no difference at all. These statistics, collected during the school year in which Riverview was moved into the Turnaround Model, were consistent with concerns raised by the teachers of this study in that they noted inconsistencies and a lack of confidence in the guiding criteria and processes undergirding teacher evaluation. Mike and Claire, the two participants who most staunchly stated feeling as though some of Riverview teachers needed to be released, seemed nearly sympathetic with those same teachers because of the manner by which the Turnaround Model replacement process was conducted. Claire remarked,

> I'm extremely outspoken and I get really upset about teachers who don't do their
> job. So, there were some teachers I was really glad that they would not be back
> because I know there are some teachers that don't even like kids, let alone like
> teaching. So in that regard, I was glad. I don't like, I didn't like the process. I
> thought for some teachers, I just felt really badly for them. Teachers that were left
> without a job or, you know, it made me sad for them because I think that they
> truly cared about kids, they just didn't jump through the right hoops as far as their

evaluation process went. So I did, I felt bad for a lot of teachers (personal

communication, October 29, 2014).

Like Claire, Mike agreed with the design feature in the SIG brand of school reform that

made provisions for teacher dismissals but found fault in the processes governing this

part of the SIG implementation. His perceptions around those processes are evident in

this exchange:

> **Tuesda:** How did you feel when the school moved from under the
>
> Transformation Model into the Turnaround Model which then required the
>
> removal of at least 50% of the staff?
>
> **Mike:** Oh, so I didn't mind the fact that that had to happen. Like I didn't mind
>
> that at all. I didn't necessarily like the way it happened.
>
> **Tuesda:** What do you mean?
>
> **Mike:** The interview process. The way the selection went down. There were
>
> just some things in it that seemed a little bit ludicrous. As in it was like
>
> okay, we're going to set this process up- and I don't blame them for
>
> having to come up with this process. I mean, I realize it was mandated
>
> but... So to go through this process, you had to have some fair way of
>
> doing it and that fair way had to kind of disregard what the union said
>
> about, like, seniority and the types of things that the union has tried to
>
> negotiate for, to keep members- I hate to say safer but, fairness… But I
>
> don't think it necessarily turned out… and again, I go back to the HR
>
> department. I don't necessarily think it turned out as good as it could have
>
> (personal communication, November 11, 2014).

Claire and Mike were confident that the replacement of some teachers was a necessary part of improving Riverview's future. Both of them were classified as Highly Effective. Both of them were confident that they would be retained. Yet, neither of them placed confidence in the evaluation or interview processes as being fair to teachers. Their procedural critiques centered on conflicting feelings about the necessity and complexity of teacher retention and replacement in the face of rigid school accountability ideologies and strict federal level mandates at the exosystem level (Cohen-Vogel, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2006b).

Barbara also took issue with the teacher evaluation process that was linked to the teacher dismissal processes. During her interviews, Barbara was vocal about her content area strength. It was reasonable, then, to see that her observations of teacher evaluations at Riverview included a commentary on the distinctions of being a foreign language teacher. She shared,

> It's, it's like you do what you do and you're good at it, right? And you're always
> trying to do better. Because at the end of the day, you have those state standards
> to meet. You have those outcomes you've got to meet for your content area. And
> your curriculum overlaps naturally with some of the other curricula in the
> building- social studies and history and English. But when you have admin who
> don't have a background in foreign language pedagogy and knowledge of how we
> teach and why we teach what we teach and, you know, everything we teach… I
> have to be able to explain to them how my discipline relates to other disciplines.
> How what I do fulfills these requirements of improving ACT scores, improving
> academic vocab (personal communication, November 14, 2014).

Barbara's frustration stemmed from the extra steps she felt she had to take as a foreign language teacher in order to convince administrators of the strength of her instructional skills and her

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fidelity to the overall school improvement plan (Borg, 2006; Grossman & Stodolsky, 1995). The formal observations made during that year were particularly critical because they determined the breadth of her reapplication process. Barbara also expressed frustration over what she saw as inconsistencies in the teacher evaluation process. Inconsistencies in microsystem level implementation were further revealed in her claim that only some teachers had the opportunity to be evaluated twice and to be coached depending on which administrator was assigned to do their observation. These critiques reinforced Claire's concern that some teachers received poor evaluations because they were not able to "jump through the right hoops" and Mike's concern that the evaluation process during the Turnaround Model's implementation was not consistently fair.

These perceived gaps in the processes governing which teachers would be retained and which teachers would have to seek employment elsewhere not only reflected teachers' frustrations over administrative decisions but also the emotional impacts of educational policies that link a school's future success with wide-scale teacher dismissal (Cross & Hong, 2012b; Kelchtermans, 2005; Lopes, 2009; Schmidt & Datnow, 2005; Zembylas, 2003). Sarah, for example, described in this exchange how she became uncharacteristically bitter due to this part of the Turnaround Model,

> **Sarah:** Then, so then of course, you've got lots of people that are bitter, applying
> for the jobs but also applying outside the district because, you know, it's
> like fine. 'You're not going to respect me. You're going to make me
> reapply for my job.' So there was a lot of that bitterness. You know, that
> you're making me leave a building. 'I had a Highly Effective or an
> Effective evaluation but yet I still have to reapply for my job.' So…and

as it was, and it didn't necessarily, it wasn't necessarily as clearly defined

as that because we lost most, except for one person that had been hired

that year, we lost our entire science department. Lost our entire social

studies department except for two people. English was pretty stable

except we lost one.

Tuesda: Wow. What were you personally bitter about?

Sarah: I think the process. I had put so many years in at Riverview High School

and HMPS and having to go and interview for my job again and the

interview process, at least for Riverview, was not, it's not like a give and

take. Like we're having an interview. It wasn't a give and take. It was

'We're going to ask you four questions and then you have two questions

that you can ask at the end.' And that was it (personal communication,

November 19, 2014).

Sarah's bitterness was associated with what she perceived as a lack of professional

acknowledgement of and respect for qualified teachers with years of effective service. Her

comments also reflected disapproval of what she regarded as a competitive process that pitted

colleague against colleague and failed to bring teachers into meaningful dialog with those

conducting the interviews so that teachers could properly convey their "fit" for the school.

Overall, Sarah presented the teacher dismissal process as one that lacked clarity and concern for

teachers' as professionals.

Conclusion

Reflections on the significance of the Transformation Model primarily pivoted around the

influx of material goods and support personnel. The potential to improve teacher capacity as

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represented by both forms of teacher support was acknowledged by the teachers. However, delays in the receipt of requested materials during this time period interfered with teachers' ability to implement planned instructional enhancements and even with the ability of grant-funded teachers to assume their duties. The delayed hiring of instructional coaches and other personnel also lead to delays in the development of teacher capacity in that their ongoing support and feedback for teachers could not begin until the second year of the grant. Other teacher observations regarding the Transformation Model conveyed concerns that although the district named figures that were to be instrumental in executing the school improvement plan, the district lacked a coherent plan for the processes and timelines needed to effectively facilitate the success of those figures. Those processes effected the delivery of key resources, the hiring of key figures at the school level, and processes guiding the observations and replacement of teachers. The perceived flaws in the policy implementation constituted significant breakdowns at the mesosystem level. By the conclusion of the second year under the Transformation Model, however, teachers were better able to infuse the requested instructional tools into their practice while being supported by the full staff of SIG-funded support personnel.

2012-2013 was the third and final year of the SIG program for Riverview but it was also the first and only school year when all resources and support personnel were on-site on the first day of school. Sarah, as an instructional coach, expressed feeling more confident and effective in that role and that teachers felt better equipped to work towards student achievement gains because of their training in shared instructional models. On the other hand, the introduction and the execution of the Turnaround Model also spurred feelings of professional disregard, competition, anxiety, and a lack of confidence in the district's ability to foresee the emotional impact of how policies were enacted. The timing of receiving a new superintendent whom the

teachers saw as having a better approach to establishing relationships with teachers, the timing of

her subsequent hiring decisions that unclogged resource requests and deliveries, as well as the

timing of her announcement that the 50% staff replacement would be concentrated among the

teaching staff were all cited as being significant aspects of the Turnaround Model at Riverview.

Timing, then, was a critical feature in the teachers' meaning-making of both the SIG policy itself

and the district's implementation of the policy. Their reflections confirmed the role of the

chronosystem within the ecology of teacher-based policy analyses because timing was described

as being a recurrent element in how the district (microsystem) sought to be compliant to policy

mandates (exosystem) and the critical timing of introducing new figures into the ecology. In

sum, the teachers' analyses of the Turnaround Model yielded praise for district leadership that

highlighted the importance of professionalism and communication without sacrificing critiques

for their lack of policy implication foresight which the teachers saw as being closely associated

with feelings of professional satisfaction and teacher capacity.

Chapter VII: Findings: School-specific Appraisal of SIG Policy

Introduction

The effects and effectiveness of an educational policy cannot be restricted to a single action, time period, or indicator without sacrificing a holistic and longitudinal view of the more fundamental issues that policy was argued to address. While the same policy can be implemented in multiple sites, its structure and the embedded assumptions perceived by educators will be uniquely experienced according to local contexts. This chapter stands apart from the previous chapter which delineated narratives associated with the Transformation Model period and then the Turnaround Model period as individual periods in the school's history in that what follows considers the cumulative, compounded effects of ecological elements across the entirety of the grant period. While evaluations of educational policies may essentialize the import and impacts of policies in ways that equate to pre and post assessments or discrete, unconnected periods, this chapter features teachers' narratives that elucidate the interactional and protracted effects of the SIG program as experienced at Riverview High School over the three year grant period. This extended view of educational policy allows the teachers' cumulative experiences and longitudinal policy-based analyses to be more accurately overlaid upon the ecology in which they and the SIG program rest.

Riverview High School was under the SIG Transformation Model for two years. It was announced to the staff a few months after the beginning of the third academic year that the school would be placed on the Turnaround Model. Since a new principal had already been placed at Riverview that same year, the remaining major element of this new model was the dismissal of 50% of the staff. However, participants reported it was not communicated that the dismissals would only occur among the teacher staff until roughly March or April.

Consequently, the reconstructed teaching staff was never in place during the actual duration of the grant. Teachers' reactions to the the dismissals and their perceptions of how (or, even if) school improvement would be more easily achieved through a reconstructed staff are included here because what happens during a grant period and the meaning-making teachers do at that time persists beyond the official scope of the grant. Furthermore, the teachers questioned how/if the SIG program requirement to replace school principals was necessary or appropriate at Riverview. The centrality of teachers' ideological positions within school reform, their professional and emotional needs, the role and autonomy of school principals, and the significance of the tone a superintendent sounds within a heightened environment of accountability represented an ecologically-generated list of figures and contexts cited by these teachers.

Reflections on the SIG Model Conversion

Riverview's conversion from the Transformation to Turnaround Model was a particularly disappointing part of the participating teachers' overall experience working under the SIG program. The disappointment was not limited to feelings associated with the loss of colleagues or having to reapply for their jobs. Part of their dissatisfaction rested in the fact that the district did not initiate Riverview's renewal by placing the school under the Turnaround Model. Barbara and Morgan shared,

> **Barbara:** When you pop a turnaround model in the middle of all that, then you're retraining half your staff or more in the initiatives that everybody you just kicked out knew and were actually starting to get comfortable with.

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Morgan: I mean, we still have staff this year that miss our PDs here because they have to go make up this other PD, the SIOP [Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol]…

Barbara: … CKH [Capturing Kids' Hearts].

Morgan: Yeah. This other, this other PD and so now they're missing what we're doing here in the building.

This exchange between Barbara and Morgan encapsulated their concern that the federal government's and district's investment of financial and human resources as well as the teachers' investments of time and confidence in the SIG process were irresponsibly handled due to the late-term model conversion. They also indicated the lingering consequences of dismissing 50% of a retrained, resource-enriched teacher staff which necessitated the training of new staff members in the initiatives the other teachers had been using for roughly two years all while keeping them abreast of the current concerns. Although the ongoing training of new teachers would have been an inevitable occurrence due to normal teacher attrition, the underlying concerns represented in Barbara's and Morgan's observations were the exacerbated loss of teacher capacity and the undue interruption of the school's momentum resulting from the model shift.

Sarah, Mike, and Liv also disapproved of the model conversion. In similar fashion to the critiques expressed by Barbara and Morgan, they spoke to the inefficiency of dismissing 50% of an already-retrained staff. These excerpts revealed their convictions that the time frame in which new curriculum was delivered and the inversion of what they saw as a more logical model sequence limited support personnel's ability to boost the existing teachers' capacity. Additionally, they claimed that the lack of clear job roles for the newly hired personnel interfered

with efforts to provide data and technology support which were key elements of the proposed school improvement plan. The Transformation to Turnaround sequence was seen as an ineffective attempt to time "booster shots" in order to speed up the school's improvement. They explained,

> **Sarah:** Yeah. So I think it would've been, if we had the 50% turnover and then you had those people in place. But we had all these extra people, including a principal coach, in the building. We as teachers didn't really necessarily know what they did. I don't think they, I mean, there were times that the four instructional coaches were like oh, my gosh. You know, what, what do they want us to do? And then we get pulled in this direction and we get pulled in this direction. There wasn't any plan for us and then you flip over 50% of your staff and some new people in the building and there's nothing for them. There's not a data person. There's not a technology person. There's not an instructional coach. There's not the money to buy for the supplies. So it's, it's kind of backward, how we did things.

> **Mike:** They came, they really came backwards. And like I'm thinking back to the advocates, when we had like so many of them…

> **Liv:** Yeah, there were like twelve advocates, when I started. Literally, weren't there?

> **Sarah:** Yeah.

> **Mike:** I don't remember exactly where that, what brought them in but I just remember thinking like, how much are we spending on that and what are

they doing? Not that they were doing anything wrong or not that helpful but I just…

Liv: I don't know if they knew what they were doing.

Tuesda: Let me see if I'm understanding. You viewed these additional personnel members, the coaches, the data, the tech, the youth advocates, not necessarily as being… You saw them as necessary supports but they would've been more effective had there been a clear vision as to how they fit into the school improvement plan?

Liv: Or, and if they would've been here after the 50% of the staff was…

Sarah: … right.

Liv: After the turnover happened… If they wouldnt've all been cut.

Tuesda: Not necessarily like, you know, in perpetuity but at least for those three years, those two or three years under the grant. You felt like that would've been nice to have had after the turnover?

Liv: Yeah.

Mike: Instead we had them before.

Liv: Right.

Tuesda: Okay.

Sarah: This is the student outcome numbers that we want. I know, Mike knows because he's one of the 50% that got to stay, but these new teachers, 'Do you know what you're supposed to be teaching? Do you know what data you need? Let me help you do that.'

Tuesda: Okay. That would've been helpful?

Mike: Right.

Sarah: Where all of those people were brought in at the beginning and they

didn't really know how they could help.

Mike: And so therefore, this is why I always go back to this, they did things to us

instead of for us (personal communication, November 19, 2014).

Here, the teachers estimated that a more efficient use of the new personnel would have been to

replace 50% of the teaching staff and to then support the reconstructed teaching staff with

instructional coaches, technology and data specialists, and youth advocates who would have had

the benefit of capitalizing on the strengths of retained staff members. Mike's comments also

reflected a lack of confidence in the district's overall concern for teachers' working conditions

because he interpreted the model conversion and what he described as an ineffective use of

support personnel to be indicators of a lack of organizational foresight. According to the

Department of Education's description of the SIG models, had Riverview implemented the

Turnover at the onset, they would have still been able to incorporate the Transformation Model's

requirements- including provisions for more professional development, collaboration, and

resources chosen to bolster student achievement. This provision confirms the teachers' suspicion

that the district's reform model sequence was reactionary, short-sighted, or ill-conceived

especially in light of Sarah's observation that the teachers introduced to Riverview after the

Turnaround rehiring process have not benefitted from the support personnel the existing teachers

saw as critical to the school's trajectory. Their observations spoke to the inadequacy of

analyzing educational policies in discrete units because the issue of timing saturates all policy

phases and because plans and processes guiding policy implementation have reverberating

effects.

Sarah noted how flaws in the processes directing curriculum delivery effected teachers brought in to the school expressly for the grant. She addressed the protracted impact of glitches in the processes of policy implementation in her observation,

Sarah: So it was very, no, no process and protocol put in with "How are we going to use the money? What are we going to use it for?" Some of the personnel was there. We had like a school to careers person and so on. But that person didn't come in until like the end of the year. Here at Riverview, we wanted the Read 180 program, reading program, all the materials came in but then they didn't come in until April. Well, you can't put the class in, you know, in April so we had to wait until the following year to put it in. So it was little things like that. We finally got Read 180 put in the last year of the grant and it's still going on now but it was, you know, here's several millions of dollars, figure out what you want to do and then everybody wanted, you know, we should do this, we should do this and there really wasn't a grand plan of things. You know, getting…

Tuesda: You mean from the district or from school leadership?

Sarah: From, I think from both, from both places. You know, so it was like, "Yes, we have this resource," but then we didn't think of "How are we going to use that resource? How are we going to support it? How are we going to continue to support it?" That type of thing (personal communication, November 13, 2014).

The curriculum those teachers were hired to deliver did not arrive until April of Year Two. Although those teachers had been repurposed by then, Sarah's observations spoke to the impact of SIG implementation processes on students in that the Read 180 curriculum was based on a cross-disciplinary approach to improve students' reading abilities using the Blended Learning instructional model whose implementation coincided with the school's first year under the SIG program. In this way, flaws in the ecology's policies impacted the timing of effective teacher employment and curriculum delivery, both of which are critical in improving students' learning and a school's ability to meet benchmarks in a timely manner.

By letter and by intention, the SIG program represented an effort to interrupt the school's pattern of repeated academic shortcoming. What teachers perceived as the long-term effects of the Transformation and Turnaround Models, as well as the processes that guided their implementation, provided insight into the intended and unintended microsystem consequences of the SIG program's requirements. One aspect of teachers' analyses about the grant's impact was the effect of superintendent's approach to school reform. Hamilton Mill's previous superintendent applied for the SIG funding but it was Dr. Cheryl Patrick, the current superintendent, who made the decision to change reform models. The teachers in this study did not uniformly express approval of the ways by which Dr. Patrick fulfilled the grant's requirements but several of them appreciated her longitudinal views on improving the district's schools. Morgan, for example, noted,

> You know, part of what the SIG grant did was it really helped to narrow that
>
> focus. We've now had the same initiatives, particularly SIOP, close and critical
>
> reading, disciplinary literacy. That's now been here for several years and so it's
>
> kind of stabilized that. The district. And part of that is our new superintendent,

too. She's not a believer in, you know, 'Oops, we tried this for two years, it

didn't work, let's find something new. It's okay. If this is truly a valid model that

we want to follow, it's going to take us more than two years. We need to

constantly be, you know, self-evaluating, reevaluating, what do we still need to

work on?' But she gets that it's going to take three to five years to fully truly

implement any type of strategy or research strategy that you want to do. So

between her and the SIG grant, it's helped stabilize that so the teachers have

bought in more. You see more, you know, you'll hear, there's a common

language among the staff now which… it's nice (personal communication,

November 11, 2014).

The confidence Morgan placed in the resulting stabilized and focused view on instructional

initiatives was paired with confidence in the new superintendent's philosophy towards

educational reform. Her analysis of the overall impact of the SIG program on Riverview linked

school and district-level changes, demonstrating a conceptualization of successful school reform

that was based on (1) alignment across those contexts, (2) frequent and critical introspection of

the roles and processes governing the reform policy, (3) realistic, yet longitudinal perspectives of

school improvement. Her valuation of consistency, stability, supportive leadership, and

evaluation of the process of school reform contributed to a work environment where she felt

Riverview's teachers could trust both the intention of the reform policy and the district.

Morgan's approach to policy analysis called for an understanding of school reform and policy

compliance as evolving aspects of educational policy instead of reducing them to a pass/fail

evaluation at the conclusion of the policy's implementation. Morgan's claim that Dr. Patrick's

policy philosophy was more closely aligned with sustained improvement underscored the

consequences not only of discrete policy decisions, nor the presence of specific individuals with administrative authority at the microsystem level, but also the philosophies at work as those authority figures take action. This was especially evident when one considers that decisions about which types of support personnel were needed and the decision to give teachers greater autonomy concerning the instructional materials they deemed most appropriate for their own classrooms were made by the former superintendent. Thus, the impact of persons within the ecology of educational policies was seen as being closely linked to the time at which they were introduced into the ecology and the macrosystem philosophies they used to frame their actions and interactions.

Barbara, for instance, lamented what she considered to be a breach of professionalism between Hamilton Mills Public Schools and Riverview's teachers. While she and Morgan both spoke to the issue of time and timing in the policy's implementation, Barbara spoke more pointedly to what she saw as the destabilization of district-teacher communication and policy alignment which preceded the reconstruction of Riverview's teaching staff.

> But with the population we have that is so far behind coming in, we did good
> work but it, you know, like I said, the problem was we were under the perception
> that we had three years and the state actually only gave us two. And I think that
> was not communicated clearly to everybody. So it was very shocking and some
> teachers here left the district because of what happened with that Turnaround
> Model. We had teachers go to other school districts. We've had teachers leave
> the building or leave the profession because of the frustration and all the effort
> they put in and then to be told at the end of that year not only do you have to take
> this little test online to say whether you're a good person to teach in an urban,

poverty school, there was also, you had to re-interview for your job and if you

weren't deemed Highly Effective that year on your eval, you had to teach a

twenty-minute lesson as well. So it was basically like sending us back to when

we first graduated from our teacher ed and our bachelor's degree where you had

to interview for your job again, where you had to teach a sample lesson. A lot of

things new teachers go through. It was very humiliating and very demeaning, I

think, to a lot of serious professionals in this building. And they were hurt by it.

They were offended and they were very upset (personal communication,

November 14, 2014).

Barbara expressed an overall approval of Riverview teachers' compliance within the two SIG

models. She did, however, indicate a perception of betrayal in that the conversion to the

Turnaround Model during the third year of the three-year grant cut short the amount of time the

teachers were told the school had to demonstrate growth. She reported the late dismissal of

teachers was interpreted by teachers as being so frustrating and demeaning that some Riverview

teachers voluntarily left the school, the district, and even the profession. She found the

requirement that all teachers go through the same rehiring process regardless of years of

experience or degree they held to be particularly offensive and humiliating. While some veins of

literature have focused on the effectiveness of policies based on teacher firing (Staiger &

Rockoff, 2010; Winters & Cowen, 2013; Yeh, 2013), other literature has highlighted the

depersonalizing effects of educational policies (Weisberg et al., 2009), teacher depersonalization

as a factor in school climates (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008), and the depersonalized language in

public discourse (Kirylo & Nauman, 2006). Barbara's perceptions of humiliation as an

outgrowth of policy compliance, however, called for research that integrates microsystem level

considerations of policy interpretation and implementation with an extension of teacher

professionalism that includes personal dignity. As a teacher who was classified as Effective and

who was retained, Barbara's comments can be seen as a cautionary warning against basing

policy effectiveness on what is in place at the end of the policy's implementation without

considering the unseen, and perhaps unknown, consequences that teachers bare even as they

survive a school reform.

Reflections on Factors Contributing to Riverview's Stagnation and Growth During the 3-Year SIG Period

Presently, Riverview High School has improved enough to no longer be placed on the

state's list of Priority Schools. Nevertheless, a review of the students' test scores still reflected

low levels of academic success. Teachers readily acknowledged areas of growth as well as

plaguing areas where improvement has not yet reached levels that would indicate widespread

student success. Here are some of their responses when asked to reflect on the growth spurred

by the SIG program and the issues which the grant had not changed:

Tuesda: So what do you think has contributed to the improvements and what do

you think has contributed to some of the stagnation?

Morgan: A lot of the stagnation comes from, again, when they come in, we have

3 ½ years. So if last year's ninth grade came in scoring a 15.2 on their

ePass data and this year's freshmen come in scoring a 15.2 on their

ePass data, there's only so much growth that we can obtain in that 3 ½

year period. And so I think we'll start to see an upswing as

communication has filtered down to the middle schools and the upper

elementary saying, you know, this is, this is the trickledown effect.

And so you know, the improvements we've made are more focused

education, particularly in your core contents, when we're preparing

them for the ACT Work Keys. Teachers are more educated and we've

had more practice now at blending that into our content. So it's not

like okay, today we're doing Algebra II, tomorrow we're preparing for

the ACT. It's blended

Tuesda: Okay.

Morgan: And so learning how to better prepare our students for the test, not that

we're skipping the content but the ACT is a reading test, above

everything else. The entire thing, math, science, the whole thing is a

reading test. So while our students were given a naked number

problem, you know, 5 x 6 + 4 divided by 8, they can do that. Put those

same steps in the context of a paragraph and they get lost.

Tuesda: Okay.

Morgan: And so, you know, we've become better at integrating that into our

curriculum so that, that close and critical reading, teaching them how to

break down a problem, how to approach a problem. That's become

better. But the stagnation is that still our students coming out of middle

school up into the high school are still coming in with the same scores

that the last year's class and the class before had. And so it, there's

only so much growth you can really expect to make. You know,

knowing with all the remediation we have to do. So you know, if we

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ever were to get a group of freshmen that came in scoring at grade

level, you know, then obviously, you know.

Barbara: We'd have no problem (personal communication, November 19,

2014).

Morgan's assessment of Riverview's areas of improvement and stagnation stemming from its

participation in the SIG program named standardized tests as a key marker of school

improvement. Though she did not assert these tests should be the primary marker of a school's

success or failure, her comments demonstrated an awareness of how central they are in the

school's overall quality assessment. Morgan accredited the school's more transparent and

integrated approach to curriculum and testing as a benefit to her instruction. The focus on

instructional initiatives like close and critical reading, according to these comments, helped

teachers across content areas to find common language and a shared framework to help students

become better readers and more adept at working through a process of learning and test-taking

instead of simply focusing on the test item's answer. She also cited greater communication

across grade levels and schools about the foundational needs of high school students in order to

be successful according to their test scores- an indication that sustainable school reform cannot

be limited to what happens in a single school. The significance of testing was also a factor in

Morgan's assessment of why the school has still struggled to find marked, widespread academic

improvement. Despite an improvement in communication across the district, Morgan still found

students' academic skillsets and content area proficiencies to be a significant impediment in

teachers' ability to help them reach standard benchmarks of success. Barbara and Morgan both

agreed that a reason for Riverview's tepid rate of test score improvement was the persistent issue

of having to meet what they perceived as unrealistic expectations that high school teachers could

remediate underprepared students within the same timeframe as those who entered high school at grade level.

Barbara and Morgan's analysis of Riverview's present state and threats to the growth they achieved spoke to the value of ecological considerations of school success and school reform even within an individual school's microsystem. Their observations revealed feelings of greater success and stability within Riverview but also demonstrated lingering concerns about the success and stability of Riverview's feeder schools. In this way, the promotion of flagship schools within a district could be more equitably connected with the investments made in others and, analyses of failing schools could help districts identify ecological breakdowns instead of viewing accountability as a punishment to be taken against one school, principal, or collection of teachers. Riverview and one of its feeder middle schools, for example, were simultaneously under the SIG program. Although it did not appear the two schools' improvement plans were purposefully linked, longitudinal and compounded effects of middle and high schools experiencing parallel reform efforts is an aspect of policy analysis raised by these teachers' interpretations of growth and stagnation as experienced throughout the grant period.

Stability, as a function of an educational policy's effect and its effectiveness, is not only evident in the number of policies teachers are required to carry out. Stability can also be seen in the clarity of vision and priorities that bring those policies into alignment with each other so that teachers have a common focus for their instructional efforts. Mike cited feeling optimistic about the current conditions within Riverview and the district:

> Now I think they've actually got a handle on it and they're going in that direction
>
> where everything is linked. However, if there's nine initiatives, I guarantee
>
> we're not going to do any of the nine well because there's too many and so I used

to just say my standing joke- we're going to do one thing good, (or) we're going to do six things badly. Can we do two things good? That would be always the negotiation. Let's do two good things then (personal communication, November 13, 2014).

His optimism, cautiously expressed as it was, is based on a sense of cohesion between the district and school in regards to which educational policies are implemented. The implementation of those policies, too, was seen as an improvement from the past in that Mike considered the policies themselves to be more complimentary in their purpose. Though connected to different sources of concern, the teachers' trepidation in the school's ability to sustain growth spoke to the need for educational policies that consider the ecological (including the role of time) and structural issues of schooling.

Claire also perceived a higher level of stability at Riverview. Although she too observed a more consistent vision for school improvement, her comments addressed the impetus of that clarified focus. She explained,

Claire: I would say the growth is the fact that I think we have a team of teachers here that do have more of a consistent vision. I think that's something we're working towards. That the teachers who are here know that that is a priority that we're a Priority school. That's not really a choice. So if we are told these are the strategies we're using, I think for the most part, most of the teachers are using it…

Tuesda: Yeah, so things that, so you attribute the growth to teachers who now, this teaching staff you feel has a clear vision? You don't think that was the case before the big turnover?

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Claire: No. I think that being in a Priority school, it has more of a focus. I think

the evaluation procedure, even though it's extremely rigorous, holds

teachers accountable. And I feel like Greg is trying to hold teachers

more accountable as far as student achievement. It's more of a focus.

We're looking at data, that's a big deal. I would say this year, I feel

more comfortable talking to students about data whereas before I didn't.

Like a lot of times, we would get the data but it didn't make sense. Like

I wouldn't know how to explain it to a kid. Whereas I feel like maybe

since last spring, it has been broken down to students where counselors

are going in and explaining it and explaining it to us during our PD time.

That's helpful. Whereas before, that was not, like what do we do with

this data? We didn't really do anything with the data. We just talked

about it (personal communication, December 9, 2014).

Claire's comments about the growth she has witnessed at Riverview because of the SIG program

emphasized teachers' common understanding of their roles, of the greater vision for the school,

and teachers' improved capacity to properly communicate and leverage student data for learning.

While she clearly described the reconstructed teacher staff as being more aware of the urgency of

the school's status and possessing a clearer sense of the vision to improve that status, her

reflection of her own improvement was not limited to the benefit of simply having new

colleagues. Instead, she found professional value in having new colleagues whom she felt were

now being appropriately held accountable to upholding and advancing the specific vision for

school improvement developed between the district and Riverview administration. It should be

noted, however, that Claire first made it clear that the consistent vision and teachers' enhanced

focused coincided with the timing of the Turnaround Model but were not the products of the reform model. Instead, she claimed the classification of being a Priority school (which occurred before the Turnaround Model was in place) was the greater impetus to Riverview's staff becoming more focused on effective teaching. This distinction speaks to a need to nuance prior research on teachers and threat rigidity, specifically in the face of reforms premised on wide-scale teacher dismissals (Olsen & Sexton, 2009).

Reflections on Riverview's Future as a Component of Educational Policy Analysis

Teachers' confidence levels about the future of their school can also be considered as a part of a teacher-based analysis of educational policy. While some policies are designed to address very specific needs that may not be related to protracted matters of educational or social inequities, others, by virtue of their usage patterns or language, are expressly meant to do just that. The SIG Program is a part of the federal government's Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title 1 which is also known as Education for the Disadvantaged and Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged. Title 1's focus on the education of marginalized communities makes the long-term effects of its efforts a critical aspect of policy analyses. While teacher confidence about the future of schools operating under the SIG program can be grounded in professional intuition that develops with experience, that confidence (or lack thereof) can also stem from more concrete indicators of a school's sociocultural positioning and the conditions of their work contexts. The participants of this study called on traditional abstractions of academic success and issues of structural conditions in order to communicate their beliefs about the SIG program's legacy at Riverview. In response to what types of teacher supports would contribute to sustainable teacher success, Morgan shared,

You know, something on a totally different, different realm would be smaller

class sizes. I mean, my Algebra II classes are thirty-two, thirty-five, thirty-seven,

and when I have English Language Learners and I have Special Ed students and I

have Newcomers, I try my best. I really try my best to put the supports in place

and using the SIOP model and… but it's tough to meet the needs of that many

kids on a daily basis. You know, it's frustrating. I mean, I'm not asking for class

sizes of fifteen, but you know, if we get twenty-eight… You know, but smaller

class sizes. It's, I mean, I would love to be able to knock a few more tables out of

here and think of all the different grouping arrangements… (personal

communication, November 19, 2014).

Morgan's comments came on the heel of having relayed her dissatisfaction with the

discontinuation of a formal co-teaching structure where content area and Special Education

teachers collaboratively developed and delivered lesson plans. In this way, she communicated a

belief that the district's implementation of the SIG program fell short of addressing teachers'

need for additional support in order to provide quality instruction for Riverview's students with

disabilities (nearly 16% of the overall student population). This perception of a missed

opportunity to respond to teachers' ongoing needs was amplified, according to Morgan, due to

the policy's lack of attention to class sizes. While small class sizes are often touted as a selling

point for schools, Morgan's comments reflected a a resignation that small class sizes were

desirable but beyond the scope of reasonable expectations in her particular context.

With neither a re-evaluation of the teachers' needs in order to properly meet students' needs nor

a restructuring that reduced the number of students in each class, Morgan's assessment of what it

would take to achieve sustained improvement revealed the SIG policy's lack of response to

structural issues related to teachers' work environments. More specifically, her critique spoke to

shortcomings in microsystem interpretations of federal mandates.

Participants also mulled over the likelihood of their students' standardized test scores

improving and the factors that would contribute to that improvement. All three of the teachers

represented in the following exchange exhibited confidence that school-specific data based on

student cohorts that experienced the sustained, more focused policy implementation under the

SIG program would prove that increased attention to supporting teacher capacity and student-

teacher relationships are related to student success. They shared,

Liv: I mean, I've only been here a couple of years. I can't wait to see the test

scores, like my first year compared to after the kids who've had access to

like the Capturing Kids' Hearts where everyone is supposed to be building a

relationship and I know a large majority of teachers are trying to. What

those test scores are going to be like four years down the road. And I think

there will be proof there. I think if you compare last…

Sarah: I think so, too…

Liv: … year to this year, there's going to be proof there.

Mike: And I agree.

Sarah: And I think then you ask the question, what's different from two years

ago and then it'll come out, whether it's the Capturing Kids' Hearts or

whatever you want to call it but you know, somebody might then say

well, we had good relationships with the kids. There was a calmness in

the building. There was consistency in classrooms and in the building

that set the kids at ease. Then I think you're going to be able to say those

things (personal communication, December 2, 2014).

While Liv's projections about the long-term benefit to student outcomes focused on the

formulation and maintenance of positive student-teacher relationships, Sarah pushed back on

would-be assumptions that the improved student-teacher relationships could have been fostered

absent a more stable and professional teaching/learning environment. She questioned if the

consistency and calmness being acknowledged in the present school year would be a short-lived

after-effect of the policy or if the changes would persist. Specifically, she was hesitant to

associate the teachers' training in Capturing Kid's Heart (which occurred after the official grant

period) with the calmer school climate. Instead, Sarah emphasized the consistency teachers

provided in classrooms as a key part to the SIG program's legacy. She insisted that the teachers'

work done in relation to the grant should not overshadow the impacts of having a stable

environment for teachers nor the stability teachers provided to students- elements of school

reform not easily evident in statistical analyses of a policy's success. This represented an effort

to reintroduce the efforts made by teachers during and prior to the grant as an element of the

chronosystem within educational policy analyses. Here, the likelihood of long-term school

stability, teachers' long-term commitment to excellence, and a forward-thinking projection of

where the school will be in the future were seen as going hand-in-hand.

The consistency in the school building referred to by Sarah could be associated with

larger issues of the abilities and actions of district officials and principals. Part of the duties of

principals and district administrators is the hiring, retention of, and support given to teachers.

Thus, another consideration of teachers' confidence in the future of their school as an element of

policy analysis was their perception about the quality of the teaching staff after the policy

implementation has concluded. The following exchanges indicated the majority of the

participants questioned the district's ability to properly staff Riverview after dismissing half of

its teachers.

> **Liv:** I know that when I started here, this was the goal and the way that
> Riverview High School has gone about doing that is by replacing half of the
> staff and so, I mean, last year when we came in, the idea was anybody in
> this building should be on the same page. They should be focused on
> improving student outcomes and they should be buying into "These are the
> things we're going to do to have that happen." Now, do you ever get that?
> Not necessarily. But…
>
> **Mike:** Well, and we didn't, right? We talked about that. I walked into that
> meeting and I looked around and I was like, 'Whoa! Am I in the wrong
> place?' You know, I was shocked at some of the people that, that were
> here that I knew weren't buy-in people.
>
> **Sarah:** Unh hunh.
>
> **Mike:** Again, there's nothing against them or their teaching skills or who they
> are as a person but I was still just like… the last, last fifteen years, she
> wasn't a buy-in person and now she's here and she's going to buy-in? I
> mean, I hope that she has and I haven't really kept track of that but it was
> like, that 50% replacement didn't do that.
>
> **Liv:** Right, right.
>
> **Tuesda:** It didn't necessarily…

Mike: It didn't get the people who were, and actually, even, even bigger was that we didn't have the HR power to get new people in that were going to be the superstars.

Tuesda: But weren't they all either Effective or Highly Effective in order to come in?

Sarah: Yes, everybody in the building had to have an Effective, at least an Effective rating.

Tuesda: So then why…

Mike: But then we had new people start. 50%...

Tuesda: Did those new people have to be…

Mike: If you have enough.

Liv: Well, if they're brand new, I mean, if they're brand new they wouldn't have a rating.

Sarah: They wouldn't've had a rating.

Mike: And if you have enough, which we haven't. We started the next year with nine subs!

Sarah: Nine subs, yeah.

Mike: Nine subs.

Tuesda: Because you had to wait to find Effective or Highly Effective…?

Mike: No. Well…

Liv: … had to wait for, to find anybody!

Sarah: People.

Liv: People.

Mike: Warm bodies (personal communication, December 2, 2014).

These teachers went on to say that starting the school year without being fully staffed was a district-wide issue. They critiqued the adoption of the Turnaround Model after the Transformation Model because it left the school in a position where long-term substitute teachers had to be used when qualified teachers were dismissed in order to meet SIG mandates. They associated the school's reliance on substitute teachers during this time period with difficulties for the teachers who were eventually hired and for students. Mike explained that teachers had to help students adjust by making up excuses for the substitutes whenever students felt they had been disrespected. Sarah claimed that teachers who assumed responsibilities for classes previously monitored by substitutes were at a disadvantage, "… not only are they behind because of curriculum, then they're behind in relationship building. They're behind with the kids. To the point where the kids are like, so are you the real teacher or are you just another sub?" (personal communication, December 2, 2014). Each of these critiques returned to what they saw as an issue that surpassed not only the Transformation and Turnaround Models as discrete time periods and spoke to more fundamental and persistent issues of the district's capacity and foresight which were relevant both prior to and after the three-year grant period.

While the district's interpretation of the SIG Turnaround Model restricted the retained teachers to the pool of those evaluated as Effective or Highly Effective, five of the six teachers believed the selection process of new teachers to have been flawed in that inexperienced teachers who lacked an evaluation altogether or those who were Effective or Highly Effective but did not list Riverview as a top choice for their teaching assignment had to be hired due to poor teacher recruitment. Barbara and Morgan, for example, were less than optimistic about the district's ability to attract qualified teachers to Riverview and claimed,

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Barbara: I mean, if you don't have enough Effective teachers in your district that apply for the position and interview for it… that leaves you with empty teaching positions, right? So then where are you pulling from? You're pulling from the layoff list, chances are a good portion of them are Minimally [Effective] or Ineffective. Or you're getting brand new teachers and you don't really have a rating for yet.

Tuesda: So let me see if I understand. The process…

Morgan: We're both sitting, our body language, wow!

Tuesda: I noticed that. Arms are folded.

Morgan: Let's mix up our body language a little bit.

Barbara: That was a rough moment. It really was. It was very, a lot of angst and a lot of depression going on there. It was very hard to see people leave.

Morgan: It was hard. And you're talking to two people who came back.

Barbara: Yeah.

Morgan: And it was hard.

Barbara: Yeah (personal communication, November 19, 2014).

After nervously laughing and an awkward pause, they continued,

Morgan: So you're replacing teachers with either an unknown or…

Barbara: … or a long term sub.

Morgan: Yeah.

Barbara: An unknown, brand new teacher, a long term sub. A long term sub because if you can't, if you can't find a teacher on the layoff list who's got the

right endorsement, who's qualified and has at least an Effective rating, right? If

you can't find them and you can't hire a new teacher coming out of college with a

diploma and an endorsement that you need, then you're ending up with a sub in

the class. Imagine that. Now, you don't even have a qualified teacher in the

classroom with the kids.

Tuesda: So long term sub…

Barbara: That's worse than having a Minimally Effective teacher in the

classroom, in my opinion. Because you got somebody who doesn't know how to

teach anything.

Morgan: I mean, they may have absolutely no knowledge of the content.

Barbara: Exactly. Or classroom management (personal communication,

November 19, 2014).

Here, the participants were critical of what they perceived as the district's inability to attract

vetted teachers who wanted to work at Riverview. Barbara and Morgan, in fact, were surprised

by how their body language changed when discussing the vacancies remaining immediately after

the Turnaround teacher dismissals. In light of earlier interviews where they both acknowledged

the benefit of fast-tracking the dismissal of subpar teachers, these narratives communicated a

belief that the 50% dismissal requirement was more detrimental than dismissing teachers who

were clearly poor fits and rehabilitating those on the borderline of effectiveness but showed

themselves to be skilled in content knowledge and classroom management. Their reflections on

teacher retention/dismissal and the long-term impact of starting the first year after the grant's

conclusion with an incomplete and possibly under-qualified teacher staff represented an

informative aspect of educational policy as an interruption to patterns of structural needs in urban

schools. Taken together, the teachers' analyses of the Turnaround Model implementation

indicated a lack of confidence that (1) the district's interpretation of the federal mandate

requiring the replacement of 50% of the school's staff reflected the actual percentage of

Riverview's ineffective teachers, (2) the process properly identified which then-current teachers

would buy into the new vision for school improvement, or (3) the district demonstrated the

necessary forethought of how school improvement progress would be stalled should they not be

able to fully and appropriately staff the school in the immediate aftermath of such a large teacher

dismissal.

Each of these points spoke to the interplay of sociocultural issues that effect and are

effected by the field of Education, popular beliefs and ideologies surrounding urban schools, and

the advancement of educational policies that come short of addressing either (Lipman, 2011;

Mehta, 2013; Noguera & Wells, 2011; Perry, Moses, Jr, Delpit, & Wynne, 2010). More

specifically, the critiques levied by the majority of the teachers about the wisdom of federal

policies mandating teacher dismissals were representative of sociocultural issues related to urban

education including factors contributing to social marginalization (Noguera & Wells, 2011;

Roscigno, 2006); discourses and urban schools, race and power (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2013; K. D.

Brown & Brown, 2012; Leonardo & Hunter, 2007) and the working conditions of teachers in

urban schools (Brian Aaron Jacob, 2007; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002; Loeb, Darling-

Hammond, & Luczak, 2005). The imposed mandates on urban districts to replace teachers was

related to both reform models in that the Transformation Model improved the working

conditions of teachers while the Turnaround Model is an example of uncritical uses of political

power that provide much-needed funds with one hand, yet perpetuate teacher turnover with the

other. The fact that the school received a significant financial investment from the federal

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government that was depreciated by the dismissal of 50% of the teaching staff at the conclusion of the grant, meant the reconstituted staff tasked to sustain the momentum achieved under the grant would have to do so without the full benefit of that consistency, capacity-building, or instructional resources afforded by sucha a significant financial investment. The teachers' longitudinal policy analyses transcended the discrete use of any single reform model and landed more squarely in the arena of exosystem educational policies needing to connect discourses about teacher and school accountability with historically contextualized sociopolitical ecologies of urban schools. Without these types of analyses, Riverview's removal from the state's Priority School list could be accredited to the SIG program when in fact, the impact of its interpretations at other levels within the ecology would be lost even though those considerations revealed teachers' concerns about ongoing systemic issues.

Reflections on Principal Replacement as a Component of Educational Policy Analysis

The above excerpts demonstrated the participants' disapproval for the timing and process by which half of Riverview's teachers were dismissed. They also indicated an understanding and even a qualified approval of advancing the school's progress via a reconstructed teaching staff. While the Turnaround Model requires the replacement of 50% of a school's staff, both the Turnaround and Transformation Models require the replacement of a school's principal. The teachers of this study addressed the models' embedded assumption that the replacement of the principal was a necessary component of improving Riverview's performance. A common element of the following exchanges is that the teachers assumed an ecological viewpoint that represented principals' effectiveness as resting at the mesosystem level according to the quality of professionalism and support shown to principals by teachers and district administrators. Ultimately, their responses to the question of whether or not principal replacement was a

necessary part of Riverview's reformation hovered around "Not necessarily, but quite possibly."

Here, the teachers discussed issues within the district's mesosystem concerning interactional

issues of power between superintendents and principals;

> **Tuesda:** So in essence, in your opinion, is replacing the principal a must do in
>
> order to turn, turn a school around?
>
> **Mike:** Yes.
>
> **Sarah:** I think probably. In our situation, it was, yeah…
>
> **Mike:** Yes.
>
> **Sarah:** Yeah.
>
> **Mike:** Without offending the prior people- It's not their fault. That's how I like
>
> to think of it. They inherited a system that was really broken and not
>
> supported properly.
>
> **Sarah:** Right.
>
> **Tuesda:** Okay.
>
> **Mike:** But, yes.
>
> **Tuesda:** Why? Because, you know, some people might say, look, it's
>
> destabilizing an already unstable situation. And you don't have to
>
> speak about this particular… I don't want you to feel pressured to do
>
> that.
>
> **Sarah:** In fact, I don't think he would be offended. I mean, he's lived through it.
>
> *Hamilton Mills was in a very unique situation, too, because not only did*
>
> *we need a principal change, we needed a superintendent change. And it*
>
> *just so happened that they both kind of happened around the same time*

as, you know, within those three years [emphasis added]. So part of me

wants to say, for sure, yes, the principal needs to change, but at the same

time, I don't know that the principal had a whole lot of control anyway.

Mike: Right.

Sarah: Where, you know, this principal wasn't doing anything because he just

wasn't doing anything. Or was it that he wasn't doing anything because

he was told that he couldn't do anything? Or he didn't have the

autonomy to do something?

Mike: Tried stuff and got in trouble for it.

Liv: Yeah, his hands were tied.

Sarah: *So I think it's almost like you have to look at that, that layer above the*

principal, too. Is it the principal because they aren't doing anything for

the school? They have every opportunity to do something and they're

not? Or is it this whole system of their hands are tied [emphasis added]?

And I think with our former principal, it was a little of both. You know, I

think that the frustration was there, so yeah, it was time for him to move

on. You know, if he's that frustrated, but at the same time, how much

fight do you have left in you when they're not allowing you to do

anything anyway. So…

Mike: I personally believe that regardless of who you end up inheriting from the,

from the swap, that leadership starts at the top and *you can only blame the*

old leader for so long and so put a new leader in and if you continue to do

the wrong thing, you find out whether or not it was the leader's problem

or not or whether it's a systemic problem or… But it always starts at the

top, leadership does [emphasis added]. Always. And so it doesn't mean

that the person you replaced is bad or has any, he just didn't have the right

wherewithal to get through the system. And so, and it doesn't make like

Greg, our current principal, is the best ever. He just somehow managed to

make it work. And so, and that gave us the chance (personal

communication, December 2, 2014).

Mike and Sarah, long-term Riverview veterans, offered a contextualized and somewhat

sympathetic perspective on this issue by describing what they perceived as the limited autonomy

of the principal during the Transformation Model. They did not attribute the school's lack of

drastic improvement during that time period to the principal's professional capability. Instead,

they leaned towards the intervening influences of district administration on his capacity to act as

an educational leader. Their comments addressed the possibility that poor leadership at school

and/or district levels may preclude informed decisions about principal fit.

 Riverview began the Transformation period with a newly-installed principal, Eric

Lawrence. Similarly, the school began the Turnaround period under the leadership of another

newly-installed principal, Greg Harris and a new superintendent, Dr. Patrick. The teachers'

comments indicated sympathy for each principal, connected their performance and autonomy

with district leadership, yet did not waiver in their estimation that a change was needed (even

during the grant period) if Riverview was to flourish. Mike even went as far as to question if

principal ineffectiveness was a matter of the principal, the superintendent, or if the issue was a

far-reaching, systemic issue. Those questions underscored the value of considering the

ecological relationships between the timing of principal hiring/replacement, changes in policy

implementation, the longitudinal impact of leadership legacies, and the interaction between the work of principals and superintendents. Lawrence, for example, was not hired in compliance of the Transformation Model nor was Harris hired in compliance of the Turnaround Model. The overlapping, coincidental changes in school administration at key points in the school's SIG years do not diminish the need for a chronologically-extended view of the SIG program because both principals "inherited' a school with consecutive years of underperformance and the compounding effects of superintendents' decisions and attitudes towards policies and teachers. In the case of Riverview High School, teacher-based analyses of the Turnaround Models' requirements to replace the existing principal revealed a multi-faceted approach to principal effectiveness that called for an ecological examination of the principal's capacity (not solely their ability) to effect change over a simplistic assumption that if the principal was good, the school would not be failing. Ultimately, the teachers' analyses of their principals' work contexts questioned the wisdom of policy requirements that leave the effects of superintendents and the impact of chronologically-compounded work contexts un-interrogated.

Morgan and Barbara also struggled to unilaterally say the school's improvement hinged on the replacement of its principal. As did other participants, they perceived that the former principal inherited a set of problematic scenarios. They shared Liv's, Sarah's and Mike's opinion that the district was run in such a way that principals have limited authority to sufficiently make decisions for their own schools. Morgan and Barbara expressed a belief that the district's leadership style made it difficult for principals to advocate for their schools without having a reasonable fear for their job security. When asked if it was reasonable to assume that Riverview's principal needed to be replaced in light of the school's struggle to meet academic standards, they shared that principals across the district lacked the "building-based decision

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power" to advance plans they collaboratively developed with Instructional Leadership Teams

(personal communication, November 19, 2014). They were also critical of the district removing

decisions about student scheduling, the development of the master schedule, professional

development topics, the recruitment/hiring of teachers from principals. They described a

controlling district environment where the reduction of principal authority had more far-reaching

effects;

> **Barbara:** And I think when we do have principals that push back, they tend to…
>
> **Morgan:** … not last very long.
>
> **Barbara:** Not, yeah, for whatever reason, maybe they're tired of being penalized
> for things they can't control, kind of like we feel as teachers. And
> they'll take off or else they'll be, they'll be removed.
>
> **Tuesda:** Was that Riverview's situation?
>
> **Morgan:** As far as?
>
> **Tuesda:** As far as replacing the principals?
>
> **Morgan:** You know…
>
> **Barbara:** I think he [Eric Lawrence] left a little bit because of that.
>
> **Morgan:** A little bit because of that but he had only been here…
>
> **Barbara:** … for two years.
>
> **Morgan:** … for two years and he honestly was put in this position probably
> before he was ready to be. I think he had fantastic potential for being a
> head principal. I don't really think they gave him enough time to grow
> that skillset before they put him in the head principal position. And in

our district, truthfully, if an administrator is told "We want you in X

position," they really, really don't have the opportunity to say "No."

Barbara: Don't have a choice. Yes.

Morgan: If they don't feel that they're ready to go into a position and they're

told 'We want you here.' Saying 'no' isn't, it's 'yes or find another

job.'

Barbara: Exactly.

Morgan: So you know, he, I would not hold him responsible for getting us in a

Turnaround position because he had only been head principal for two

years.

Barbara: I'm not blaming him. I'm just saying that…

Morgan: Right.

Barbara: You know, when you talk about building principal needing to be

replaced, not necessarily. Sometimes it is necessary (personal

communication, November 19, 2014).

Their clear hesitance to directly answer the question of whether or not Riverview's struggles

made it necessary to replace the principal showed feelings of sympathy for the principal in light

of the district environment. Morgan and Barbara's comments conveyed a conviction that district

leadership enhances or inhibits the work done by principals. In this case, examples of district

control were cited to confirm their estimation that the replacement of Riverview's former

principal should not be considered as commentary on his professional ability. Instead, they

asserted that his performance should have been considered in juxtaposition with the institutional

conditions under which he was expected to produce a significant change in Riverview's pattern of underperformance.

The intervening influence of principals' decisions and capabilities to foster a proper teaching/learning environment were contingencies expressed by Claire when asked if the replacement of a school's principal was necessary to move a struggling school towards greater achievement. Her reflections called for district oversight that assessed principal effectiveness in ways that examined the underlying and contributory aspects of school improvement- specifically the principal's passion and ability to create or maintain a positive, academically rigorous school climate.   When asked if replacing Riverview's principal was a necessary step to advance the school's improvement, she stated;

> **Claire:** No, not necessarily. Not necessarily. I don't know. It depends, I guess,
>
> on the principal. I don't know that there was much of a choice in
>
> replacing our principal at that point because our principal left. So I
>
> don't know that it's a must. It depends on who the principal is.
>
> **Tuesda:** What about that principal? Would it hinge on- not necessarily the one
>
> that was here but just in general, what would it hinge on to make you
>
> feel like it would or would not be appropriate?
>
> **Claire:** I think that, I mean, whoever is evaluating that administrator that is
>
> something that has to be looked at. I mean, what is happening in our
>
> building? I mean, as far as the climate, as far as student scores,
>
> everything, you know, there was a lot of… there were a lot of areas
>
> where, you know, our principal was not held accountable and it was, it
>
> was clear throughout the building, it affected our entire climate. It was

not a positive environment so I'm sure that had a lot to do with it. So in

that case, yeah. Probably, we needed someone here who had a focus and

who was passionate about being here (personal communication,

December 9, 2014).

Although Claire provided a qualified answer to the question of whether or not the replacement of

a school's principal was necessary, her perspective hinged on a perceived lack of district

oversight rather than the micromanagement of principals by a district. In her estimation, the

principal in place during the first two years of the grant did not foster a proper school

environment and was not held accountable by the district for his (in)actions. These excerpts

indicated that five of the six participants felt as though Riverview's former principal was not

completely "present" or engaged in the school's success. The question of whether that was a

function of his own professional commitment or the detrimental consequence of a

disempowering district leadership style is a question these commentaries did not resolve.

Nonetheless, they spoke to the benefit of considering a principal's "fit" as a contextualized and

multiple-faceted decision rather than relying simply on Annual Yearly Progress targets,

graduation rates, and other statistical determinants. Two of the SIG reform models expressly

require the removal of the school's principal while the other two, Restart and Closure, allude to

the same fate for principals. These teacher-based analyses of the grant's requirement called for

policy analyses that actively consider the impact of district politics within the micro and

mesosystem levels, especially in light of the trickle-down effects district leaders have on school

leadership which then impact the quality and cohesion of teachers.

While having to work under either a restrictive or less-than-engaged district

administration could inhibit a principal's ability to enact instrumental changes, Liv proposed that

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a teaching staff's willingness to comply with the principal's leadership could dampen the principal's efforts to facilitate the changes needed to promote student success. She explained,

> **Liv:** I just feel like even with the principal question, so much of it depends on the situation. And that's what I feel like a lot of these reform policies, they have no room for that…
>
> **Sarah:** Unh hunh.
>
> **Liv:** … and I have a hard time saying yes or no because it really depends on the situation. I mean, you can be in a setting where you have an outstanding staff and the principal is terrible, and if you got a new principal, the staff would step it up and make great changes. Or vice versa. Maybe you need to replace your entire staff because they've, you know, organized a, I don't know the word I'm looking for but…
>
> **Mike:** Blue flu, right? Everybody's together…
>
> **Liv:** … and they don't, and they don't respect the principal and so I mean, the principal is a good guy but what's he going to do if nobody listens to him. I mean, I just, I have a really hard time saying yes or no because it really depends on the situation (personal communication, December 2, 2014).

Liv made no claim that a rebellious teacher staff contributed to the demise of her former school or the state of affairs at Riverview. Rather, she named yet another set of actors to be considered in determining if and when principal replacement is an appropriate school reform requirement. The possibility that the teaching/learning environment fostered by principals could spur the disengagement of teachers does not eliminate the possibility that a teaching staff can short-circuit the good ideas principals have in order to improve a school. Clearly, Claire struggled to

definitively say if principal replacement is always a reasonable policy decision. What her comment interjected into the analysis of school reform is that without school-specific, contextualized understandings of what is happening within a school, assessments about the quality, fit, or competence of teachers and principals will inherently be misinformed at best and either overly or insufficiently punitive at worst. Considered collectively, these teachers' comments on the replacement of Riverview's principals revealed an ecological view of accountability based on the relationship between principal capacity and teacher buy-in, as well as the relationship between district leadership and the processes they sanction which characterize the dynamics between stakeholders.

Indeed, according to these teacher narratives and survey data, the introduction of Greg Harris as Riverview's current principal has had a noticeably positive impact. Based on teacher survey data collected during Harris' first year, teachers' perceptions about principal leadership and engagement were shown to vary based on who is placed in that role. In comparison to survey results collected under a prior administration, there was a clear growth in teacher satisfaction. 85% of Riverview teachers (compared to previous reports of 30%) reported that the principal actively monitored the quality of teacher. 80% indicated they felt Harris set clear and measurable school-level goals (compared to 57%). Likewise, 89% of the teachers felt he supported them in their efforts to improve teaching and learning (compared to 70%). The clear shift in teacher survey data reinforced teacher narratives about the impact of Greg Harris' leadership style and decisions on their satisfaction and capacity to work towards school improvement.

Conclusion

The sequencing of policy decisions, the impact of timing on policy implementation, the roles and purposeful timing of introducing key figures into the school's ecology, and the

consequences of centralized power within the superintendent-principal relationship worked in concert to reveal an ecological view of accountability within school reform policy. Here the issues of class size, student scheduling, policy fidelity (as exhibited by both teachers and districts), the avenues of professional communication, and the development and execution of school improvement plans shared significance in the assessment of a school reform policy's fit and effect. In this multi-layered, contextual view of policy analysis, facilitative or inhibitive district actions promoted or diminished teacher confidence in the district serving as an agent acting on behalf of teachers and principals. The day-to-day and institutional processes guiding those actions were also frequently discussed as being either positively or negatively impacted by the confidence teachers place in leadership and the policies they are asked to implement. The claim of principals being significant figures at both the micro and mesosystem levels made the teachers' perceptions of the work they did difficult to uniformly describe. This was because the work done by district principals in favor of student learning and teacher expertise were seen as a professional hazard. The teachers' expanded view of superintendents across time showed that teacher capacity and principal leadership can both be thwarted or celebrated by district leadership and the conditions under which they work. Without considering the Transformation and Turnaround Models as conjoined and mutually related eras in Riverview's history, it would not be possible to view the eventual teacher dismissals as a consequence of compounded leadership decisions, nor would it be possible to see the SIG-mandated removal of principals as a decontextualized policy element or the teacher dismissals as policy overreach. That overly narrow perception of policy analysis would mischaracterize the effectiveness of the SIG policy because one would not be privy to the localized restrictions on principal authority nor would one be able to consider the possibility that district and teacher efforts to improve teacher capacity

under the Transformation Model made it less likely that 50% was an appropriate minimum threshold for the Turnaround Model.

Time, much like the individuals and processes named by these teachers, was a significant factor in the teachers' appraisal of the SIG program's overall effect on Riverview High School. They shared strong opinions about the time promised, the time given, and the time needed for teachers, students, and principals to produce the types of statistically significant changes most often used to determine professional qualifications and success in teaching or learning. The timing of district decisions and the timing of policy implementation were shown to be highly impactful on teachers' ability to implement changes they agreed were necessary for the survival and sustainable success of their school. The timing of policy adoptions and shifts, superintendent changes, teacher replacements, principal replacements, and the timing of demographic changes, representation were all named as being inter-tangled and symbiotically related.

Chapter VIII: Findings: General Appraisal of SIG Policy

Introduction

The School Improvement Grant Program offers school districts, or Local Education Agencies, four model options from which to choose. Riverview High School is representative of the 2010-2011 cohort of SIG awardees because it was part of the 65% of schools that were placed under the Transformation Model. While the teachers in this study were intimately familiar with only one of those 615 schools, their analyses spoke to dominant narratives about urban teachers, influences in educational policy decision-making, teachers' rhetorical placement within the ecology of educational policies, and elements of implementation that can enhance or inhibit a policy's potential to improve learning and teaching environments. Like Brown's 2012 work on discourses based on an employment of Foucault's stance that "My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do" (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984, p. 343), I consider the inclusion of teacher-based policy analyses as part of the social and historical trajectories of discourses about teachers, urban schools, and school reform (Kumashiro, 2012; Perry et al., 2010; Wilkins, 2010). This chapter draws upon Riverview teachers' narratives that addressed components of the SIG program and educational policy writ large in order to illustrate how teacher-based ecological policy analyses are informative beyond their local contexts through the emphasis they created between microsystem policy interpretations of exosystem policies and the sociopolitical discourses that inform and are informed by the macro and chronosystems. In this way, the promotion of teachers' analyses is "something we always have to do" in order to reveal the implications of actors in the education system, beyond teachers, who play a role in the success of all children. While that may be dangerous in that it risks exposing institutional and structural culpability in underperforming schools and educational inequities, the

meaningful inclusion of teachers as policy analysts can also expose the commitments of and contributions made by pivotal policies and figures towards the provision of a public good.

Relationships between Public Opinions and Educational Policies

Teachers are public figures who often do the bulk of their work in relatively private spaces with groups of individuals who, although they may be growing into their political and economic authority, already carry the influential weight of public opinion with them every time they leave the classroom. That opinion for better or worse, accurate or unfounded, becomes ingrained with every teacher and every year of schooling. When those young people become adults and assume even greater roles in the social, political and economic realms, they carry those opinions of teachers with them. Teachers in this study commented on the types of policies developed in response to public narratives about schools and the danger of educational policies influencing public opinions. The social, political, and cultural underpinnings of education in this country are evident in laws banning the education of enslaved Africans, the restriction of women in formal education settings, the use of boarding schools as a nation-building project to "fix" First Nations children, racial segregation, and even in the outsourcing of education to private companies. Fendler (2014), for example, noted that although the Elementary School Act was passed at a time when public opinion leaned towards families bearing the responsibility for the development and education of youth, it still took decades for the government's discourse of public education to respond to the public's debates about the structures, organization and purposes of schools. She explained the interaction between educational policies and the sociocultural realms of society, saying, "all these domains together- ways of thinking and talking, laws, customs, money, and people's identities- comprise a discourse" (Fendler, 2014, p. 191). My use of policy as discourse draws upon that relationship between politics and

macrosystem social norms and practices by presenting teacher-based policy analyses as a discursive act where teachers theorize and make meaning of their direct experiences within education about policies and public thought.

Mike and Liv both drew connections between dominant narratives about teachers and how the general public understands policies such as the SIG program. Both believed there to be popular misconceptions about teacher accountability which contributed to beliefs that educational policies based on large-scale dismissals of teachers were reasonable or even appropriate. Mike shared;

> In the last conversation, we talked about the complexity of the job, especially given the fact that, I mean, if you really believe that we're training and we're preparing the next leaders of America, I'd like to think that even though we're at Riverview High School, that one of my kids would be president next. Or at least something in that arena. President of a bank. President of something that makes a bigger difference on society. If, if in that, under that lens we look at what we're doing and the capacity of our job, we'd definitely be at least aided into being more proficient, safe, compensated, heroic. There's, there's definitely things that society would look at and go, 'Wow. We need to support these people.' And it wouldn't just be am I Highly Effective, Effective, Minimally Effective or not effective at all. Not that I can't look at these people and think some of them aren't effective or… I mean, I could probably be taught and trained to do that. But again, how do you take a teacher who's possibly been given a situation, a PTSD situation and then put whatever system you've gathered on them as a future

job, 'You can be here or you can't.' It doesn't seem terribly fair (personal

communication, November 13, 2014).

Liv, who had previously worked in a different urban school district where all of the

teachers were fired when the district came under the management of a private charter

company, also addressed the messages she felt educational policies conveyed to the

public about schools and teachers.

> **Tuesda:** But you experienced the shakeup when you were in Washington Mills
>
> Public Schools. So I guess given those types of experiences, what
>
> assumptions do you think these types of reforms- shut a school down,
>
> start it as a charter school, re-evaluate and dismiss 50% of the teachers?
>
> What do you think those types of reforms say about urban teachers?
>
> **Liv:** I think it's probably to the outside, the same thing that my principal said to
>
> us the whole time at Washington Mills the last two years- that we had a new
>
> principal, that it's our fault. And if we were good teachers, this wouldn't be
>
> happening kind of a thing. And I mean, I think that would be the
>
> perception, you know, and even here at Riverview, when you replace 50%
>
> of your staff, if that's the decision that you make as a district, I mean, I think
>
> that says to the public that maybe 50% of our staff wasn't up to par. Or
>
> weren't doing what they should be doing. I mean, I don't know. It's so…
>
> it's so hard to be a part of that because I know the misconceptions
>
> associated with that and I just know it simply isn't true. Are there a few bad
>
> apples? Probably in every teaching staff that I've worked in, yes. Is that the
>
> majority? No. And it's, you know, it's almost, it's this idea, I had a

conversation with my second hour just about this, about the whole group

spanking idea where we don't just address two negative behaviors that

happened from two different individuals. We just throw out a statement of

teachers are doing this, or students are doing this, and this class is this.

Instead of addressing those negative behaviors, we give the group a

spanking and then move on. And I think that, you know, on a much larger

scale, that's what happened in Washington Mills especially. I mean, I don't

know how it could possibly be construed that the problems there were the

teachers' fault. I mean it came down to dollars, that's what it came down to

is mismanagement of money, and we don't have a lot of say in that at all

(personal communication, November 10, 2014).

Mike addressed the public's lack of awareness concerning the environments in which teachers

work. In his opinion, if the public was aware of teachers' unhealthy, unprofessional work

conditions, they would not be comforted by labels of Highly Effective or Minimally Effective

that are not first accompanied by the provision of safe schools conducive to teachers' ability to

convert their professional capacity into results. Liv, on the other hand, addressed the public's

misdirected perceptions of urban teachers' professional capacity. She posited that the public

would be less likely to blame teachers for a school's underperformance if they were more aware

of the financial mismanagement or disinvestment in schools. Though they differed in what

issues they felt would give the public a greater and more accurate understanding of teachers'

roles in a school's success or failure, Mike's and Liv's comments both indicated a shared belief

that (1) urban teachers are popularly misunderstood, (2) urban teachers do not receive the level

and type of support necessary to do the job they have been trained to do, and (3) punitive

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elements of school reform policies exacted against teachers fail to address the larger, structural

issues within education while perpetuating damaging and inaccurate discourses about teacher

inadequacy. This addition of teachers' understandings of policy and public discourse contributes

to literature about the articulations of schooling and school reform by administrators

(Anagnostopoulos & Rutledge, 2007; Kirylo & Nauman, 2006) and parents (Kirylo & Nauman,

2006; Wilkins, 2010) by foregrounding teachers who not only function as policy actors and

enactors at the micro and mesosystem levels, but also represent experienced professionals that

bridge exosystem considerations of federal policies and systems to microsystem efforts towards

school improvement.

Barbara and Morgan, as did Mike and Liv, spoke to the underestimation of the

broader realms within which teachers work. Their focus, however, centered on what they

perceived as the myopic and inappropriate application of business models to educational

issues. In their estimation, the enforcement of reform models not based on the public

service nature of education leaves teachers vulnerable to being misunderstood and

improperly assessed, which in turn contributes to decontextualized public opinions about

teacher success or failure.

> **Barbara:** But, but just political action groups that, you know, like, like what's
>
> been going on in California with the law that they're attacking unions
>
> because they think unions protect bad teachers who have seniority.
>
> And they're the ones trying to, they push politicians to create these
>
> policies and write these laws to hold teachers and schools more
>
> accountable but all they see, what they see is that, you know, they're
>
> clients or customers of schools and they want to be treated like good

customers and get what they want from the school. But it's a little

more to factor into it than that. You know, it isn't just about the

teachers are on an assembly line and the admins are the business

managers. So they don't really come from it at the right angle. And

they don't, sometimes people are the most blind when looking at their

own children. And we have so many parents and I myself have been

on that end of it, too… Kids don't always perform up to our

expectations and you know, that…

Tuesda: How are you making, what… when you say sometimes parents are most

blind to their own children…

Barbara: Political action groups, they want to hold us accountable but they don't

realize there's a lot more players in this game than just teachers and

administrators.

Tuesda: Who are the other players?

Barbara: Parents, students, you know, and…

Morgan: I mean, teachers can't, I mean, we do, the best teachers do the best that

they can do but…

Barbara: … can't control everything.

Morgan: I mean, we can be as engaging and develop these relationships but, you

know, if… and we know circumstances are out of, a lot of times, out

of the kids' control for sure but, you know, your younger brother is

sick and needs to stay home so I need you to miss school today to

babysit your brother. You know, there are just… We're one part of

the equation. And it's such a complicated equation. I mean, it's not, there's nothing simple about it. The blueberry story, you know, the guy that owned the company that produced, you know, award-winning ice cream and he was trying to sell his business model to a group of teachers and the teachers said, 'Okay, what happens if you get a shipment of blueberries that aren't ripe? Oh, we send them back. Okay. What happens if you get blueberries that are overripe- they're almost, they're rotten inside? Well, we send them back.' We have to take whoever walks in our door. We're a public school. So if the student's not ripe, if they're not prepared and their skills aren't up to speed, we still have to take them.' They still have to test in 3 ½ years. We're still accountable for them. If they come in and they're overripe, I mean, there's only so much, and so we, like she said, we're not an assembly line. We don't produce products. We work with people and when you have people who only have experience in business where you produce a product, trying to make, pass judgment and laws on the culture of education which deals with, only with people, there's a real disconnect (personal communication, November 19, 2014).

The complicated equation discussed here included teachers, administrators, policymakers, political lobbyists, students, and students' families- all of which are elements in an ecologically oriented analysis of educational policies. Barbara, however, believed educational policy was often driven by opinions that lead to teachers bearing the burden of student achievement without considering how figures and social conditions beyond the classroom contribute to the work of

teachers and students. Likewise, Morgan expressed concern that misaligned approaches to

education contribute to popular misconceptions about teachers' ability to "produce" student

success. Her disapproval of the partnering of business models and school reform models hinged

on the liberty business can exert in terms of the raw materials they receive in comparison to

public schools providing a public good to all, regardless of who enters the classroom. The

judgment she spoke of was linked to requirements that hold all students accountable to the same

measures with no regard for their earlier preparation. Although a school data analysis report

stated that Riverview often received students with a four to five year deficits in reading and math

skills, Morgan's concern is applicable to any school receiving a disproportionate level of

academically under-prepared students. She questioned the suitability of expecting underprepared

students to meet the same benchmarks within the same timeframe as those who were adequately

prepared but still called for teacher accountability- accountability that took student growth into

account instead of solely relying on decontextualized benchmarks. These analyses revealed that

teachers acknowledged the impact of sociocultural inequities on students and yet understood that

their role within the ecology was to educate all students. Their awareness of the influence of

capitalism on schooling and school reform represented their awareness of macrosystem-

exosystem relationships and their perception that the current balance in those relationships were

out of tune with teachers and what they believed were the purposes of public education (Giroux,

1988; Labaree, 1997; Sleeter, 2007).

How Today's Policies Can Spur Tomorrow's Crises

The most thorough, cyclical, and inclusive educational policy analyses cannot prevent the

occurrence of unintended consequences. Teachers represent the largest body of educational

policy enactors and their meaningful inclusion in these analyses can be utilized by policymakers

and administrators to more responsibly guide policy development and analyses and to foreshadow possible outcomes. The following narratives present a series of consequences the teachers predicted as subsequent outcomes of the SIG program's approach to school reform.

Barbara, for instance, was not confident policies were commonly developed and implemented with proper consideration of the effects of poverty on students and their teachers:

The expectations have to be realistic. They have to be real world, do-able types of things. I don't think it's fair. And what you're going to find is, you know, the struggling schools that deal with poverty and things like that, it's going to get to a point where they're either going to get taken over and become charter and then the charters are going to exit these kids that prevent them from reaching the standards, and you're going to find all your Special Ed and your immigrant kids either without an education or they're going to have their own little schools that are never going to succeed. I mean, you're talking about forcing kids, forcing schools to track or shove out the unwanted, you know, populations. You can't, and then if you're public, you can't do that so then you're stuck (personal communication, November 19, 2014).

Barbara's comment on student and teacher accountability suggested that underperforming schools with high percentages of economically disadvantaged students are more susceptible to the consequences of decontextualized policies. If those policies are not corrected, she predicted a tipping point where educational policies that allow or facilitate the growth of charter schools would further undermine the stability of traditional public schools. This undermining would occur, according to her, because charter schools have greater autonomy to restrictively select or surreptitiously push out students whereas, traditional public schools work with students no

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matter what their academic preparation, background, or cognitive abilities may be. The disenfranchisement of underperforming schools from structures that would allow them to more directly exercise authority over their own future was imagined as a sequence that began with policy expectations which failed to account for students' social and learning contexts and teachers' professional contexts.

Claire and Mike critiqued brands of school reform that justifiably removed ineffective teachers but failed to prevent those teachers from entering other classrooms. Their focus on urban schools highlighted both the need for educational policies that help urban schools become more attractive to qualified and effective teachers and educational policies that would allow urban schools to be more selective in their hiring. Claire explained,

> But the problem with the Turnaround is that a lot of those teachers, they're still in the district. I mean, they may have been turned around from here but that doesn't mean they're not somewhere else in another urban school. So I just look at it as still being this circle- so there's going to be another school that's going to be a Focus [School]. So we have a Riverview staff that is finally looking somewhat strong and it's representing that unified focus but then these teachers that didn't all get laid off because they didn't, they got jobs somewhere else, some of them, some were laid off but they're in another urban school where I mean, when you look at Wilson, for example, they went through that process this year- the Turnaround. So it seems to be the same thing. So we put the teachers that we got rid of here somewhere else (personal communication, November 5, 2014).

Mike also described the SIG program's Turnaround Model as an educational policy that responded to a verifiable need (the need to remove ineffective teachers) without

accounting for issues of institutional capacity that plague urban school districts. He

shared,

> So I think we're looking at this Turnaround Model a little bit, a little bit sideways
>
> because I don't know that I could, I could look at our staff of seventy and then
>
> want to bring thirty of them back. Maybe there's only thirty that I thought are
>
> deserving but again, I mean, I'm not the guy that decides on deserving. I don't
>
> know who that guy is but it was a team of people and ultimately Mr. Harris and
>
> whoever his coaches were, I guess, probably. And so the fact that I was on the
>
> winning team makes me kind of look around and go, all right. You know, this is
>
> good but I didn't feel bad for the ones that had been supported and then didn't get
>
> on the winning team because if they had been supported and then they still
>
> couldn't prove that they were, and I hate to use the word worthy, but again,
>
> worthy of being here, the thing that ruined it for me was where did those people
>
> go? Let's call them the lemons for a minute. Where did the lemons go? If you
>
> told me the lemons got fired and weren't teaching anymore, in our district, I'd go
>
> wow, they were bad teachers. They didn't deserve to be here, right? But that's
>
> not what happens. They just went to other buildings (personal communication,
>
> November 11, 2014).

Although they referenced two specific schools, Claire's and Mike's concern that ill-prepared or

ineffective urban teachers would merely be circulated among other urban schools speaks to

larger, institutional factors common among many urban school districts (Craig, 2013; Quartz,

2003; Useem, Offenberg, & Farley, 2007). Claire criticized the Turnaround Model's lack of

attention to the issues of how urban schools and districts attract and retain high-quality teachers

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and how those schools and districts can shield students from the recycling of habitually

underperforming teachers. Mike expressed this same concern, calling this loop of

underperforming teachers "the dance of the lemons." Mike's concern about the Turnaround

Model's requirement that 50% of the staff be replaced was not that the percentage of presumably

underperforming teachers was overestimated, rather that those who were dismissed were simply

being passed along to other urban schools. Although Mike shared elsewhere that he was not

convinced all who were retained at Riverview were the most effective, he and Claire displayed

an ability to analyze both their most immediate work context and the district-level context

without losing sight of how both are impacted by policies that fall short of addressing historically

persistent institutional challenges. Their disapproval of educational policies that dismiss

ineffective teachers from the halls of one urban school but then allow those same teachers to

enter the halls of another urban school was an indication of their concern for the teaching

profession as a whole, the professional contexts of urban teachers, and the provision of quality

education for students.

Need for Aligned Policy Interpretations and Transparent Communication

Morgan and Barbara's analyses of school reform indicated their association of disjointed

policy interpretation and a lack of transparent communication about policy purposes and

functions with their professional capacity to improve student outcomes. Their cross-sectional

view of the chain-of-command named state legislators, district leaders and other layers of the

bureaucratic structure as stakeholders who interpreted but actively shifted policies.

> **Tuesda:** What other stakeholder groups' opinions would you say have a direct
>
> impact on your ability to take a school reform policy and translate that
>
> into improved outcomes? Who else's opinions…?

Morgan: I have too many filters that it has to pass through. I mean, generally, it's starting from a politician or a political action group or a money perspective, but then it has to get filtered through the state legislature, then it gets filtered through your county Independent School District (ISD) and then it gets filtered down to the district and then it gets filtered to the school and then it finally gets down to the teachers. So…

Tuesda: And what's the impact of having to go through so many filters?

Morgan: Everybody has a different spin.

Barbara: Yeah.

Morgan: So you know, what may come out of the state with one perspective, the ISD may take a different spin on, and then the district says, 'Well, we're going to tweak it this way for our purposes' and then the school says, 'Well, we're going to tweak it this way.' And so everybody has their own perspective or their own spin on it. So it doesn't, it's not coming directly out of the legislation to us. Even though we can read that. There are, you know, we have to please the masters of our evaluators, or of our curriculum specialists…

Barbara: Right.

Morgan: And they have to then meet the people, you know, above them. And so it has to go through a lot of filters…

Tuesda: And what does that mean for your ability to work towards improved student outcomes?

Morgan: Well, if you're talking specific school outcomes that are stated [in]

school reform policies like, you know, all students will achieve a

certain level, there are certain hoops that then get put in our way that,

because they want to see such and such documentation, we're spending

more time on that than on actually working with truly improving the

students' performance. So it just creates hoops.

Barbara: And I think the interpretation, like you said, changes at each level.

There's, sometimes the laws are written so poorly that there's room for

interpretation or misinterpretation. You know, it's, and usually the

people making the rules sometimes aren't educators or even have a

background in education.

Morgan: Most of the time they aren't.

Barbara: Sometimes you've got business making educational decisions

(personal communication, November 19, 2014).

Teachers, according to this view, are positioned as recipients of policy regulations that have been

reimagined multiple times and are not co-contributors or analysts. Despite their perception of

being at the bottom of the chain-of-command, these teachers still demonstrated a nuanced view

of administration that acknowledged the likelihood that they too were subject to multiple layers

of scrutiny and perspectives concerning the meaning and implementation of policies. Ultimately,

though, their acknowledgement of demands placed on administrators did not excuse what they

saw as expectations that shifted attention away from improving teaching and learning conditions

to providing documentation to satisfy demands for policy compliance. Furthermore, by

conceiving of themselves as being at the bottom of the educational policy chain of command,

those teachers communicated an assumption that teachers, as a stakeholder group, are being largely disconnected from key aspects of policy processes. The mentioning of capitalism as an interloper in the design of educational policies and their critique of the absence of educators as policy decision-makers spoke to the need for teacher-based analyses and the actual inclusion of teachers at the exosystem level.

Increased inclusion of teachers in policy analyses could position them to influence how policies are best interpreted for a given context. Inclusion means little, however, without consistency and communication. Sarah, Liv, and Mike discussed the need for clear and consistent communication across the multiple levels of educational contexts.

Sarah: I think there should be some kind of procedure in place- that every district follows that procedure. Because you're right, I don't know if it was just our district that did it this way or if it was… And I think that needs to be communicated.

Liv: Communication is huge. That's what I was just thinking. I mean…

Sarah: Yeah. I mean, we all found out that we had to interview for our jobs. I mean, they kept telling us that it was coming and coming but they couldn't answer whether it was 50% of the staff or was it going to be everyone. We all got letters before spring break, right? So it's like, that could've been handled more professionally and is that the fault of the district or is that, you know, what the district was told- 'This is what you do, this is the policy that you communicate to your staff?'

Mike: I'd have to think that the state probably screwed it up to begin with and then you set this, you set this policy in place for then someone else to

screw up even worse, and then each district, based on their incompetency,

screws it up even worse (personal communication, December 2, 2014).

This excerpt echoed the teachers' call for an ecological view of policy implementation and

interpretation that would analyze communication processes at the mesosystem level which help

or hinder the transparent articulation of policies to teachers. While the articulation of the

implementation of the policy can convey the policy primarily as a text, when there are

breakdowns in those communication processes, there is a risk that the policies and the district's

handling of those policies become discourses that convey indecisiveness, evasiveness, and

inefficacy across micro and exosystems. Here, the teachers called for clear articulation of

policies, uniform procedures for their implementation, timely execution of policy requirements,

cross-sectional policy alignment, and an expanded view of accountability. The teachers also

recalled unclear communication from the district as to when interviews for the reapplication

process would begin and staggered announcements to individual teachers as to whether or not

they would be retained. These experiences prompted questions as to whether or not these

communication issues were functions specifically of Riverview's principal and Hamilton Mills'

superintendent or, if their experiences were common among other Turnaround schools across the

state. It should be noted, however, that they did not call for uniformity in the plans developed

for each school, only in the governing procedures that would guide the execution of those plans

in order to mitigate the compounding effects of multiple levels of policy interpretation and the

disruptive effect of administrative incompetency.

Educational Policy and Professional Dignity

Mike, Sarah, and Liv all agreed they wanted it to be known the Turnaround Model was a

policy that was done to them. Their perceptions of being disaffected recipients of policy

decisions and of being a part of the collective unit within the ecology of educational policy whose sense of professionalism was sacrificed in pursuit of reform stemmed from deep feelings of personal hurt and professional betrayal.

Tuesda: What is it that you would want someone to know about teachers' experiences with reforms like the Turnaround Model? What do, what do people need to know?

Mike: This might be oversimplification but that the stuff that they did to us.

Sarah: Right.

Liv: It affects people. They have a life other, they're not just a teacher. They're not just a number. I remember feeling that way very early on at HMPS. I've never felt like I was an employee number until I worked here. And I mean, I just feel like to be able to look at individual situations and maybe to treat you as a human instead of as a number, I think that that's something. That's huge. I mean, I think about those people that were cut and just how that affected them personally. I mean, these are real people. This is real life. This is their livelihood.

Sarah: Yeah. Mike and I talked about that just the other day that, I think that's a great way of… You're dealing with human beings that have been, lots of people don't like change. It was huge change. It wasn't well explained. Yeah, it was almost like…

Liv: It was done to us.

Sarah: Yeah.

Tuesda: That's what you feel needs to be understood?

Sarah: Yeah (personal communication, December 2, 2014).

Their comments indicated that feeling like a number rather than a skilled professional was an outgrowth of perceiving a lack of communication about the Turnaround Model. These "survivors" of Riverview's teacher replacement wanted it to be known that educational policies have a direct impact on humans, on teachers such that if the policy is not implemented with respect to personal and professional dignity, teachers can come to feel as though the value they bring to a school is interchangeable or dispensable. This warning is particularly fitting for urban schools where the majority of SIG Turnaround schools are concentrated. These comments also exposed teachers' feelings that the district did not implement the Turnaround Model requirement to replace 50% of the school staff with a compassionate concern for their professional benefit. Instead, they conveyed a perception that teachers' professionalism and dignity were not protected.

In addition to contemplating the impact of the Turnaround Model on teachers who ultimately left or were dismissed from Riverview, Mike reflected on the outcomes of the SIG model for the remaining teachers. Here, he commented on the complexity of achieving greater academic success for students from the perspective of a Highly Effective teacher who was retained.

Tuesda: Have you reached a point where you think the turnaround is
approaching? Do you think it's possible?

Mike: Yes. I think it's already happened. We got off the bottom whatever
percent list that I hate even talking about but it's, because the state has
done this to us. I mean, thanks, right? It's one thing to put a ranking
together and try to get students, but then put it out there like we're in the

bottom of the bottom percent and I mean, that's hard on people's egos. I

teach at the worst school in the state. I mean, that's, that's tough. Must

mean I'm the worst teacher. I mean, it does get adults to start thinking

badly about themselves. When you're told that you're at this bad spot,

you kind of, you associate with… then you must be bad, right? I mean, I

know teachers do. I mean, I feel like most of us are going to have PTSD

when we're done with this.

Tuesda: That's a strong statement.

Mike: I feel it.

Tuesda: Why?

Mike: We've been that misconstrued. We've been, we've been mistreated that

much. We've been harassed, abused. Illegal stuff has gone on that's just

looked the other way. There's, I'm sure it's why the former

superintendent gave up on it. The superintendent, everybody was excited

about that. [He] was going to save our school and our district. I'm sure

after just a few conversations with him- and I watched the direction that

he'd go, that he ended up going. He just went 'Oh, my gosh,' you know.

Like superintendents in other schools, like they make the news because

they misspend a few hundred dollars on a credit card that was supposed to

be for what it was they did and they end up getting fired for it. I mean, our

former leaders, they should be in jail for years, in my opinion. And I'm

sure in the courts' opinions, if they could handle it, and would want to deal

with it. I don't mean to overdramatize it.

Tuesda: So PTSD from?

Mike: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder.

Tuesda: And the source of the stress?

Mike: Well, most people would say the kids, right? I mean, that's the easy, like
'Oh, the kids are out of control' or whatever, but my kids aren't out of
control. It's, it's trying to work in an environment that's been so chaotic
for so many years. I know it's sad. I don't mean to make you sad. No.
No. I'm thrilled about the way things are going. Got off the list. Like we
got off, we're going to be one of the few schools in the nation supposedly
that possibly could get off of this bottom, I forget which part of the list it
is.

Tuesda: You mean across, you mean in the state?

Mike: Right. But even nationwide, it's rare for a school to successfully turn
around and then get off of whatever bottom percentage that they have
(personal communication, November 13, 2014).

The pride Mike conveyed about Riverview's progress was presented as a bittersweet feeling. He

recognized that the present context of Riverview was a drastic improvement from the prior years

but lamented the state's decision to publish a list ranking every school according to student and

school data in order to achieve a NCLB waiver. In his experience, the lists which were

published beginning in 2012 represented another example of teacher shaming even though the

official purpose to diagnostically identify schools' areas of strength and improvement. Instead,

he claimed the list produced feelings of professional anxiety and inadequacy which contributed

to the impact of working in, what he described as, a chronically chaotic setting. Mike's

assessment of the historic working conditions under which Riverview's teachers managed to yield higher levels of student achievement spoke to the devaluation of teachers' professional dignity and needs in favor of advancing a pass/fail narrative of school success.

Barbara succinctly captured the need for policy analyses that meaningfully consider the intricate ways teachers are connected to the implementation of educational policies and to the health of schools. She explained;

> Any time you turn over staff, you disrupt, I mean, it's like me cutting your leg off or taking out veins in your leg or in your arm. The circulatory system keeps things moving. I mean, that's what gives you the blood and the oxygen and everything you need, and the nutrients you need. Granted, you know, you think cutting off the head would be worse but we're almost like a chicken. We'll walk around without a head on for quite a while, just because we know how things work. And the core of the building, the heart of the building is the teachers. There's more of them, number one, and number two, they're the one teaching the content (personal communication, November 14, 2014).

Here, Barbara described teachers as the heart and circulatory system of schools. In this depiction, even though teachers represent the largest contingency of educational policy actors, reform policies were seen as underestimating their roles by not anticipating that large-scale firings would have detrimental effects on the health of student bodies and schools. Her analysis of educational policies premised on the wide-scale dismissal of teachers as a necessary step in the direction of school improvement addressed what she saw as logical consequences that would be evident regardless of where the policy would be implemented. Her "chicken without a head"

analogy spoke to her belief that although teachers can prolong the life of a failing school even without an administrator's vision or forethought, the school will inevitably fail.

Conclusion

Clouded and myopic visions of school reform did not originate nor are they limited to Hamilton Mills Public Schools or Riverview High School. To date, 1,259 schools across the United States of America have been placed under the SIG Transformation Model and 312 schools have been placed under the SIG Turnaround Model. The substantive incorporation of teacher-based policy analyses from those with first hand experiences of school reform efforts can benefit the development, interpretation, and implementation of school reform across multiple ecological levels. Their infusion across the educational policy ecology has the potential to keep policies in step with sociocultural and political understandings of urban schools at both the institutional and school-levels. Teacher-based educational policy analyses can be used to identify unique arrays of state, district, and school-specific contexts for the purposes of improving policy selection and assessment and to identify overarching flaws in policy assumptions and designs. The analyses performed by these six teachers about their experience of working in a SIG school underscored larger, fundamental concerns that could be present in any school under the SIG program. Namely, their assessments of the policy spoke to; (1) the mutually-influenced role of discourses about teachers and discourses about school reform, (2) the role of time in that policy decisions shape future educational landscapes, (3) the need for consistently transparent and aligned processes governing educational policies, and (4) the need for policy analyses that recognize and treat teachers with personal and professional dignity such that their success or failure is contextualized in relation to the actions of the figures who govern teachers' work conditions.

Chapter IX: Findings: CRT, Teachers' Sociocultural Knowledge, and Title I School

Improvement Grant Program

Introduction

This study was situated in an urban district that has and continues to experience marked shifts in its racial composition. Matters of race, ethnicity, language, residential segregation, class, and economic disparities have converged in ways that have shifted the school's composition to not only be majority-minority, but one where the needs of refugee children, and English Language Learners are critical components to the school's needs, strengths, challenges, and success. The fact that five of the teacher participants are White female and one White Latino male is neither unusual for the makeup of the Riverview's teaching staff nor is it unusual when compared to the national pattern of who teaches the majority of Black, Latin@, and international students. Furthermore, just as race in and of itself is not an indicator of dominance or subservience, the teachers' race does not predetermine their ability or desire to be critically and socially aware of racism in schools. Nevertheless, the ways in which they make sense of themselves, their students, their school, and the Title I SIG program's effects upon their own professional practice must be analyzed using a theoretical lens that considers how the system of racial oppression operates within and through schools. This consideration is necessary (a) because the SIG program has disproportionately concentrated disruptive forms of school reform in urban settings and (b) because the work of all teachers is a raced endeavor given the nationally and locally raced histories of school regardless of student demographics. Therefore, what the teachers say about race- including any commonly "coded" references to culture, language, and class, as well as what the teachers do not say about about race is important because the act of teaching, the teaching profession itself, educational policies, and school governance are neither

race-neutral, trans-racial, post-racial, nor are they sacred areas left untouched by social oppression.

While the larger context of the study was dedicated to the teachers' perceptions of and experiences with the Title I School Improvement Grant, special attention is given in this chapter to analyses of the sociocultural explanations embedded in the teachers' narratives. In this way, issues related to the policy itself, the school and district contexts, the city of Fordham, and even how the teachers did or did not find connections between social patterns of oppression and education would all fall under the lens of analytical consideration. This expanded view of the relationships between schooling and society was consistent with the ecological viewpoint of the study because it allowed for a nested analysis of Riverview High School as a local figure in regional and even national discourses. Furthermore, this expanded view was taken in recognition of the teachers as individuals working and thinking at multiple intersections of professionalism and socialization: (a) White teachers in an urban school district, (b) White teachers of primarily Black, Latin@, refugee, and low-income students, (c) professionals who are statistically more vulnerable to Title I SIG models that threaten teacher employment. The intersections of teaching, Whiteness, educational policy, and social oppression necessitate an inclusion of teachers' sociocultural knowledge and Critical Race Theory due to their complimentary emphases on the intersectional functioning of oppression and justice.

Teachers' Sociocultural Knowledge and Reasons for Decline in School Stability

Within the study, Mike and Sarah were the two teachers with the longest history at Riverview (twenty-two and fifteen years of experience, respectively). They both spoke to how the school is now quite different than when they first arrived in that racial composition changes of the student body paralleled changes in the school climate and district policy decisions.

Whereas the school used to be primarily populated with middle class decedents of Polish immigrants, it was now what they described in positive terms as a diverse school where Black, Latin@, and refugee students constituted the majority. Whereas the surrounding neighborhood once reflected similar demographics to that of the student body, they now noted that students relied on city bus passes issued by the school. Their narratives revealed that the decline of school discipline, administrative presence, and teacher commitment, coincided with White Flight away from Riverview and the district's decision to restructure electives and athletics. In short, these two resident "historians" linked policy decisions to bus students from their home school to schools across the city depending on which electives or athletic program they chose as one that spurred discontent among the school's largely middle class, White family base. Many White families, in this case, were able to exercise power against an educational policy that would limit both their ability to customize learning experiences according to their children's gifts and interests and their ability to have school as a "home base" where both community and status were constructed without having to sacrifice hours each day in commute.

In part, Mike attributed the decline of Riverview into a state of gross underperformance to teacher, administrator, and family mobility. He described the "old guard" as more experienced teachers who held students to strict expectations. At the time when those teachers were in place, Mike explained that the students were lower middle class to middle class and "less of the poverty-stricken kids" (2014). When asked if the student demographics at Riverview had changed since he began working there, he quickly said yes and named it "White Flight." He went on to explain that the White, Polish Catholic families from the west side of Fordham left:

> **Mike:** … those families that I knew for the first five or six years, when they saw things going bad, they got out.

Tuesda: So the old guard must not have been in place or something must've happened.

Mike: The old guard, well…

Tuesda: What happened to precipitate that?

Mike: It was so little by little, our leadership changed and the building started to get out of control. And I watched, I watched, I mean, I told you I watched our school fall into an abyss. I used to take pictures of the office with the lights off.

Tuesda: What do you mean?

Mike: Like there's no one in the office. There'd be like twenty, thirty kids, just creating like the worst behavior in the whole school was in front, on the bench in front of that office" (personal communication, November 13, 2014).

Mike's description of changes in the racial demography of Riverview is intersectional in that it linked both race and class to educational agency- even if one is a lower middle class White person of foreign descent. His description also linked teacher and administrator mobility to schools' racial and economic composition which is consistent with literature delineating the preference of White teachers to work in predominantly White majority schools that do not have large numbers of impoverished students (Boyd, Hamilton Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Lankford et al., 2002). The power and privilege of teachers, administrators, and families to opt-out of an "unfavorable" (re: poor, Black, and Brown) educational context resulted in exodus of White educators and students at a time when the city of Fordham was experiencing a significant shift in population that included more Latin@ families.

Sarah cited the time period of 2002-2006 as the window of that significant change in Riverview and the district. She drew a parallel between shifting city populations, student enrollment, and the entrenchment of Riverview as a district mainstay,

> Hispanic families tended to come to the west side of Fordham as they started to come to Fordham. And so we're the only west side school, west side high school. When they closed Smithfield that was a big issue because, you know, here Smithfield was a successful school but they couldn't close Riverview because they would've probably lost a whole population of Hispanic students. So yeah, it's, it's really changed over, really…fifteen years is not that long for a school to change and it's dramatically changed (personal communication, Sarah, November 13, 2014).

She went on to describe multiple, fast-paced district policy changes including the creation of elective hubs that required busing to and from schools, specialized small schools, the creation of freshman academies and their dissolution. Although Sarah never mentioned race as she described the fallout of those overlapping and frequent policy changes, she explained,

> **Sarah:** So some of the families just left. You know, they didn't agree with hubs, they didn't agree with this so they left. Yeah, kind of a, we used to have a large, we used to be at the small school, ACE, Arts, Communication and Entertainment School and then we had a freshman academy, school, so we used to do the small school concept. After that kinda was dismantled, kind of people also dismantled.

> **Tuesda:** What do you mean, people dismantled?

> **Sarah:** People went to other districts

Tuesda: Teachers?

Sarah: Teachers. Yeah, yeah (personal communication, November 19, 2014).

Here again, the connection between educational policies- in this case, the isolated housing of electives and athletics, school closures, racial shifts, declining enrollment, teacher turnover, and the loss of key, successful school-based elements that attend to the education of the whole child were highlighted. In addition to her awareness of the city's overall shifting population patterns, Sarah demonstrated a racialized understanding of district characteristics and conveyed a belief that the increased presence of Latin@ students in the district played a role in the decision to close a predominantly Black school so as to keep Riverview open for the increasing percentage of Latin@ students who, by the time of the SIG Turnaround significantly outweighed the enrollment of Black students (48% in contrast to 22%). Yet, she neither declared nor denied any association between the loss of families and teachers with the dramatic increase of Latin@ students and city residents. Between Mike and Sarah, entire schools were named as racially marked spaces and population shifts that led to significant White Flight were described but, what was missing in their description of chronologically overlapping occurrences was a sociocultural contextualization of the family and troubling educator turnovers. Instead, the events are presented as parallel, disconnected occurrences.

Mike and Sarah's sociocultural awareness was keen enough to name White Flight and to draw connections between residential patterns and school demographics. However, their narratives failed to include descriptions of (a) how each was or was not a function of structural and institutional racism, or (b) how teacher turnover and shifting student enrollment were or were not reflective of professional, residential, and educational preferences to be distanced from racial/ethnic and even economic diversity. In short, race and class were mentioned in

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demographic terms but family and student turnover were associated with policy decisions alone which, in effect, silences or disregards individual and institutional responses to race. White Flight, for example, is not a spontaneous phenomenon. It is the exercising of racial privilege to avoid the devaluation of one's property value and social status by creating, expanding, or maintaining White residential enclaves. Guinier, for example, noted the coinciding timing of the *Brown* decision, the scheduled desegregation of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, the creation of a new suburban school for the purpose of White Flight, the violent response of Whites who could not attend that new school, and the feelings of loss and betrayal they conveyed when reflecting on being educated in the same building as Black youth (2004). Like racism, White Flight is neither an individual, aberrant act nor is it a phenomenon based on innocuous, racially-neutral personal preferences. The intentional removal of Whiteness, then and now, in its physical and ideological forms from a neighborhood is often accompanied by the disinvestment of and disenchantment towards the neighborhood, its residents, and its schools (Hirsch, 1998; Lipman, 2011; J. J. Smith & Stovall, 2008b). While the neighborhood in which Riverview is situated is still middle class, the school's stability has languished, according to the teachers, under ill-prepared or disengaged school leaders, disenfranchising district leaders, and the district's unfocused approach to policy.

While nostalgic remembrances about a "golden era" during one's career or tenure at a specific work site could be a factor in these urban teachers' inability or avoidance to nuance changes in their professional environment as racialized events, the compounding effects of racism, classism, and institutional inattention to inequities will continue to impact their students. I argue that since the quality of their work environment and even their employment is, to an extent, linked to those very same students, White, urban teachers' ability to critically seek out

and apply sociocultural knowledge to the profession is a key part of their professional practices, advocacy, and security. These demonstrations of Mike and Sarah's sociocultural knowledge did not bring such nuances to light. If the general White public has been gaslighted, that is, manipulated into believing their children's best chances for education success are reached in isolation of Black children and teachers (Roberts & Carter Andrews, 2013), the legacy of such pervasive masternarratives may still persist even among successful, dedicated White urban teachers. In full recognition of the interacting influence of my own presence as an African American woman in the research site, I must say that neither Mike nor Sarah shared or did anything that indicated a disdain for their students or an unwillingness to educate them with care. Their disjointed references to race, geography, class, and the disinvestment of Riverview, if re-imagined within a sociocultural ecology of educational policy, could position them as professionals, as long-time Riverview teachers, and as knowledgeable beneficiaries of Whiteness who could leverage allyship for their students and their professional standing. The potential of that form of interest convergence between White, urban teachers and the educational interests of socially marginalized students (Chapman, 2008; Milner IV, 2008b) would contribute to equitable schooling conditions and improved work environments given that ideologically and financially, White families and White teachers have a long history as symbols of residential and education anchors of stability. Through the development of critical allyships and the leveraging of racial privileges for the purposes of protecting racially and educationally marginalized youth as well as the professional futures of the educators who dedicate their expertise and careers to them, interest convergence could aid in "urban education" no longer being a predictable byword for underperforming teachers or students.

Teachers' Sociocultural Knowledge as Evidenced in Their Descriptions of Students and Families

Several teachers in this study mentioned how their own upbringing differed from the perceived upbringing of their students. While being raised in the same region, state, or even the same city as the location of one's school does not universally create a shared sense of understanding nor a shared sense of investment between teachers and students, it lends to teachers a contextually-specific knowledge base that can be expanded upon based on critical incidents of sociocultural experiences. None of the teachers described their hometowns as being one where racial or economic diversity were prevalent and none of the teachers were actually from Fordham. Morgan, for example, shared that she was from a rural area in the state and expressed familiarity with the dispositions and opinions about urban schools and youth held by those from areas similar to her hometown. She shared,

> I really have a passion for this school, for this district, for our students. I get
> very angry when I, when… as I've gotten older, I've learned to understand that
> it truly is ignorance but then I look at these people and I think okay, but you're
> an adult. There's no excuse to be ignorant. When they don't understand the
> needs that our students have and, you know, if people will say, well, I don't
> feel my tax dollars should have to go to, you know, support these schools that
> aren't performing and I stop and I explain to them and I say your tax dollars
> are going to pay for them period. You're either going to put that money into
> helping develop a solid educational system for these students, so that when
> they graduate, well, first of all, they can graduate and they can become
> productive members of society, that pay taxes, that, you know, that help

society. They perform a role in society. Or you're going to pay for them to sit

in jail or you're going to pay for them to be on public assistance. You're going

to pay. What would you rather pay for? I'd rather pay to support a good solid

public education system where these kids can come out and be successful.

Because you know, and again, I come from, you know, urban, or sorry, rural,

you know, small town. They don't necessarily get the cultural poverty things.

They don't, because they've never been exposed (personal communication,

Morgan, November 11, 2014).

The connection she referenced between the macro-level relationship between institutions of

education and law enforcement is evidence of her sociocultural knowledge in that she understood

that marginalization in one area of the social order, especially for youth, would have significantly

detrimental impacts on their likelihood of success in others. The structure and outcomes of the

school-to-prison pipeline she mentioned as a point of ignorance have been analyzed by

educational researchers in ways which describe the symbiotic, institutional relationships that

damage youth as students, adults and as citizens (Farmer, 2010; Nocella II, Parmar, & Stovall,

2014; Winn, Behizadeh, Duncan, Fine, & Gadsden, 2011). Therefore, her understanding about

the domino effect of poor schooling or school failure was correct. Her assertion of being a part

of rural communities where critical understandings of the social conditions and factors of urban

education were not common is further evidence of her sociocultural knowledge in that the

socialization she experienced while working in Fordham presented professional and social

moments of cognitive dissonance when she could have doubled down on her prior socialization

or incorporated social realities other than her own into her conceptualization of society and

education. Indeed, the work she claimed to do in informing individuals within her own racial

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and residential communities represents a form of allyship in that she did so in order to address the fallacy of masternarratives concerned with urban youth and urban schools.

The bases on which allyship are founded, however, must be considered because in the same way the desegregation of U.S. schools was largely premised on the supposed psychological effects children would experience if not taught alongside White students and not on matters of morality or legality, the motivations of our social stances and activities matter (Guinier, 2004). Morgan attributed an unwillingness for one's tax money to be used in support of underperforming schools to ignorance of the long-term effects of targeted educational disinvestment in urban areas. Notably, she even discredited attributing that unwillingness to mere ignorance. Riverview is not only situated in an urban context, a strong majority of its students are from families with low incomes and less than a quarter of its students were White at the time of this study. Taking note of these characteristics is important because Morgan was careful to name that she was from a small, rural town, that she was familiar with the beliefs people from similar contexts hold towards urban areas, that she did not hold the same beliefs, and, quite interestingly that at the root of her different belief was an understanding of "cultural poverty things." Here, she tapped into, yet distanced herself from, ideologies of associated with Whiteness- namely the supposed entitlement to restrict public funds from being used to provide a public good for all youth. Ansley (1997) described Whiteness as;

> a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly
>
> control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of
>
> white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white
>
> dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad
>
> array of institutions and social settings (p. 592).

Although Morgan argued against an assumption rooted in Whiteness that urban youth attending public schools should have less access to public funds, she countered that notion based on a claim that she has a deeper understanding of "cultural poverty." Since she did not position herself as someone who has experienced poverty as a child or adult, the operative word in her assertion would be "culture-" she had become more familiar with a "culture" that hinges upon poverty.

"Cultural poverty" as an explanation for perceived deficits or academic underperformance among racially marginalized youth has a long, storied history. Sociologist Oscar Lewis coined the term "Culture of Poverty" to describe what he saw as pervasive family structures, values, and ideologies common among those living in poverty regardless of global context (Lewis, 1966a, 1966b, 1971). Lewis not only explained that those living in a culture of poverty (which interestingly was specifically attributed to "American Negros," Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans with no mention of poor Whites), had "a weak ego structure" and possessed "a high tolerance for psychological pathology of all kinds," but also that "There is in [the culture of poverty] much pathos, suffering and emptiness. It does not provide much support or satisfaction; its pervading mistrust magnifies individual helplessness and isolation. Indeed, poverty of culture is one of the crucial traits of the culture of poverty" (Lewis, 1966b, pp. 23, 25). Lewis' culture-based explanation that poor, non-Whites perpetuated their own poverty because their communities were bereft of "culture" was expounded upon in Patrick Moynihan's report for the U.S. Department of Labor, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action, better known as The Moynihan Report.* Like Lewis, Moynihan claimed that poverty and cultural pathologies were not restricted to a small subset of individuals. And, like Lewis, he described poverty as a self-perpetuated consequence of a supposedly flawed culture. Moynihan claimed:

There is no one Negro community. There is no one Negro problem. There is no

one solution. Nonetheless, at the center of the tangle of pathology is the

weakness of the family structure. Once or twice removed, it will be found to be

the principal source of most of the aberrant, inadequate, or antisocial behavior

that did not establish, but now serves to perpetuate the cycle of poverty and

deprivation (Moynihan, 1965, p. 30).

Since then, author Ruby Payne has presented in over 10 countries and has certified over 7,000

trainers based on her book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty: A Cognitive Approach*,

and its accompanying workshop. Criticized by teachers and scholars (Bomer, Dworin, May, &

Semingson, 2008; Boucher, Jr. & Helfenbein, 2015; Gorski, 2008), Payne continues to be a

mainstay for K12 professional development and multicultural training for her presumed insight

into the traits of children living in poverty and how teachers can respond to them.

The pathologizing of racially and economically marginalized communities- especially

children, has long been a way to recast oppressed peoples as self-oppressing, self-destructive

groups who are responsible for their own poverty. "Cultural poverty," and its subsequent

repackaging, is a rationalization used by many- the willfully ignorant, the experientially isolated,

the well-meaning, and those who proudly were their biases on their sleeves (Young, 2011).

Morgan felt that her years of service at Riverview revealed to her social realities to which she

may have not been exposed to had she never moved from her small, rural hometown. That

increased level of social awareness contributed to her claim of defending urban youth and urban

schools but, Morgan's reiteration of an ideology consistent with essentialized narratives at the

intersections of race and class may unwittingly allow the perpetuation of discourses that

minimize structural racism in favor of normative and meritocratic explanations of academic achievement.

While Morgan situated herself in contrast to those who felt financial retribution on underperforming urban students was a reasonable solution, she did so by claiming an understanding of something those others did not- "culture of poverty things." The legacy of cultural poverty being employed as an explanation about urban (read: racially and economically marginalized) students and as a subtle criticism of their culture was also evident in the ways the teachers in this study described their students' families. The teachers' discussion about their students' families included not having much knowledge of the parents' expectations for them as professionals, the beneficial relationships the teachers nurtured with parents as a result of having several children from the same family attending the school, and comments about the families' commitment to or valuation of education. Claire, for instance, offered this explanation for what she considered to be low levels of parental involvement at Riverview:

I think that clearly we don't have parental participation like we should here at Riverview. I think that many teachers or…many parents when they come into the building- they don't necessarily feel welcome. Possibly because they haven't finished school or they don't speak English so I think that inhibits some of our parents from becoming active in their child's learning. And there's both ends of the spectrum…I mean, there are some that are very, very supportive and that believe in Riverview High School and they care about what's happening here. They see that there are good things that are happening here. But I think that there's just both ends, like the parents that are not involved because they choose not to or ones that feel inhibited to be involved and then there's others, there's a

small group of others that are very involved. (personal communication, October

29, 2014).

In Claire's opinion, not all Riverview parents were absent from school life and some who were

absent may have actually felt uncomfortable or disenfranchised due to either their own limited

academic advancement or English language proficiency- all of which spoke to her analyzing

parental involvement, in part, as a function of social and institutional factors. However, even for

those parents who she said did care about the activities at Riverview, her comments positioned

them as those who were physically present in the school building. Furthermore, this association

of parents being "active in their child's learning" with those who had found academic success in

their own lives and even their English proficiency echoes narrowly imagined frames of what

counts as parental involvement. Claire's broad depiction of levels of and potential factors

effecting parental involvement indicated an awareness of the school's racial, ethnic, and

linguistic diversity. However, parents were still described according to a troubling dichotomy:

(a) parents who did not feel welcomed felt so because of their own educational backgrounds,

limited English proficiency, or blatant disinterest while, (b) those that were active and supportive

of the school did so because they wanted to. Within that dichotomy, there was no allowance for

uninviting district or school cultures or even parental involvement strategies that were

prescriptive and out-of-sync with the district's makeup.

     High school educators' lamentations that parental involvement lag behind productive

levels has been regularly documented in educational research (Bakker, Denessen, & Brus-

Laeven, 2007; Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009; LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). Increasingly,

studies are also distinguishing between the the traditional typology of parental involvement that

is most commonly sanctioned by schools (open house attendance, volunteering, attendance at

athletic or creative arts events, parent-teacher conference attendance, etc.) and the types of involvement that racially, ethnically and/or financially marginalized families provide both within and beyond those traditionally applauded parameters (Crozier, 2001; Howard & Reynolds, 2008; Lightfoot, 2004; Reynolds, 2009; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). Positive parental involvement, as Claire described it, was largely synonymous to parents being present in Riverview because of their interest in the school. Sarah, though, spoke to parental involvement at Riverview in terms of parental advocacy:

> Well, and we've talked about, several of us have talked about this before. And like I said, my kids are at [a suburban district with overall and subgroup proficiency levels above the state average]. My kids will learn in spite of what's going on because they don't have, because they have me to push them, you know? They have me to check on their grades. We were just talking about this in the ILT meeting. We came up with a sheet for the kids to fill out that shows their test scores, their grades, their attendance because they don't come from backgrounds that the parents will push them, and some of them don't have parents at all, they're coming as refugees and so they're, you know, with an organization [scheme], to, to check up on them. It's almost like, you know, we need to be the champion for them and the advocate for them because they don't have that at home. Where, you know, my personal kids, I can advocate for them or I would advocate for them. If I see something's going on that I'm not sure about, I'm emailing their teacher. Where our students don't have that. They either advocate for themselves or they have us to advocate for them. We don't have parents that come in and question (personal communication, November 13, 2014).

Again, parents coming into the school building was seen as a desired behavior in the eyes of the teachers, with a digital presence in the form of emails as another form of institutionally sanctioned parental behavior. Sarah described Riverview parents as (a) being less than fully supportive in that they did not "push" their children to achieve academic excellence or to even strive for good attendance, (b) falling short of monitoring their children's educational experiences, and (c) unable or unwilling to seek out clarity or to challenge inconsistencies within Riverview. The focus of this study was not teacher-parent relationships, therefore the type of data needed to verify these descriptions of Riverview's parents is not available. However, conceptions held by teachers about themselves and others is a critical aspect of this qualitative study about school reform because conceptualizations influence not only our worldviews but how we choose to be engaged within those personal, social, and professional worlds. While Sarah appeared to be aware of her students' families (refugees, no parents present in the household), she described her involvement in parent outreach as a response to deficiencies, not as a necessary and reasonable service all schools ethically and legally should provide.

The juxtaposition of geography (urban and suburban schools) and family values underscored a supposed difference in cultural priorities akin to the culture of poverty rationale-these students came from broken families where parents were absent, legally disenfranchised, or unconcerned with children's education and quality of life. As such, teachers needed to do what these parents were not present to do or were unwilling to do. In a sense, Sarah explained that she advocated for her students as she did for her own children. Except, advocacy done according to that conceptualization of others, self, and race or class (as shrouded by geographic labels) stems from benevolence with roots in cultural determinism and culture of poverty masternarratives that re-center Whiteness, its values, and the appearances of its educational involvement as the

standard. And while Sarah used the term "advocate," she also described teachers as "champions" for Riverview students. Her description of what Riverview teachers did and why they needed to do it echoed ideologies of White saviors who must step in to save others who are incapable of doing so for themselves (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Matias & Liou, 2015). Although there was no blatant use of raced language or economic class labels, she drew clear distinctions between herself and her children and the children and families with whom she worked. Embedded within those distinctions was an awareness geography, residential segregation and educational inequities- less than 10% of the students enrolled in the suburban school district Sarah's children attend were economically disadvantaged, over 80% were White, and all the schools met AYP status for the 2011-2012 academic year. However, what could have been attributed to one inheriting the material privileges of Whiteness without replicating its masternarratives was lost in her sweeping, patriarchal depiction of Riverview's teachers as the students' advocates and champions in the absence of engaged, concerned, active Parents of Color.

The teachers participating in this study were selected based on nominations from students, administrators, and parents and had been evaluated as Qualified or Highly Qualified by their principal, yet, their conceptualizations of students' families had troubling tinges of Whiteness. The pervasiveness of racism, even among White teachers in urban schools where the majority of their students hailed from different racial and ethnic groups than themselves, may not have hindered them from facilitating their students' academic success but, it did seem to have interfered with their ability to name and reject discourses based on White supremacy.

Teachers' Sociocultural Knowledge and Teacher-Student Relationships

In similar fashion to their descriptions of Riverview parents, some teachers drew upon a framing discourse (K. D. Brown, 2013) of their students that reinforced problematic, deficiency-

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laden masternarratives. The findings of this study reinforced assertions that cultural difference discourses can propel teachers into either becoming more responsive in emancipatory ways or, can re-inscribe Whiteness (K. D. Brown & Brown, 2012). The discourses and the ideologies called upon by teachers, especially discourses about racialized and otherwise marginalized students, are of utmost importance in order to ensure not only excellence in instruction but excellence in attending to students' holistic sense of self and their understanding of self within society. Doing so requires upfront, critical, and socioculturally framed discussions of teaching/teaching and learning/learners. Hamilton Mills Public Schools had a predominantly White teacher staff (82%-86% from 2007-2013) and body of administrators (60%-56% from 2007-2013). In 2011, the state education department placed the district under a $1 million sanction because a significantly disproportionate number of disabled and disabled African American students were given suspensions of ten days or more. The district's high proportion of White teachers in public schools (Gay, 2014; King, 2004; Sleeter, 2004), and disproportionate punishment of marginalized students (Cassidy & Bates, 2005; Farmer, 2010; Kennedy-Lewis, 2013; Lipman, 2003; McNeal & Dunbar, 2010) are frequent topics in educational research dedicated to urban schools. However, when discussing factors they felt contributed to the need for Riverview to be subjected to a reform policy and in their discussion of students and their families, the teachers rarely used specific racial terms.

In fact, overt racial talk was not frequently a part of their narratives. When asked if/how students were effected by the SIG required dismissal of 50% of the school's teachers, teachers remarked how students were on edge because they weren't sure which teachers would return, that they were pleased to see teachers about whom they complained had been removed, and even that the SIG policy was less disruptive to students than Riverview absorbing students from a

rival school due to its closure. The teachers' estimations of the policy's impact on students failed to consider Riverview as part of a larger trend where urban neighborhoods disproportionately absorb the effects of hiring inexperienced or unlicensed teachers, the channeling of funds to charter schools, the high rates of teacher turnover, or the blows dealt to urban students' learning as a result of disproportionately disruptive educational policies. Their lack of troubling the SIG policy beyond its impact on their own instructional practices or job security represented a gap in their sociocultural understanding of how educational reform policies impact urban education. While the silence about race and policy in the teachers' narratives could be ascribed to their socialization and lived experiences, that would assume they were wholly ignorant about racism, and the cognitive and affective impacts of learning environments. The excitement and sense of fulfillment they expressed as a result of teaching in a school with such great racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity should not be disregarded. Nevertheless, the lack of depth and nuance in their understanding that the SIG turnaround was likely traumatic for students and teachers alike is an area of concern and an area where the pursuit of social justice by teachers for students would reap rewards for families, communities, and teachers.

Although race was not a part of how the teachers imagined the SIG policy effecting their students, the following examples represent two occasions where teachers did incorporate race talk into discussions about themselves as educators. Here, Mike took issue with a former Hamilton Mills superintendent's comment about teachers' cultural competence:

> **Mike:** Under the CJ [Superintendent Johnson] time when he was here, you
> know, to put out in the newspaper and whatever, that teachers need
> more, need to be more, what was it? Racially sensitive or diverse or
> whatever, you know. As a blanket statement, or it's like, I'm more

racially diverse than you are. Seriously? And to put that out there, like

that's what teachers, like you blame teachers for not being, that we're,

that we're too whatever. We're from too upper middle class and rich

White areas? Say what really is on your mind, not just this blanket

statement about teachers need to be, that I need to have some, some

ethnic or racially sensitivity training.

Tuesda: What was he responding to?

Mike: Oh, so many things. It was lack of performance. His ultimate lack of us

growing and then when we don't, it's a blame, blame, blame…. You

know, when you have sixty languages spoken, you know that a lot of

those kids have English as their second language and therefore, trying to

teach them math but they're not getting the English part of it. Oh, my

gosh, so now you gotta make sure you do techniques, SIOP type

techniques, to program, to try to get kids to, of second languages to rise

to the new standard (personal communication, November 11, 2014).

Mike- as did other district teachers, based on local newspaper articles describing ongoing

tensions between the superintendent and the teachers' union, took issue with many of Johnson's

decisions. One flashpoint was Johnson's criticism of teacher education programs and district

teachers for what he perceived as a factor in the district's racial achievement gap- teachers' lack

of cultural competence. Claire also disagreed with Johnson concerning cross-racial teacher-

student relationships ("I know that we've heard stereotypes in the past that white teachers can't

connect with black students, that they can't build relationships because they can't identify. I

mean, I would say that does not hold true" (personal communication, November 5, 2014).

Although Claire did not expound on her thoughts around the superintendent's comments, Mike was staunch that Johnson's comments were not only unfounded but actually detracted from the greater issue which were his policy decisions.

It is certainly possible Superintendent Johnson's decisions created a hostile and unstable work context- during the interviews and as evidenced in local media coverage, teachers were openly critical of his frequent and short-lived organizational decisions as well as his decision to delay students receiving a failing grade in favor of allowing them to retake a portion of a course while still being able to continue to the progressively higher level course. It is also possible that the ability to name particular sides of the city as being predominantly occupied by particular racial and ethnic groups, the observation of White Flight, coupled with the reluctance (or lack of insight) to name the SIG Turnaround Model as a traumatic event for teachers and learners belied a local culture of insulated Whiteness. That type of professional environment would inhibit (though not prevent) the meaningful inclusion of marginalized voices in the construction of a collective identity- even if members of those marginalized communities constituted increasing percentages of the city population or the majority of a school's student body. It is also possible that racism, poor leadership, classism, a contentious work environment, the lack of cross-cultural understanding even when there is frequent cross-cultural contact at schools, inattention to teachers' needs, and the overestimation of one's place and participation in the network of social oppression could work in concert to create a corrosive mélange of institutional underperformance. What was seen here, however, was an inability or refusal to look beyond oneself as a professional or as one of many White teachers in Hamilton Mills. After all, the superintendent's criticism was not directed at Mike or Claire specifically. Their rejection of the difficulties in forging inter-racial understanding, especially within a teacher-student dynamic,

could have been a reaction to professional mistreatment- a diagnosis far beyond the scope of this study. But as educators of primarily Black, Latin@, and refugee students, the absence of race, racism, and racialized socialization as factors in student-teacher relationships and teachers' ability to holistically educate children exposed the persistence of Whiteness as a tool to diminish and deny the role of racism in schooling.

If Mike and Claire's comments were an underestimation of race and teachers' need to intentionally seek out opportunities to increase their cultural competence, the following observation from Liv represents a turn in the opposite direction:

> **Liv:** …Because I don't, I don't know how to relate to, I mean, especially like a middle class White student is not my forte at all. And so that's sort of a joke but it's true. I think my life experiences have made it easier for me to teach the socioeconomic class, you know, I mean, if you are a child of poverty, I'm going to be able to relate to you better just because of my experiences and I've studied that as well.

> **Tuesda:** Because of your teaching experience?

> **Liv:** Unh hunh. Because of my teaching experiences, yup. And then because of my life experiences, I have been on several mission trips. I don't know if I talked to you about that but, you know, one of the places I've gone several times is Mexico and so I feel like, well, first of all, I feel like I can relate to the African American students probably better than anybody because that's who I taught for ten years. Then the Mexican students especially, you know, I've been on several mission trips to Mexico and I feel like I can relate there because I have a little bit of a cultural

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understanding. My latest mission trip was to Peru and so, you know, just

the whole like Latino population, I feel like is sort of a, I have a soft spot,

you know, for that. Like I just, I feel like that is, which is great because

Riverview has a very, very large Hispanic population. So I feel like that is

kind of covered (personal communication, October 30, 2014).

Liv, too, expressed confidence that White teachers can successfully forge relationships with students of other races. She attributed her specific ability to do so to her teaching experiences (which also included time in a troubled district that made national headlines and eventually was completely placed under management by a charter organization) and her service as a missionary. As evidence of her professional experiences that improved her relationships with diverse students, she described a recent professional development session offered at Riverview about the difference between refugees, documented and undocumented immigrants as well as information about religious and cultural practices of ethnic groups represented at Riverview. She also mentioned showing *Freedom Writers* after which her students declared that her classroom was just like the one depicted in the film.

Liv gave the impression of being keenly interested in learning about her students' cultures. She reported bringing what she learned in the professional development session back to one of her refugee students to continue the conversation and that the student was surprised she had taken the time to learn about his homeland. Her excitement to learn about refugee students and her intentionality in seeking out how to apply her experiences represented specific efforts to increase her cultural competency. While Liv's reflections did not directly diminish or dismiss the role of race in teacher-student relationships, they did not indicate a critical engagement with race in the U.S. context beyond a film that perpetuated normalizing images of Black and Latin@

urban youth as being disengaged from learning and violent in contrast to the naïve, principled White teacher who saves the day (Cann, 2015; Sealey-Ruiz, 2011). Furthermore, her rationale for claiming teaching and cultural competence with Latin@/Hispanic students was based on international experiences that could not contextualize those students' experiences living in this country nor the experiences of those born and raised in this country. Collectively, Mike, Claire, and Liv presented examples to demonstrate the bases of their convictions that they were fit to and skilled in teaching or relating to Students of Color. However, those examples did not include evidence of how they pursued pedagogical training based on culturally responsive or relevant, nor did they reflect engagement in contextually-specific efforts to learn about their students' sociocultural realities or worldviews. As such, the bases for their claims of cultural competence reflected the complex ways in which racism is reinforced when teachers draw upon discourses about cultural and racial competence but stop short of demonstrating an understanding of their own racial socialization or professional efforts to create/maintain an anti-racist praxis (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; K. D. Brown & Brown, 2012; Picower, 2009).

Conclusion

Race and racism, on the whole, were not commonly discussed or troubled in the narratives of the teachers participating in this study. Race was insinuated, however, by the employment of class-based terms in conjunction with either discussions of White families removing their children from the school or in conjunction with discussions of themselves as parents- discursive moves that indirectly named the subjects of their race-talk (students, students' families, etc.) as a contradistinction of middle class values, or even the teachers as parents or preofessionals. At other times, teachers mentioned race to defend their ability to create meaningful relationships with students across racial lines or to celebrate the racial harmony they

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felt characterized the dynamics in their classrooms. Consistent across the various topics addressed in this chapter (school stability, students and their families, and teacher-student relationships) were teachers' timid use of direct race-talk when matters of social oppression intersected with their school's past or future but more specific and bold claims when defending their class status or work as White teachers in a school where the students were overwhelmingly of different races. The implications of which is that the teachers exhibited their sociocultural knowledge in ways that either left Whiteness and racism in schools un(der)-interrogated or used that knowledge to portray themselves in ways that allowed their fit as White teachers in urban schools to remain intact even in the absence of details that would have supported the development of the sociocultural knowledge about their domestic students or the local, racial politics.

More pointed investigation into these teachers' understandings of the role of racism in schooling, especially as it is manifested in Fordham, would aid in better understanding their discursive moves. For example, the absence of discussion about the sanctioned and mandated turnover of 50% of Riverview teachers as a single event in what has become the normalized destabilization of urban schools could be the result of (a) a lack of knowledge about educational policies, (b) an intentional effort to deny racism as a factor in schooling, or (c) an effort to reconcile the dissonance of their appreciation of diversity, their feelings of being unsupported as teachers, and the ideological discomfort of experiencing privilege while daily witnessing oppression, among many other possibilities. Regardless, what is evident is the potentially fruitful tension between teachers' sociocultural knowledge about educational policies and social oppression, their coming to terms with their own socialization, and the consuming pressures of working in an unstable or recovering professional atmosphere. Integrating the teachers' and

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students' racial/ethnic identities is a subsequent and necessary analytic step given the highly political and oppressive use of learning and formal education to shape the lives and life opportunities of various social groups in the U.S. context (Anderson, 1988; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Rushing, 2001).

Inquiries into how these particular White and White Latino teachers conceptualize the role of racism as a historical and contemporary issue in Hamilton Mills Schools, when framed by theories such as CRT, could provide more precise understandings of how they utilize language and ideologies to protect or dismantle the multifaceted system of oppression (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2013; 1997; García, 2015; Garrett & Segall, 2013). Such inquiries could expose the types of knowledge the teachers draw upon. Briscoe and Khalifa, for example, differentiated between the hermeneutic, technical-rational, emancipatory knowledge paradigms and the possibilities or inhibitions each presented as community members and district leaders discussed the relevance of a school closing to racism (2013). Identifying areas of needed growth and strength in the teachers' sociocultural knowledge would be bolstered with a greater understanding of the epistemologies they use to frame discussions about policies, their students, and their professional status. But, knowledge can be utilized for different purposes. For that reason, further study using discursive frameworks, such as that done by Garrett and Segall (2013), could help identify what is protected and dismissed as teachers call upon different forms of ignorance and resistance as they discuss race. An extended investigation into the teachers' understanding of race in education that focused on discursive moves, motives, and the epistemologies those discourse patterns are based on could identify gaps in their sociocultural knowledge, fortresses of protected Whiteness, and potential areas of interest convergence that could be used to show how and why it is in the best interest of all to invest in racially equitable educational polices.

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Chapter X: Conclusion and Implications

Introduction

The guiding research questions and purposes of this case study center on the value of teachers' experiences, meaning-making, and perceptions around the Title I School Improvement Grant program within the broader realm of educational policy analysis. In particular, the teachers' narratives provided both longitudinal and iterative views of the school's prior placement under various policies, the time spent under first the SIG Transformation Model followed by the Turnaround Model, and the time period following the end of the grant. Synthesizing the document and interview data collected for this study, therefore, required intentional analyses for the ways in which (a) time, (b) contextual conditions, (c) the teachers' sense of professionalism, (d) processes governing the development, interpretation, and implementation of the grant, and the (e) meaning-making teachers do as individuals. The adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model to an ecological view of teacher-based educational policy analyses, in conjunction with a sociocultural view of teachers and schooling accounted for each of those areas of analysis. What follows are the primary lessons I learned as a result of conducting this study as well as their implications for school and district administrators and for educational researchers

Lessons Learned

Teachers are mentioned in and sanctioned/rewarded by educational policy without sufficient socio-political consideration of their working conditions

The Title I School Improvement Grant Program rhetorically links student learning and achievement with quality teaching not only through models that require school districts to make provisions for professional development but also through the assumption that teacher dismissals

will "jump start" the school's ability to improve test scores. Although the grant calls for the inclusion of teachers and principals in the development of teacher evaluation plans, teachers in this study did not perceive that teacher evaluation sufficiently took into account their working conditions. Working conditions, as described by these teachers included (1) the multiple, overlapping yet often short-lived implementation of district policies (blended learning, trimester schedules, semester schedules, elective hubs), (2) ongoing district policies that distance teachers and principals from key site-specific decisions (centralized student scheduling, hiring), and (3) district policies that concentrated English Language Learners at their school with limited and brief language support even though that decision would make them more susceptible than any other school to Title I sanctions. With the exception of recent changes in district leadership, teachers often described a chaotic working environment due to demoralizing and antagonistic treatment from the superintendent. They also claimed their work environment was negatively impacted by overly demanding and disenfranchising principal-superintendent dynamics. Poor control of student behavior, infrequent classroom observations, and limited feedback on instructional practices were cited as impacts felt by teachers due to those dynamics. Together, these descriptions of Riverview teachers' working conditions presented critical nuances to reform policies that threaten teachers' employment without holding other stakeholders at the micro and exosystem levels accountable for their decisions that eroded the teachers' work environments.

Teachers also cited their students' social, economic, and prior academic preparation as key elements of the working conditions. Whether they were describing factors they felt contributed to the downturn in Riverview's ability to meet academic benchmarks, factors related to their evaluations, or factors they felt contributed to the stagnation of student outcome

improvement during the grant period, teachers often referred to the attention teaching

linguistically diverse, Special Education, refugee, or low-income students required. Although

they were proud of the school's student diversity, they were also aware that having higher

concentrations of student subgroups, in particular because of the Newcomers Program, made

them professionally vulnerable in ways charter schools, schools in more affluent districts, and

even particular schools within the same district were not. Teachers also discussed the difficulties

they as high school teachers faced when they persistently received academically underprepared

students. Teachers' claims that district and federal policies failed to reward them for their

abilities to produce academic gains in spite of those challenges and the historical lack of support

provided to support those students' academic needs were seen as punitive and shortsighted

decisions. In sum, the teachers reported that policies such as the SIG Turnaround Model, which

are heavily dependent on teacher dismissals, failed to account for the macrosystem impacts

social inequities on their work and failed to hold states or districts accountable at the micro and

mesosystem levels for their decisions that further complicated their ability to be successful.

A significant contribution this study of teacher-based analyses of the SIG program is the

extended and multi-layered, ecological understanding of educational policy- specifically from

the vantage point of teachers. Due to its relatively recent introduction, the literature concerning

this specific school reform policy is limited and is primarily in the form of policy reports that

rely on survey data, SIG applications or statistical analyses of student achievement markers as

indicators of its effectiveness or lack thereof (S. Hurlburt, Therrieult, Le Floch, & Cole, 2011;

Lachlan-Hache, Naik, & Casserly, 2012; Scott et al., 2012; T. Trujillo & Renee, 2012; Yatsko et

al., 2012). Although some of these reports included teachers in the data collection, teachers

speaking for themselves was not a common element. Waddell (2011) was a K12 teacher whose

work reflected on the SIG program's faulty assumptions and lack of socio-economic considerations, however, his work did not feature longitudinal considerations of the policy's impact on teachers work. There have even been several dissertations that focused on the SIG program. Those studies have run the gamut of quantitative research based on survey or student test score data with the intention to gauge whether or not the grant was effective in improving student achievement (Graham, 2013; W. A. Smith, 2012); a phenomenological study of school principals' socializing experiences and perceptions of their role within the turnaround process after Year 1 of the grant (Kehoe, 2012); examinations of how the federal government's use of dominant discourses and deliberate performance shaped the policy's language (Carpenter, 2011); and a case study of principals and teachers concerning the grant's impact on school culture with consideration of the district's role in the turnaround process (Harrelson, 2014).

What is largely missing, and what these teachers' analyses present, are studies that engage teachers as policy analysts. This study contributes to the growing body of literature by inserting the localized experiences of teachers in relation to the SIG program. By conducting this research as a case study, teachers are seen not only as technicians or policy enactors but as professionals who are cognizant of their position within a larger ecology where time, public discourses, policies, and district decisions are understood as relevant factors to their ability to more fully and authentically engage in the turnaround process. The roles of time/timing and the sociocultural conditions of both teachers and students have been largely unaccounted for in the existing literature but their prominence in these teachers' narratives complicates findings drawn from quantitatively or qualitatively studies that go directly to questions about the policy's effects, thus bypassing the experiences and meaning-making of teachers.

Teachers are discussed in educational policies and policy analyses as enactors, but rarely as actors with expertise and a stake in turning schools around

Within the school improvement plan for Riverview, teachers were given extensive attention as evidenced in the additional requirements of training, observations, and peer collaborations, the provision of substantial funds to purchase instructional materials of their choosing, and in the focus on shared instructional models. In this way, teachers were represented as key figures in the success of students and in the revitalization of the school. Teachers consistently reported benefits to their professional capacity as a result of the activities of instructional coaches, technology consultants, and student data consultants as well as trainings in SIOP® and Close and Critical Reading which were key elements of the Transformation period. The infusion of these capacity-boosting elements boosted cohesion among the staff and increased perceptions of efficacy in responding to the academic needs of their students. In these ways, the grant shifted the teachers from being mere deliverers of instruction or policy enactors within the ecology towards their functioning as professionals who were receiving professional development specifically concerned with their working conditions so they could better serve their school's student population.

Although the teachers' length of continuous service in urban schools in general and at Riverview can be seen as evidence of their position as stakeholders in the school's success, the teachers' claims of improved professional capacity and morale represented a deepening of their professional stake in turning the school around. In fact, two of the teachers in this study did and continue to serve in leadership roles that keep them involved in the school's efforts to increase student achievement and to facilitate families' knowledge of and participation in school initiatives. Feelings of being further entrenched in the future of Riverview were presented as

benefits of the Transformation Model once glitches in its implementation were resolved and following changes in school and district leadership. However, the sequence and timing of the district's decision to place the school under the Turnaround Model diminished their perceptions of being valued stakeholders in the school reform process. The district's decision to opt for the restriction of the SIG requirement to replace 50% of the school staff to the teaching staff, in combination with what the teachers regarded as dehumanizing and divisive procedures, were seen as examples of the district not only disregarding their commitment, effort, and professional dignity but perpetuating discursive narratives of teachers being the parties most responsible for struggling schools. While the dismissal of half of the school's teachers on the heels of a substantial financial investment in their professional capacity is sufficiently troubling, the chronologically cyclical return to a climate where teachers felt disregarded and disposable spoke to the need for educational policies and policy analyses that actively consider the relationship between policy design, policy implementation, and the role of teachers professional and emotional needs in their ability to improve student achievement. The SIG guidelines, for example, require schools to address the socio-emotional needs of students but never those of teachers.

This study stands in contrast to dominant narratives about teacher inadequacy. These teachers' narratives indicated they were interested in remaining professionally active and welcome educational policies that provide resources which enhance their instruction and professional community. The tone of the Transformation Model, as experienced by these teachers, was one that largely considered teachers as professionals who were capable of making decisions and who were interested in student success. The significance of studies like this that then go deeper to question the intangible consequences experienced by teachers as they received

grant-supported resources shows that skipping to the end of an educational policy in pursuit of pass/fail assessments will leave policy makers, principals, superintendents, and even educational researchers without critical information. Those analyses interrogate assumptions that hardline reform policies premised on teacher dismissals are appropriate moves that benevolently pursue student achievement by any means necessary. This study shows that teachers critique themselves and their colleagues. They recognized the value of school reform policies. But, they also critically analyzed the sociocultural conditions and ecological elements that rhetorically and professionally functioned to enhance or diminish their status as stakeholders in education.

Final Thoughts and Implications

The conditions in which teachers work are the same conditions under which students learn. The political and social contexts in which urban teachers operate are the same contexts in which urban students fight to achieve. The practically singular focus on student outcomes and teacher performance inherently shifts our collective focus towards what schools do rather than what is being done to and in our schools. We, as researchers, educators, teacher educators, administrators and we, as the general public, must actively consider which agendas are advanced when we reduce schooling to prescribed, standardized, and commoditized student outcomes. Who is it that wins when teachers are discursively reduced to curriculum deliverers and policy enactors? Which agendas, which public interests can be advanced if we not only consider but engage with teachers as informed policy analysts?

We must learn to recognize the disenfranchisement of teachers as another factor in the conversion of public and collective goods into a free-market enterprise and then combat that disenfranchisement via socially, politically, and discursively means. What would happen if people beyond institutions of higher learning and those in administrative or legislative offices

could hear from and interact with teachers as they delineate the ecological forces that shape their work? Without such critical considerations, conversations, and action, our well-placed desire to see students learn could be capitalized upon in ways that lead us to devalue or demonize the professional and experiential knowledge of teachers all in the name of student outcomes. We could very well find ourselves in a rhetorical and political situation where the adults who possess the most extensive system of inroads to student achievement, those with the highest levels of academic/experience-based pedagogical training, and indeed the very numbers to democratically advocate for students of marginalized communities will find themselves dispossessed of their livelihood and discursive platform to speak from within the constantly in-flux system of urban schooling. In short, if we do not tune into and attune our evaluation of schooling to the conditions of urban teachers, their naming of educational interlopers and their political advocacy will be considered nothing more than distracting noise to the call for so-called student achievement.

Findings from this study also hold importance for school and district administrators and educational researchers. The teachers' perceptions of the complex dynamics between school principals and administrators spoke to their belief that both sets of leaders are critical in the prevention of school decline and in the process of rebuilding a school's capacity to improve learning. The tone, actions, distribution of leadership, and even the perceived levels of professional confidence lied at the root of teachers' concerns that breeches in the principal-superintendent relationship produced palpable and long-reaching effects. These teachers' analyses suggested it would be to the benefit of the entire microsystem if district leaders would include and share power with principals and teachers while still allowing them to be meaningfully present at the school-site.

The development of longitudinal SIG school improvement plans that consider struggling schools' past and present conditions in order to account for and resolve prior administration's actions can "clean house" so that teachers will not be bogged down by multiple, conflicting, or disparate policies. Actively considering the processes that will allow resources and personnel to be present and equipped on Day 1 of the grant will preserve teacher-district trust and frequent assessment of teachers during the grant period will bring to light implementation flaws while there is still time to resolve them. Also, the development of school improvement plans that do not hold the district to the fire of having to replace 50% of the teaching staff will stem the loss of qualified teachers while more expansively considering other processes and figures within the school's ecology that may be stymying the work of teachers and students. Finally, in the same way school districts cannot singlehandedly resolve social and economic inequities, teachers cannot transform their classrooms into spaces where the impacts of not being academically fluent in English, having physically, cognitively, or emotionally different abilities, and poverty do not effect students' learning. The sociocultural conditions and population shifts cited in this study as having significant impacts on teacher effectiveness cannot be resolved by educational policy alone but the adoption of policies that hold districts and principals as responsible for the provision of necessary support structures can help. By linking teacher, principal, and district accountability to special populations, sustainable and transformative education can be provided well beyond the grant period because each stakeholder within the microsystem will then have both the responsibility and the ecological support they need in order to meet those responsibilities. In short, the fates of teachers, principals, district leaders, and students are inextricably connected.

This study also speaks to the need for more qualitative research on the SIG program that addresses the intermediary effects of the policy through the use of teacher-based policy analyses. The incorporation of more teacher-based analyses is integral to the interrogation and interruption of dominant discourses that unfairly discredit teachers, narratives that diminish the impact of infusing capitalism in educational policies while curiously praising its benefits, and to the reclamation (or perhaps, true establishment) of teachers as social and policy agents. Conducting these types of studies places the researcher in some degree of risk because schools and teachers understandably see themselves as operating in contested spaces where the tone of accountability would discourage them from discussing their views about educational policies. Nevertheless, it is critical that policymakers at all levels know that prior to the ability to assess a policy's effectiveness, there are teacher narratives and teacher-based policy analyses that can either complicate or confirm decisions of whether or not a policy was successful. Teacher-based policy analyses have the potential to help them and the general public to question for whom the policy was effective and at what cost.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Figure 2: Systems within Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model, Adapted from Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2007

Chronosystem: Changes in Life Events, Changes in Social, Political, Historical and Economic Patterns and Conditions over Time

Microsystem: Teachers, Principals, Students, Students' Families, School district representatitives

Mesosystem: Interactions between microsystems

Exosystem: State and Federal Levels of Schooling, State and Federal school funding schema, State and Federal level political systems, School reform and teacher accountability policies, Politicians and policy-makers

Macrosystem: Political Philosophies, National customs, Social ideologies and conditions, Economic Ideologies and conditions, ideologies and narratives about school reform and teacher accountability

Appendix B: Figure 3: Systems within an Ecology of Teacher-based Educational Policy Analyses, Adapted from Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2007

Chronosystem:
Social, political, economic, cultural, and institutional patterns of educational policies over time, individuals' socialization, positionalities, and life experiences, changes in sociocultural, political, and educational contexts over time, ecological effects of timing

Microsystem:
Teachers, Principals, Students, Students' Families, School District Representatitives

Mesosystem:
Interactions between Microsystems

Exosystem: State and Federal Levels of Schooling, State and Federal School Funding Schema, State and Federal level Political Systems, School Reform and Teacher Accountability Policies, Politicians and Policymakers

Macrosystem: Political Philosophies, National Customs, Social Discourses and Conditions, Economic Discourses and Conditions, Discourses and Narratives about School Reform and Teacher Accountability

Appendix C: Table 7: Alignment of Core Research Elements with Data Sources

	Type of Information Needed	Data Sources
Title I School Improvement Grant Guidelines and History	• Grant application procedures and documents • Completed State/District grant applications • School Improvement Plan • Records of grant awards • Local implementation methods	• Review of institutional and federal documents • Review of archived local newspaper articles
How do successful urban teachers describe their experiences working in a school operating under the Title I School Improvement Grant program?	• Chronological recollections of school and district environments • Recollections of policy notifications and implementation • Description of involvement in school structure beyond classroom	• Individual teacher interviews • Focus group interviews • Teacher profile surveys
What factors do teachers believe contributed to the school's history of student achievement?	• Teachers' recollections of school and district history since employment at Riverview High School • Historical district decisions effecting all schools	• Individual teacher interviews • Focus group interviews • Standardized test score data • Review of institutional and federal documents

Table 7 (cont'd)

	Type of Information Needed	**Data Sources**
What factors do teachers believe contributed to the school's history of student achievement?		• Review of archived local newspaper articles
How do teachers' experiences with localized interpretations and forms of policy implementation impact their understanding of school reform efforts?	• Teacher explanations concerning educational policy development and implementation • Teachers' historical accounts of district and school policy decisions	• Individual teacher interviews • Focus group interviews
How did the time periods under the Transformation Model and then the Turnaround Model enhance or inhibit the teachers' capacity to improve student outcomes?	• Teachers' recollections of district or school-specific forms of teacher support • Delivery and use of teacher support measures • Teachers' meaning-making concerning why reform initiative have or have not yielded desired results	• Individual teacher interviews • Focus group interviews
How, if at all, do the teachers understand their experiences as a SIG school in relation to larger trends of educational policies related to urban schools?	• Teachers' opinions about school reform models • Teachers' perceptions of public opinion concerning teacher accountability	• Individual teacher interviews • Focus group interviews

Appendix D: Administrator Letter of Consent

Dr. Administrator,

My name is Tuesda Roberts, and I am a doctoral candidate in Michigan State University's College of Education. You are being invited to participate in a study that will take place during the Fall of 2014. You have received this invitation because you have been identified as an administrator at a school that is implementing an improvement plan as part of Title I School Improvement Grants' Turnaround Model. I am conducting this study in order to learn more about the perceptions and experiences of urban school teachers who are employed in these Turnaround schools. Your involvement as an administrator is an essential part of this study, because I am asking you to nominate experienced teachers in this school you feel are successful and to describe the attitudes, behaviors, etc. that influenced your nominations. You will be asked to complete a survey in which you rank the criteria you use when describing successful and/or highly qualified teachers. In that same survey, you will be asked to name specific teachers you feel meet those criteria. In addition to completing the survey, you will be asked to participate in two 45-60 minute interviews that will focus on (a) your goals during the SIG application process and the development of your school improvement plan, (b) the criteria you identified in the survey concerning successful and highly qualified teachers, (c) how you perceive the SIG Turnaround Model being a part of improving student outcomes and, (d) the role of teachers in your school improvement plans.

Confidentiality is an important part of this study. Please know that anything you share with me during the interviews will remain confidential. The teacher(s) you nominate will not have access to the information you share. In fact, the teachers will not be made aware of who nominated them. Because other administrators will be interviewed, you should know that nothing shared during the individual interviews will be shared with them in ways that name you or use any of your identifying information. Information I may present to the joint focus group will be expressed as patterns or aggregate data. I will not share identifiable information gathered from the survey you complete nor your interviews with representatives from Grand Rapids Public School. The only exception to the confidentiality between you and I would be an instance in which you report abuse or intent to harm yourself or others.

Your participation is entirely *voluntary*. To be certain I can accurately describe what we discuss during the interviews, I will use an audio recorder during all interviews. I will be the person responsible for transcribing the interviews and will securely store both the transcripts and the audio files. By agreeing to participate in this study, you are indicating your willingness to be recorded. I will interrupt the recording any time you ask me to. At any time you may choose not to answer questions, and you can withdraw from this study at any time, without penalty. I will emphasize the importance of confidentiality during the focus group interview and ask all participants to protect each other's privacy.

There is a minimal risk of loss of privacy inherent in participating in this research, because members of your faculty will know of your participation. Pseudonyms will be used in any representation of this study. All collected data will be stored (with security measures taken) for up to ten years and electronic files will be password-protected and archived. Files will be accessible to me and the MSU Institutional Review Board (in the event of an audit). Only I will

have access to information that could reveal your identity. Results of this study may be presented at professional conferences, in journal articles, or in a book and would include pseudonyms for your name and this school.

While the direct benefits of participation may not seem obvious, I believe administrators represent an important part of a school's success and that they have valuable first-hand knowledge about what contributes to a school's success. If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact me, Tuesda Roberts, at 620 Farm Lane, 3rd Floor Erickson Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824; rober785@msu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this research study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, FAX 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu, or regular mail at: 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Urban Teachers in SIG Schools Study
Tuesda Roberts, MSU-College of Education

Please indicate your decision about participating in the Turnaround School Improvement Plans Study:

_____ I voluntarily agree to complete a survey and to participate in two audio-recorded interviews for this study.

_____ I decline. I do not wish to participate in this study.

_____   (Print Name)

_____   _____
           Signature   Date

Appendix E: Parent Letter of Consent (English)

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Please consider sharing your opinions about what it takes to be an outstanding teacher. Parents are an important part of any school community and who better to speak for parents than parents themselves? Thank you for considering participating in this study. Here's some information about the study:

Why am I receiving this?: Because you are the parent/guardian of a <u>returning</u> student at this school *and* because parents' opinions are very valuable!

Who is this letter from?: My name is Tuesda Roberts, and I am a doctoral candidate in Michigan State University's College of Education. Your participation will help me complete my dissertation about outstanding teachers.

What do you want me to do?: If you agree to share your opinions, (1) put a check mark indicating if you only agree to do a survey OR both the survey and a 30 minute interview, (2) rank the qualities you think are important when it comes to identifying an outstanding teacher, (3) name teachers at this school who you think are outstanding and then place a check mark beside the teacher qualities they have and/or, (4) complete a 30 minute audio recorded interview about why you named those specific teachers. During the interview, you won't have to answer any question you don't feel comfortable answering and I will stop recording our conversation if you ask me to. You can withdraw from this study at any time, without penalty. Completing the survey does <u>not</u> mean you have to do the interview.

Do I have to do <u>all</u> of that?: No. The more information I have from parents, the better it is, but you can do the survey without agreeing to the interview. The survey and the interview are absolutely voluntary.

What's in it for me?: That depends on how you look at it. If you return a properly completed survey, you will get a free notebook. If you volunteer, are chosen and complete the 30 minute max interview, you will receive a $20 gift card. Other than that, your participation means that parents get a voice in educational research and hopefully, that can give you a sense of personal satisfaction.

I don't want to share my personal information: That's okay. If you only do the survey, I don't need your name or contact information. If you do the interview, your name, your students' names and anything else that could reveal your identity will be removed. Nobody at the school will read or hear what you share. The survey you complete and the transcription of your interview will be securely stored by me. Your privacy is so important to me, that the people you name as outstanding teachers won't even know it was you who nominated them for a different part of this research project. In short, unless you share something that indicates abuse or intent to harm yourself or someone else, anything you share in the survey and/or interview is strictly confidential.

How will you use the survey and interview?: I will use your responses to select teachers for a different part of this research project. Once I've completed the entire study, the results may be published in a professional journal, a book or maybe used during presentations. But remember, I will not use anyone's name at any time. In fact, even the name of this school will be changed in all publications and presentations.

Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns?: If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact me, Tuesda Roberts, at 620 Farm Lane, 3rd Floor Erickson Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824; rober785@msu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this research study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, FAX 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu, or regular mail at: 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Urban Teachers in SIG Schools Study
Tuesda Roberts, MSU-College of Education

Please indicate your decision about participating in the Turnaround School Improvement Plans Study:

_____ I voluntarily agree to ONLY complete the survey for this study.

_____ I voluntarily agree to complete the survey AND volunteer to participate in an interview.

    Name:_____

    Contact Information:_____

Estimado padre o tutor,

Por favor, considere compartir sus opiniones sobre lo que requiere ser un maestro excepcional. Los padres son una parte integral de cualquiera comunidad escolar y ¿quién sea más apropiado hablar por los padres sino los padres sí mismos? Gracias por considerar participar en esta investigación. Aquí tiene información con respeto a la investigación:

¿Por qué yo? Porque es una madre, un padre o un tutor de un estudiante para quien este año no es su primer año en esta escuela y porque las opiniones de padres son muy importantes.

¿De quíen esta carta? Soy Tuesda Roberts y soy candidata doctoral en la facultad de educación en la Universidad de Michigan State. Su participación me ayudará en cumplir mi tesis sobre los maestros excepcionales.

¿Qúe es lo quieres que haga yo?: Si consiente compartir sus opiniones, (1) pon una marca de flecha indicando si solo prefiere solo llenar la encuesta O si consiente llenar la encuesta y hablar conmigo en otro día por más o menos 30 minutos, (2) califica calidades según su nivel de importancia acerca de lo que considere usted sea importante cuando habla de una maestro excepcional, (3) nombre maestros en esta escuela quien considera ser excepcional e indica con flecha las calidades que corresponde a lo que sabe de ellos, y/o (4) hacer una entrevista grabada de 30 minutos acerca las razones que nombró aquellos maestros específicos. Durante la entrevista, no tendrá que contestar una pregunta si no se siente cómodo contestarla y pararé la grabación en cualquier momento que me pida. Puede terminar su participación en esta investigación en cualquier momento, sin consecuencia. Llenar la encuesta no se obliga hacer la entrevista.

¿De verdad tengo qué hacer todo esto?: No. La más información que tenga yo de los padres, lo mejor sería pero no hay problema si prefiere llenar la encuesta sin consentir en hacer la entrevista. La encuesta como la entrevista son completamente voluntarias.

¿Hay recompensa para participar en esta investigación?: Depende de la manera en que piensa de la investigación. Si entregue una encuesta llenado correcta (sólo un número 1, un número 2, etc.), le daré un cuaderno gratis. Si consiente hacer la entrevista, es escogido hacerla y la completamos, le daré una tarjeta de regalo de $20. Además de eso, so participación da representación de las opiniones de padres y tutores en investigaciones de educación y se espera que saber que contribuye de esta manera le dará un sentido de satisfacción personal.

No quiero que mi información personal sea compartida: No se preocupe de eso. Si solo quiere llenar la encuesta, no necesito ni su nombre ni su información de contacto. Si hace la entrevista, su nombre, el nombre de su estudiante y todos los aspectos de su identidad serían quitados. Nadie quien trabaja en esta escuela tendrá permisión de leer ni escuchar a lo que comparte. Guardaré la encuesta que llene y la transcripción de la entrevista con medidas de seguridad. Su privacidad es tan importante a mí que no revelaré a la gente a quien nombra como maestros excepcionales que era usted quien les nombra para participar en otra parte de esta investigación. En pocas palabras, a menos que comparta algo que indica abuso o un intento de hacer daño a sí mismo o a otra persona, todo lo que comparte en la encuesta y/o en la entrevista es estrictamente confidencial.

¿Cómo usarás la encuesta y entrevista?: Usaré sus respuestas para escoger los maestros para otra parte de esta investigación. Después de terminar con la investigación entera, los resultados podrían ser publicados en una jornada profesional, un libro o tal vez usados en presentaciones. Pero no se olvide de que no usaré los nombres de ningún participante en ningún parte de los

resultados. De hecho, cambiaré el nombre de esta escuela en todas las publicaciones y presentaciones.

¿Con quién me puede comunicar se tengo preguntas o reservaciones?: Si tiene preguntas o preocupación con respecto a esta investigación, incluyendo a asuntos científicos o las instrucciones, o para reportar un daño, soy disponible y me puede comunicar a Tuesda Roberts 620 Farm Lane, 3rd Floor Erickson Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824; rober785@msu.edu. Si tiene algunas preguntas o preocupación con respecto a su papel y sus derechos como participante en este investigación, desea obtener información, o registrar alguna queja sobre este investigación, puede contactar—anónimamente, si así prefiere—a Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program, por teléfono: 517-355-2180, fax 517-432-4503, correo electrónico: irb@msu.edu, o al correo postal: 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Investigación Sobre los Maestro Urbanos en Escuelas de SIG
Tuesda Roberts, MSU- Facultad de Educación

Por favor, indica abajo su decisión de participar en esta investigación.

_____ Voluntariamente, solamente quiero llenar la encuesta de esta investigación

_____ Voluntariamente, Llenaré la encuesta y quiero participar en la entrevista.

Nombre:_____

Información de contacto:_____

Appendix G: Student Letter of Consent (English)

Dear Student,

Please consider sharing your opinions about what it takes to be an outstanding teacher. Students are an important part of any school community and who better to speak for students than students themselves? Thank you for considering participating in this study. Here's some information about the study:

Why am I receiving this?: Because you are a <u>returning</u> student at this school *and* because students' opinions are very valuable!

Who is this letter from?: My name is Tuesda Roberts, and I am a doctoral candidate in Michigan State University's College of Education. Your participation will help me complete my dissertation about outstanding teachers.

What do you want me to do?: If you agree to share your opinions, (1) put a check mark indicating if you only agree to do a survey OR both the survey and a 30 minute interview, (2) rank the qualities you think are important when it comes to identifying an outstanding teacher, (3) name teachers at this school who you think are outstanding and then place a check mark beside the teacher qualities they have and/or, (4) complete a 30 minute audio recorded interview about why you named those specific teachers. During the interview, you won't have to answer any question you don't feel comfortable answering and I will stop recording our conversation if you ask me to. You can withdraw from this study at any time, without penalty. Completing the survey does <u>not</u> mean you have to do the interview.

Do I have to do <u>all</u> of that?: No. The more information I have from students, the better it is, but you can do the survey without agreeing to the interview. The survey and the interview are absolutely voluntary.

What's in it for me?: That depends on how you look at it. If you return a properly completed survey, you will get a free notebook. If you volunteer, are chosen and complete the 30 minute max interview, you will receive a $10 gift card. Other than that, your participation means that students get a voice in educational research and hopefully, that can give you a sense of personal satisfaction.

I don't want to share my personal information: That's okay. If you only do the survey, I don't need your name or contact information. If you do the interview, your name and anything else that could reveal your identity will be removed. Nobody at the school will read or hear what you share. The survey you complete and the transcription of your interview will be securely stored by me. Your privacy is so important to me, that the people you name as outstanding teachers won't even know it was you who nominated them for a different part of this research project. In short, unless you share something that indicates abuse or intent to harm yourself or someone else, anything you share in the survey and/or interview is strictly confidential.

How will you use the survey and interview?: I will use your responses to select teachers for a different part of this research project. Once I've completed the entire study, the results may be published in a professional journal, a book or maybe used during presentations. But remember, I will not use anyone's name at any time. In fact, even the name of this school will be changed in all publications and presentations.

Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns?: If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact me, Tuesda Roberts, at 620 Farm Lane, 3rd Floor Erickson Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824; rober785@msu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this research study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, FAX 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu, or regular mail at: 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

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Urban Teachers in SIG Schools Study
Tuesda Roberts, MSU-College of Education

Please indicate your decision about participating in the Turnaround School Improvement Plans Study:

_____ I voluntarily agree to ONLY complete the survey for this study.

_____ I voluntarily agree to complete the survey AND volunteer to participate in an interview.

      Name:_____

      Contact Information:_____

Appendix H: Student Letter of Consent (Spanish)

Estimado estudiante,

Por favor, considere compartir sus opiniones sobre lo que requiere ser un maestro excepcional. Los estudiantes son una parte integral de cualquiera comunidad escolar y ¿quién sea más apropriado hablar por los estudiantes sino los estudiantes sí mísmos? Gracias por considerar participar en esta investigación. Aquí tiene información con respeto a la investigación:

¿Por qué yo? Porque es un estudiante para quien este año no es su primer año en esta escuela y porque las opiniones de estudiantes son muy importantes.

¿De quíen esta carta? Soy Tuesda Roberts y soy candidata doctoral en la facultad de educación en la Universidad de Michigan State. Su participación me ayudará en cumplir mi tesis sobre los maestros excepcionales.

¿Qúe es lo quieres que haga yo?: Si consiente compartir sus opiniones, (1) pon una marca de flecha indicando si solo prefiere solo llenar la encuesta O si consiente llenar la encuesta y hablar conmigo en otro día por más o menos 30 minutos, (2) califica calidades según su nivel de importancia acerca de lo que considere usted sea importante cuando habla de una maestro excepcional, (3) nombre maestros en esta escuela quien considera ser excepcional e indica con flecha las calidades que corresponde a lo que sabe de ellos, y/o (4) hacer una entrevista grabada de 30 minutos acerca las razones que nombró aquellos maestros específicos. Durante la entrevista, no tendrá que contestar una pregunta si no se siente cómodo contestarla y paré la grabación en cualquier momento que me pida. Puede terminar su participación en esta investigación en cualquier momento, sin consecuencia. Llenar la encuesta no se obliga hacer la entrevista.

¿De verdad tengo qué hacer todo esto?: No. La más información que tenga yo de los estudiantes, lo mejor sería pero no hay problema si prefiere llenar la encuesta sin consentir en hacer la entrevista. La encuesta como la entrevista son completamente voluntarias.

¿Hay recompensa para participar en esta investigación?: Depende de la manera en que piensa de la investigación. Si entregue una encuesta llenado correcta (sólo un número 1, un número 2, etc.), le daré un cuaderno gratis. Si consiente hacer la entrevista, es escogido hacerla y la completamos, le daré una tarjeta de regalo de $10. Además de eso, su participación da representación de las opiniones de estudiantes en investigaciones de educación y se espera que saber que contribuye de esta manera le dará un sentido de satisfacción personal.

No quiero que mi información personal sea compartida: No se preocupe de eso. Si solo quiere llenar la encuesta, no necesito ni su nombre ni su información de contacto. Si hace la entrevista, su nombre y todos los aspectos de su identidad serían quitados. Nadie quien trabaja en esta escuela tendrá permisión de leer ni escuchar a lo que comparte. Guardaré la encuesta que llene y la transcripción de la entrevista con medidas de seguridad. Su privacidad es tan importante a mí que no revelaré a la gente a quien nombra como maestros excepcionales que era usted quien les nombra para participar en otra parte de esta investigación. En pocas palabras, a

menos que comparta algo que indica abuso o un intento de hacer daño a sí mismo o a otra persona, todo lo que comparte en la encuesta y/o en la entrevista es estrictamente confidencial.

¿Cómo usarás la encuesta y entrevista?: Usaré sus respuestas para escoger los maestros para otra parte de esta investigación. Después de terminar con la investigación entera, los resultados podrían ser publicados en una jornada profesional, un libro o tal vez usados en presentaciones. Pero no se olvide de que no usaré los nombres de ningún participante en ningún parte de los resultados. De hecho, cambiaré el nombre de esta escuela en todas las publicaciones y presentaciones.

¿Con quién me puede comunicar se tengo preguntas o reservaciones?: Si tiene preguntas o preocupación con respecto a esta investigación, incluyendo a asuntos científicos o las instrucciones, o para reportar un daño, soy disponible y me puede comunicar a Tuesda Roberts 620 Farm Lane, 3rd Floor Erickson Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824; rober785@msu.edu. Si tiene algunas preguntas o preocupación con respecto a su papel y sus derechos como participante en este investigación, desea obtener información, o registrar alguna queja sobre este investigación, puede contactar—anónimamente, si así prefiere—a Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program, por teléfono: 517-355-2180, fax 517-432-4503, correo electrónico: irb@msu.edu, o al correo postal: 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Investigación Sobre los Maestro Urbanos en Escuelas de SIG
Tuesda Roberts, MSU- Facultad de Educación

Por favor, indica abajo su decisión de participar en esta investigación.

_____ Voluntariamente, solamente quiero llenar la encuesta de esta investigación

_____ Voluntariamente, Llenaré la encuesta y quiero participar en la entrevista.

Nombre:_____

Información de contacto:_____

Appendix I: Teacher Letter of Consent

Dear Teacher,

You are being invited to participate in a study that will take place during the Fall of 2014. You have received this invitation because you have been identified as a successful teacher by a parent/guardian and/or an administrator at your school. My name is Tuesda Roberts and I am a doctoral candidate in Michigan State University's College of Education. I am conducting this study in order to learn more about the perceptions and experiences of urban school teachers who are employed in schools that are working under an official Title I Turnaround Model of school improvement. Please know that anything you share with me during the interviews and my observation notes will remain confidential. Neither members of your school's administration team, nor any other faculty or staff member will have access to the information gathered during this study. This same level of confidentiality will apply to the person who nominated you to participate in this study. The name of any nominating party or parties that specifically recommended you for inclusion in this study will be withheld. The only exception to the confidentiality between you and I would be an instance in which you report abuse or intent to harm yourself or others. I will be the person responsible for transcribing the interviews and will securely store both the transcripts and the audio files.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be expected to participate in a total of 5 audio-recorded interviews over the course of the semester- three individual interviews and two focus group interview with other teachers. One focus group will include teachers from this same school and the second focus group interview will bring together teachers from both schools participating in this study. During these interviews, you will be asked to reflect on your school's improvement plan and what it has meant for you as a teacher. I will also ask to observe you in the classroom and attend off-site professional activities you feel are important to you as a teacher. In order to accurately document our conversations, I will need to audio record the interviews. By agreeing to participate in this study, you are indicating your willingness to be recorded. I will interrupt the recording any time you ask me to. You may also choose not to answer questions at any time and can withdraw from this study at any time, without penalty. Anything shared during the interviews or observations will be kept confidential, except in the case in which you report abuse or the intention to physically harm yourself or others. I will emphasize the importance of confidentiality during the focus group interview and ask all participants to protect each other's privacy.

Interviews and observations will take place during the Fall of 2014. Should you decide to participate in this study, we would need to schedule and complete three individual interviews which will last approximately 60 minutes and two focus group interviews which will last approximately 90 minutes. You will receive a $50 Visa gift card at the conclusion of the second focus group interview or the final observation (whichever occurs last) as a token of my appreciation. Your participation is entirely *voluntary*. You will not be penalized for not participating, nor will you be penalized for withdrawing from the study at any time.

There is a minimal risk of loss of privacy inherent in participating in this research because you have been nominated by a parent/guardian and/or member of your school's administration team and because you will participate in a focus group interview. All data that I collect from you during the interviews and observations will be kept confidential in the sense that what you share and what I observe will not be shared with others while attached to your name. School administrators will not have any access to the audio recordings, interview transcripts nor field notes gathered during my observations. Pseudonyms will be used in any representation of this study. All collected data will be stored (with security measures taken) for up to ten years and electronic files will be password-protected and archived. Files will be accessible to me and the MSU Institutional Review Board (in the event of an audit). Only I will have access to information that could reveal your identity. Results of this study may be presented at professional conferences, in journal articles, or in a book and would include a pseudonym, not your actual name.

While the direct benefits of participation may not seem obvious, I believe the experiences and opinions of teachers in urban schools should be an integral part of educational research. Furthermore, as a former teacher in urban schools, I believe the opportunity to speak one's own truth can contribute to a teacher's professional and personal sense of satisfaction. If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact me, Tuesda Roberts, at 620 Farm Lane, 3rd Floor Erickson Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824; rober785@msu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this research study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, FAX 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu, or regular mail at: 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

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Urban Teachers in SIG Schools Study
Tuesda Roberts, MSU-College of Education

Please indicate your decision about participating in the Urban Teachers in SIG Schools Study:

_____ I voluntarily agree to participate in five audio-recorded interviews and observations for this study.

_____ I decline. I do not wish to participate in this study.

_____   Print Name)

_____   _____
       Signature   Date

Appendix J: Community Nomination Survey

	Rank of Importance	Teacher #1: _____	Teacher #2: _____	Teacher #3: _____
The teacher is fully-certified in the subject they teach.				
The teacher has demonstrated their ability to help students improve their standardized test scores (MEAP, SAT, ACT, etc.).				
The teacher knows how to relate to students of different racial, economic and linguistic backgrounds.				
The teacher has several years of experience teaching experiences in urban schools.				
The teacher makes the content interesting and exciting.				
The teacher looks for ways to be active in school life beyond their own classroom.				
The teacher can manage student behavior well.				
The teacher collaborates with other teachers to improve their own instruction.				
The teacher is kind to students and treats them with respect.				
The teacher has several years of teaching experience.				
Other:				

Appendix K: Teacher Interview Protocol

1. What motivated you to become a teacher?

2. Tell me about your journey into the classroom.

3. What has been a pivotal moment in your career as a teacher?

4. Why did you choose to teach at RHS?

5. How would you describe yourself as a teacher?

6. What are your professional goals?
   a. What are your goals as a teacher?

7. In your opinion, what expectations do RHS administrators, students, parents and/or education policies have for you?

8. Would you consider those goals to be consistent with the expectations you feel from RHS administrators, students, parents and/or education policies?

9. Do those expectations align well with your professional goals and the way you envision yourself as a teacher?

10. Which set of expectations is closest to your professional goals and the way you envision yourself as a teacher? Why?

11. Which set of expectations is closest to your professional goals and the way you envision yourself as a teacher? Why?

12. What would it take for you to maintain your own professional goals and the expectations of RHS administrators, students, parents and/or education policies?
    a. Do you think it's possible to do this?
    b. To what extent have you been able to achieve this?

13. What efforts by the <u>district</u> would you describe as bridges or barriers between your professional goals and those external expectations?

14. What efforts by <u>RHS</u> would you describe as bridges or barriers between your professional goals and those external expectations?

15. Why have you chosen to stay at RHS?

16. Thank you so much for agreeing to have this conversation with me. I realize that your history with local schools gives you first-hand knowledge about this school and district, so, I'd like to make sure you have an opportunity to raise issues we have not discussed yet.   In order to put what you've shared into a proper context, what should I take into consideration about the history of this school or about your experiences since you have been employed here?

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