

TEACHER ACTIVISM IN RESPONSE TO NORTH CAROLINA'S 2013 EXCELLENT
PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACT

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ABSTRACT

COURTNEE D. COX: Teacher Activism in Response to North Carolina's 2013 Excellent Public Schools Act
(Under the direction of Catherine Marshall)

In 2013, North Carolina's political power balances shifted with the election of a Republican governor, Pat McCrory, and a Republican super-majority in the General Assembly. This shift in political power allowed for more conservative legislation to be introduced in the North Carolina General Assembly. Some of the newly proposed legislation, especially bills concerning public education in North Carolina, have been drafted from the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) model bills (Hauser, 2010).

North Carolina public school teachers and other stakeholders have opposed these legislative decisions with protests and other actions directed at the North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA). Teacher's reactions to the 2013 Excellent Public Schools Act is drawing national attention to North Carolina's educational policies. Teachers have rallied, walked out of their classrooms and met with legislators to voice their opinions and express concerns with the legislation. This qualitative research investigates the reasons teachers decided to protest the 2013 NCGA legislation while using Elazar's political culture as a guiding framework for exploring teachers' interpretations of North Carolina's laws.

The data reveal that some teachers are angry and desire to leave the profession. Some teachers noted that professional double standards and lack of salary increases have made them question their commitment to teaching, but cannot leave because the children deserve to have a devoted teacher in the classroom each day. Additionally, when teachers step out of the expected

apolitical role in a traditionalistic political culture, challenges arise and some can be extremely risky.

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*Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.
James 1:12 ESV*

My doctoral journey has not been without trials, heartache, anger, and tears. As I begin to write these words, images of the past eight years parade through my mind and with each I say, “But God!” I am thankful to be His child and I know that He has carried me all the way. He has placed so many individuals on my path and I am blessed to have all of them in my life.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Though a school may be brand new, tech-intensive and every “thing” one could want, it is the teacher who makes the difference in the academic trajectory of a student. Throughout my academic career I have heard this truism reiterated in many variations. These words sunk deeply into my soul and reminded me why I truly wanted to be a teacher: to inspire, to educate, and to help mold the future of the country. These words made me feel important, intelligent, and needed. Realizing their truth, I knew there was no more noble profession than teaching, and I was excited to add my name to the list of professional educators.

As my career unfolded, I encountered attitudes and legislation in North Carolina that made me question this “truth” I had held for so many years. Instead of feeling important, intelligent, and needed, I was questioning my career choice because I felt that North Carolina’s policies and laws directed towards public education were demoralizing and defeating towards me as a public educator. I knew that I was not alone in my feelings, and it became important to me to hear the voices and sentiments of other teachers – my colleagues.

Background

In 2013, North Carolina’s political power balances shifted with the election of a Republican governor, Pat McCrory, and a Republican super-majority in the General Assembly. This shift in political power allowed for more conservative legislation to be introduced in the North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA). Some of the newly proposed legislation, especially bills concerning public education in North Carolina, have been drafted from the American

Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) model bills (Hauser, 2010). ALEC, established in 1973, notes that it is a “nonpartisan, voluntary membership organization of state legislators dedicated to the principles of limited government, free markets and federalism” (ALEC, 2015). The organization has eight task forces, each focusing on different areas of federal and state government responsibilities, which develop model bills for the state legislative members' use in state law-making procedures (ALEC, 2015; Hauser, 2010). Many of the 2013 legislative actions concerning public education in North Carolina, in the opinion of those in opposition to the actions, have been related to ALEC’s attempt “to advance a far-reaching conservative agenda and to advance the interests of business and industry” (Hauser, 2010). Several of those actions are: elimination of master’s degree teacher pay and teacher tenure, reduction of classroom teacher assistants, budget cuts limiting school supplies, provisions for vouchers paid from public tax dollars to private schools, elimination of caps on class sizes, the change in the salary schedule for teachers, and the public school A-F grading scale (2013 Excellent Public Schools Act [EPSA]). North Carolina public school teachers and other stakeholders have opposed these legislative decisions with protests and other actions directed at the North Carolina General Assembly. Of those educators who have spoken out against the legislation, many were members of teacher organizations like the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) and other grassroots organizations. These activists, along with an array of social justice oriented organizations have protested at “Moral Monday” rallies at the capitol in Raleigh, NC. Some of these activists have been arrested for their actions of protest (Berman, 2014).

Problem Statement and Rationale

The teaching profession has a history that shuns political involvement and protesting legislation (Marshall & Anderson, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2005). Teachers are expected to remain

apolitical when teaching students and they are not expected to share their opinions on issues (Marshall & Anderson, 2009). From No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; United States Department of Education, 2016) to the current federal education program, Race To The Top (RTTT), North Carolina teachers have been introduced to new certification processes, new testing requirements for students and new national standards that dictate the curriculum. With the onset of new legislation in the NCGA, in addition to the federal mandates, how are teachers responding? Not with the typical, apolitical expectation. The reaction of teachers and other leaders to the 2013 NCGA legislation—EPSA—is drawing national attention to North Carolina’s educational policies. Teachers have rallied, walked out of their classrooms, met with legislators to voice their opinions and express their concerns with the legislation, and many have left the profession. In response to teachers’ protests and rallies, several North Carolina legislators question the teachers’ motives and even teachers’ right to stand and speak out against state laws. For example, North Carolina law prohibits teachers from unionizing (NCGA, 2016), but many teachers have joined and stood alongside the teacher advocacy group, the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE). To curb political participation with the NCAE, Republican legislators introduced a bill in 2011 to keep NCAE members from paying their dues via state paycheck deductions (Hogan, 2015). Although vetoed by then governor, Beverly Perdue, North Carolina teachers were receiving hints that their protests against governmental decisions were in question and not deemed appropriate. The NCGA’s legislation aimed at public schools continues despite the protests against the laws. The mystery is what could be keeping the activist teachers’ voices heard, but not heeded in North Carolina?

Purpose and Major Research Questions

This research is investigating the reasons teachers have decided to protest the 2013 NCGA legislation on education and how their passion/drive has been impacted because of the legislative action. This research aims to explore ways in which political culture may guide teacher activism in North Carolina using the following research questions:

1. In what ways has the 2013 NCGA EPSA undermined teacher professionalism?
2. What affects a teacher's depth of involvement in activist movements?
3. Why are teachers remaining in the profession despite their opposition to the 2013 legislation?
4. Are teachers knowledgeable of the political culture in the state and its influences on their professional decisions?

To answer these questions, the history and meaning of teacher professionalism needs to be analyzed, teacher professionalism challenges need to be discussed, an overview of protest activities in North Carolina that relate to the 2013 EPSA needs to be provided, and the data from interviews conducted must be thoroughly analyzed.

Significance of Study

Nationally, teachers are tasked with preparing all students to be college and career ready for the 21st century. The "Four Cs": critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity are the widely accepted concepts behind the twenty-first-century skills framework developed by different groups of educational stakeholders. With these skills, students will have what they need "to succeed in work, life, and citizenship" (National Education Association [NEA], 2015; Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2016). To prepare students for the twenty-first century, teachers are required to teach basic skills in reading, writing, and math, to provide

settings for students to research and collaborate with peers, to interview and shadow community leaders, and to use modern technologies with each task (NEA, 2015). These goals and requirements are monitored and assessed with high-stakes testing.

In addition to the twenty-first-century learning requirements and testing, teacher across the nation are noting that the emotional energy needed to maintain work-life balance is very stressful and they leave the profession (Riggs, 2013). In North Carolina, the NCGA's 2013 EPSA outlines numerous policies that challenge teacher professionalism and has moved teachers to speak out against the state legislation and pushed others to leave the profession, like many teachers across the country. This research will contribute to the work in educational policy while delving into teacher activism in North Carolina. The research team¹ is conducting this research amid the action and capturing immediate attitudes and perceptions of participants. The research will guide future research on education legislation and policy-making decisions.

Theoretical Framework

Teacher activism is affected by context, including the cultural assumptions about politics. This study uses political culture as a guiding framework for exploring teachers' interpretations of North Carolina's laws that affect their profession. The United States is home to many different ethnic, religious, and racial groups that come together to make the American society. Although we know ourselves to be the United States of America, our differences create unique cultural

¹ Dr. Catherine Marshall (lead investigator), Courtnee Cox, Ariel Tichnor-Wagner, Mark Johnson, and Natasha Scott completed a study to examine the new coalitions, or counter-networks, that have formed or been re-structured by educators, and other interested stakeholders, to counteract market-based reforms in education. The study captured the voices of teachers and social justice-oriented organizations and leaders. In addition, the study explored strategies that grassroots organizations and activists are using to combat recent education legislation and the goals these organizations, activists, and new alliances hope to achieve.

norms for communities. As the country developed, people migrated from the East coast to the West coast of the United States, making stops in between. Cultures spread across the country, and along with geography, have helped to develop different political subcultures for regions of the United States. Most of the society operates unaware of the limits placed by the political culture. Because culture can be difficult to explain, most of us see our learned cultural behaviors as 'how we do things' without any second thought. The political culture of a society sets a framework for behaviors and creates a political path that limits those outside the majority culture without their knowledge (Elazar, 1994, p. 4). This power over culture influences the behavior and determines the accepted actions are creating a subliminal direction for society's political behavior (Elazar, 1994, p. 3). According to Elazar (1994), the political-cultural norms influence the different governmental (national, state, and local) systems by:

1. Molding the perceptions of the political community as to the nature and purposes of politics and its expectations of government and the political process
2. Influencing the recruitment of specific kinds of people to become active in government and politics
3. Subtly directing the actual way in which the art of government is practiced by citizens, politicians, and public officials in the light of their perceptions (Elazar, 1994, p. 219)

What may be appropriate in government for one region may be viewed as wrong in another; knowing these cultural norms becomes second nature to community members and most behave accordingly by following laws (or the lack of them) and supporting or criticizing those in government positions (Elazar, 1994).

Elazar (1994) divides the United States into three political subcultures: moralistic, individualistic, and traditionalistic. These subcultures are not bound by state borders, but instead,

are based on migration and settling patterns. Often, two political subcultures are mixed within a state because of the settling patterns of different groups, as seen in Figure 1 (Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005), but for this research, Elazar’s subcultures will be discussed separately.

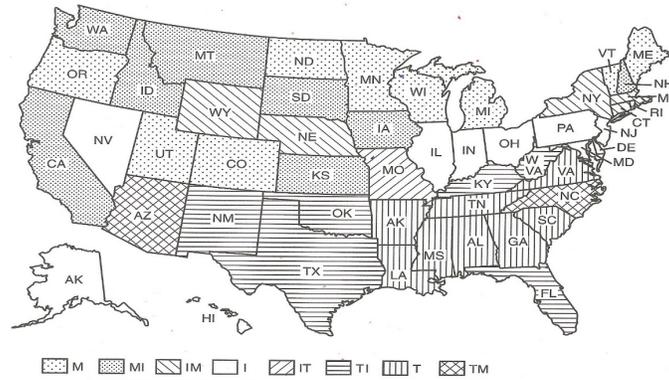


FIGURE 1.7 Regional Distribution of Political Culture in the United States
 Source: Fig. 5.4, p. 135 from *American Federalism: A View from the States*, 3rd ed. by Daniel J. Elazar.
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Figure 1. The regional distribution of political cultures within the states.

In the northern United States, Puritans settled with a strong focus on their religious beliefs, hence, establishing a moralistic political subcultural identity in the New England states. Puritans continued west and along with other groups (Mormons, Scandinavians, and abolitionists) in states like Utah, Oregon, Washington, and California continued to develop the moralistic political culture (Elazar, 1994). Generally, in this political subculture, politics is a concern for all citizens. Each person should selflessly give of him/herself to the government to promote the general welfare of the community. In this subculture, political participants are expected to operate in honesty and not seek personal gain from political ventures (Elazar, 1994).

Settlers in the Mid-Atlantic states (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland) were from very different ethnic and religious backgrounds. These groups developed a culture dedicated to individual freedom and personal pursuits of goals (Elazar, 1994). With the

California Gold Rush of 1849, this ideology followed the settlers into the region. The individualistic political subculture that developed in these states encouraged people to pursue their personal interest without too much interference from the government. Those who pursued politics did so as a business—seeking a public position for pecuniary gain. Because government officials worked for their interest, regular citizens perceived government as a favor system. The only way things happened for the public good was if one official needed a favor done—the quid pro quo system (Elazar, 1994).

Lastly, Elazar (1994) explains the traditionalistic political subculture of the South. Southern states (Virginia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Kentucky) thrived off slave labor in a plantation-based economy. Naturally, there was a small population of landowning elite that controlled government and a large population of chattel, the slaves, that was not allowed to have any part of government affairs. This way of life was deemed "right" according to religious doctrine followed by those in control, and the established hierarchy was a part of the "ordered nature of things" (p. 235). Those in control of the government were at the top of the social hierarchy, and the governmental power remained within the families in control. In this paternalistic structure, the government was filled with those desiring to maintain the status quo. Citizens without a direct role in government were expected to take what was given and not expected to participate in decision making. Further, those in control were only willing to initiate programs if the program benefited the governing elite (pp. 235-238).

North Carolina's political structure remains primarily traditionalistic today with traces of moralistic values because of the strength of religious groups in the state (The new encyclopedia of Southern culture: Religion, 2006). From the early 1800s, the state relied on the cotton industry for economic growth. The cotton industry led to the development of textile mills and mill

villages that lasted in North Carolina until after World War II. These mill villages were paternalistic; "Uncle Ben on the hill took care of 'his' workers in the mill" as Luebke (1998, p. 3) illustrates. Mill villages were tight-knit communities where obedience was valued, and mill workers rarely challenged their employers through protest. Those who did were seen as outcasts and problem makers for the small communities. This ideology spilled into the larger culture, and it developed disciplined workers who did not complain and did not push toward unionization (Luebke, 1998). As North Carolina's small towns grew, the religious influence and traditionalism "taught" the people that unionizing and collective bargaining are disruptive, and to respect the social order- do not challenge those in hierarchal positions (Luebke, 1998). These "teachings" were often violent attempts, led by mill owners in conjunction with local police and politicians, to stop strikes organized by the mill workers (Schwalbe, 2010). In North Carolina, workers were often intimidated and blacklisted when they would attempt to join labor unions—all which helped create the long-lasting fear of labor unions in the state (Jenkins & Finlator, 1985; Schwalbe, 2010).

As agriculture and manufacturing grew in the state, the "Rip Van Winkle" nickname dropped and North Carolina became known as a leading southern state despite its slow start. Educational progress was seen in the state as well. Under the leadership of Governor Charles Aycock, state-funded schools grew, and North Carolina's educational commitment was acknowledged as leading the nation (Fleer, 1994). Despite the assumed progressive nature of the state, historians have noted that the "progressiveness was conservative, designed to sustain control by a small economic and social elite" (Fleer, 1994, pp.12-13). The state was progressive in earning manufacturing profits, but it was the lowest paying in the region in manufacturing wages. Also, unionized workers were limited; the fear established within the mill community

continued. The assumed progressive state actions were funded by the regressive taxes that impacted lower waged individuals. In education, per-pupil expenditures for students were low and voluntary segregation after the *Brown* decision was met with violence by the Ku Klux Klan (Fleer, 1994). The political leaders' opposition to political participation by minority groups and their opposition to new ideas was led by their mindset to maintain the status quo (Fleer, 1994).

The traditionalistic political subculture of North Carolina's local and state government today can be felt in the day-to-day operations of North Carolina's public school system. School policies have been developed to maintain the status quo emphasizing standardization of teacher practices and established hierarchical controls over teachers and children. One example of this control was the ABCs of Public Education Program. The ABCs of Public Education was the accountability program in North Carolina in the early 1990s until the late 2000s. The program, developed by political leaders and top executives in education, provided the state with measures of student growth so school performance could be evaluated (Louis, Febey, & Gordon, 2015; Ward, 2016). In June 2010, North Carolina, along with numerous other states, adopted the Common Core State Standards for K12 Mathematics and English Language Arts. These standards were developed by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Posted on the Public Schools of North Carolina website (2016), the Common Core standards claim to "embrace clear and consistent goals for learning to prepare children for success in college and work." The success of these standards is measured via local and federal high-stakes testing. The success and failure determinates are decided by legislative decisions; leaving teachers' professional expertise and advice out of the decision-making conversations (Napso, 2005). Not only are teachers purposefully left out of conversations, but many are also afraid to speak out in fear of losing their career. Thus, North

Carolina's political culture and recent policies are embedded with assumptions of elite control of policy systems aimed at controlling workers within the hierarchy (Napso, 2005).

Definition of Terms

The listed definitions are provided for clarity throughout the research study:

Accountability. Accountability is defined as holding teachers, schools, and students responsible for results on standardized tests that are to show student achievement. Depending on results, for many schools, teachers, and students, there may be rewards or punishments.

Accountability became a major emphasis during President George W. Bush's NCLBA of 2001 (United States Department of Education, 2015).

ALEC. ALEC is defined as the American Legislative Exchange Council. ALEC is a political organization that has created model bills for numerous state legislatures (North Carolina, Florida, New Jersey, and Wisconsin) (American Legislative Exchange Council, 2015; Hauser, 2010; Marshall, Tichnor-Wagner, & Johnson, 2017; Underwood & Mead, 2012). ALEC promotes ideals that lean towards the political right. According to ALEC, their model bills allow for parents to "take back control over their children's educations by allowing them to apply competitive pressure to schools and educational providers" (American Legislative Exchange Council, 2015). The organization's ideals focus on privatization and it has a goal, according to Underwood & Mead (2012), "to undermine public education by systemically defunding and ultimately destroying public education as we know it" (p. 52).

School choice. School choice is defined as giving parents the opportunity to send their children to any school (public, charter, private) if they do not desire to send them to the local public school. Parent choices are supported with financial support from the government in the

form of vouchers, opportunity scholarships, and education savings accounts (Ballotpedia, 2016; Ravitch, 2013).

High-stakes testing. High-stakes testing is defined as an assessment that is used to determine important decisions about students, teachers, and schools. These tests are linked to accountability measures and play a role in promotion, compensation, sanctions, and funding (Edglossary, 2014).

Moral Monday. Moral Monday is defined as a movement of North Carolina constituents that protested the legislation of the Republican super-majority in the North Carolina General Assembly. Moral Monday began with members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) meeting on the lawn of the legislative building on Mondays to protest legislation. The meetings grew in size; led by the president of the NAACP, Reverend William Barber, marginalized groups joined to advocate for their causes such as voting rights, health care, women's rights and education (Marshall, Tichnor-Wagner, Johnson, 2017).

Conservative. Conservative is defined as an ideology most often linked to the Republican political party in the United States. The ideology is typically rooted in the belief that free-market capitalism should be embraced while traditional morality and social norms should be preserved (Friedersdorf, 2012; Pierce, 2015).

Neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is defined as an ideology that focuses on educational reform that “removes the buffer of social welfare as a governmental function in the belief that the market operates most efficiently and effectively without regulation” (Lakes & Carter, 2011, pg. 107). There is a national push to have education operate like private market entities by privatizing educational services and schools. The conservative right were the original backers of

corporate/private models in education, but both major political parties in the United States have embraced and support the ideology (Saltman, 2014).

Political culture. Political culture is defined by Elazar (1994) as the norms that guide and influence a society's political behavior. In North Carolina, the political subculture is traditionalistic. This label was given because the control of the government was in the hands of the elite and the social hierarchy of the state matters in decision making (Elazar, 1994). The political subculture of North Carolina greatly influences the day-to-day operations of schools and the treatment of teachers.

Professionalism. Professionalism is defined as the qualities that mark or identify a profession. In North Carolina, teachers have expressed that teaching is not respected by the general public nor by state legislators. Teacher professionalism includes: having input in curricular decisions, having due process, being compensated for advanced degrees, and being trusted to do what is best for students in North Carolina public schools.

Teacher activism. Teacher activism is defined as North Carolina public school teachers who have chosen to voice publicly their protest of the North Carolina General Assembly's 2013 Excellent Public Schools Act. The teachers have decided to no longer remain apolitical, which is unexpected, given the expectation that teachers remove themselves from political arenas (Marshall and Anderson, 2009).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The focus of this study is teachers' activism in response to the North Carolina 2013 Excellent Public Schools Act. This literature review will provide the national and state context in which this North Carolina Act passed. The literature will also detail the range of views about teaching as a profession while explaining how teacher professionalism is challenged. The remaining focus of the literature review will be on The American Legislative Exchange Council's history and how the group influences public education in America and North Carolina.

The National Context of Education Reform

Public school educational leaders in North Carolina are facing situations and challenges in schools that are vastly different from those I experienced at the start of my career in 2002. In my first teaching position, I was inundated with President George W. Bush's NCLB Act of 2001, which capitalized on previous federal policies attempting to correct the assumed failures of American public education system. Wherefrom did these policies arise?

President Ronald Reagan created the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) in 1981 to examine public education in the United States. The leader of the group, Secretary of Education T.H. Bell, was concerned about the perception that the United States' schools were not doing well and he wanted those who cared for the future of the country to work alongside him to find ways to improve public education. This group consisted of university/community college presidents, school superintendents, school board members, foundation leaders, a former governor, a former state commissioner of education, university

professors, two principals and one teacher. In 1983, the commission released a report that informed the American people that the country is a nation at risk:

Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world... while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. (NCEE, 1999)

The commission noted that the country's decision to have public schools focus on solving "personal, social, and political problems" cost the United States in other areas. The report noted that standardized test scores (SAT) had dropped over 50 points in verbal skills and about 40 points in mathematics skills, remedial education costs for businesses and the military were in the millions of dollars, and functional illiteracy was prominent with 17-year-olds in America (1999). These data coupled with the United States loss of manufacturing industries to other nations and the public schools' failure to raise students' international test scores in comparison to other nations since Sputnik's launch in 1957, had to be blamed on the lack of strong curriculum standards, essential skills and low teacher pay that plagued America (Earley, 2000; Johanningmeier, 2010; Mullen, Samier, Brindley, English, & Carr, 2013; Ravitch, 2013).

The commission compared curriculum data from 1964-1969 to data from 1976-1981. They concluded that American students did not have a clear purpose in their coursework and most students' credits came from vocational courses, physical education courses and remedial English and mathematics courses. According to the commission, the curriculum of American schools was inadequate. The same sentiment was used when the commission learned that American students spent less time on school work than other industrialized countries and that American students' study skills were "haphazard and unplanned" (NCEE, 1999). Regarding teachers and their influence on the national risk, the commission's findings noted that the

teaching profession was filled with students from the lowest academic tier, teachers were not being prepared adequately in subject matter courses, and the starting salary for teachers was too low for teachers to live without a supplemental income. Additionally, the report noted that teachers were not involved in professional decision-making conversations that impacted the curriculum choices of schools.

The commission concluded in 1983,

Each generation of Americans has outstripped its parents in education, in literacy, and in economic attainment. For the first time in the history of our country, the educational skills of one generation will not surpass, will not equal, will not even approach, those of their parents. (NCEE, 1999)

The report forced American education into the forefront of federal discussions, and US leadership mandated that solutions be found to show that the United States was committed to learning. The report listed specific areas of improvement but did not give much discussion to accountability, testing, and choice (Ravitch, 2013). As new presidential administrations entered the office, each had the opportunity to determine the path of education in the United States, each using *A Nation at Risk* as a guide.

President George H.W. Bush did not desire an extensive federal presence in educational decisions (Ravitch, 2013), but his administration launched a campaign called America 2000. This plan proposed national standards and voluntary national testing, federal support towards private vouchers, and report cards for schools and districts. Both political parties took issue with the plan; Democrats were citing that national tests would only show that poor and minority students score at lower levels than white students and Republicans were citing that the plan took too much power away from states. Ultimately, America 2000 as a campaign died, but not without bringing forth the term "systemic reform" that would permeate educational policy (New York State Education Department [NYSED], 2009).

Quickly into his administration, President Bill Clinton began his educational policy campaign, Goals 2000: The Educate America Act. Goals 2000 supported states' efforts towards systemic reform in standards and assessments. There were no specific groups targeted with this reform effort; instead, as long as each state provided evidence of their reform efforts, the federal government would support them financially without many restrictions on how monies should be spent. Numerous states took advantage of Goals 2000, especially Texas. At the time, George W. Bush was governor and Texas established Academics 2000, which created state standards and tests. When George W. Bush ran for president in 2000, his education platform stood on the laurels of the assumed major achievements in education in Texas. Ravitch (2013) former advocate and supporter of George W. Bush, notes that the "Texas Miracle" was not true. Instead of major increases in student achievement, Texas' assessment scores were average. Although Congress was warned that the Texas information was not quite true, Congress passed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, and this created a drastic change in the role of the federal government in education (Hannaway & Mittleman, 2011; NYSED, 2009).

The systemic reform within NCLB led to high-stakes testing (scores determine passing and graduation for students), accountability (determined by test scores), and choice (Ravitch, 2013; United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2015). Using these reforms, NCLB mandated that schools reach Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for students based on income, race, gender, English-language ability, and special education needs. AYP was determined by each state, but the sanctions for not meeting those goals were set by the federal government. First, a school would be determined a 'failure.' Then, depending on the number of years of failure, the school would receive state-supported help to turn the school around until total restructuring was done. Restructuring required new leadership and teachers, in most cases

turning schools into charter schools (New York State Education Department, 2009). Critics of NCLB noted that the program set unrealistic goals that, instead of addressing real problems of poverty and racial segregation, relied on high-stakes testing to help push public schools into the private sector (Paige, 2006; Ravitch, 2013).

With the change of federal administration in 2008 came an expectation that federal education policy would take a swift turn. These hopes were quickly dashed when President Barack Obama not only kept many parts of NCLB – high-stakes testing, accountability, and choice, but his policy, Race To The Top, attached teacher quality to student test scores, expanded charter schools, and pushed for common national standards. Race To The Top was not funded for all public, local education agencies (LEA). Instead, LEAs were required to apply for and win the Race To The Top grants. In the national press release about Race to the Top (2009), President Obama challenged,

To our nation’s governors and school boards, principals and teachers, businesses and non-profits, parents and students: if you set and enforce rigorous and challenging standards and assessments; if you put outstanding teachers at the front of the classroom; if you turn around failing schools – your state can win a Race to the Top grant that will not only help students outcompete workers around the world, but let them fulfill their God-given potential. (p. 1)

This presidential challenge and monies promised via the federal program pushed states and LEAs to compete for the Race to the Top grant monies. With the onset of competition for federal funds to help already underfunded schools also came entrepreneurs into education. These vendors and consultants were selling anything that claimed to help in the reform movement (Klein, 2015; Ravitch, 2013; Saltman, 2014;).

The national education policy, regardless of administration over the past 20+ years, has focused on systemic reform. Based on the specifics of most plans, claims of reform in the true sense of the word are seemingly unfounded (Ravitch, 2013). Instead, reform has turned into an

ideology that promotes privatization of public schools. Educational reformers, including commission members writing *A Nation at Risk*, focused on and debated about schools' roles in creating a democratic society, the well-being of families, and the relationship between school and society (NCEE, 1999; Ravitch, 2013). Since the 1983 report, educational reform has been shaped by corporations, large foundations, and political and business leaders (Saltman, 2014) in hopes to “cut costs and maximize competition among schools and among leaders” (Ravitch, 2013, p. 19).

The Context of North Carolina’s Educational Reform

North Carolina's public education history is similar to that of many southern states as schools began in the region. Schools in North Carolina were exceptions, not the rule in the colonial period. Slowly, support grew for public schooling in North Carolina, but by 1861, under the leadership of Calvin Wiley as Superintendent of Common Schools, the state had one of the best school systems in the South. Unfortunately, the United States' Civil War halted the progress of public schooling. In the early 1900s, Governor Charles Aycock began the swing toward stronger public education in the state, and North Carolina rose to the challenge creating more schools and funding more aspects of schools in the state. However, after the stock market crash in 1929, North Carolina's economy could not support the educational advancements, and the education system plummeted, just as many other states suffered during the Great Depression.

In 1931, the North Carolina General Assembly realized that local governments were unable to fund schools; the NCGA took over funding North Carolina Public Schools. The School Machinery Act created a free and uniform school for all of North Carolina’s children (North Carolina General Assembly, 2016). With this, students in North Carolina were a part of a shift in educational practices in the state over the course of 30+ years. A full kindergarten program was

established, free textbooks were provided, and programs for students with special needs were a few of the advancements seen in the state. The 1970s also ushered in statewide testing programs. Students in grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 9 were required to take the tests as well as graduating seniors (The history of education in North Carolina, 1993; History of the State Board of Education, 2001).

North Carolina's response to the *A Nation at Risk* report was immediate work to improve public schools. Gov. James "Jim" Hunt established the North Carolina Commission on Education for Economic Growth so that North Carolina's State Board of Education would work to benefit children and the state economy (The history of education in North Carolina, 1993). After being elected to office in 1989, State Superintendent of Education, Bob Etheridge, restructured the Department of Education and supported efforts to fund early childhood education for disadvantaged children, increase opportunities for educators' professional growth, and efforts to improve SAT scores. Success was seen in these areas and a salary schedule improving pay for teachers was implemented in 1992 (The history of education in North Carolina, 1993). The NCGA also approved the School Improvement and Accountability Act in 1989. This act focused on educational reforms to improve schools and allowing those decisions to be made at the school-level instead of starting from the state-level. To show the success or improvement efforts, an annual report card on was published by the state education agency (The history of education in North Carolina, 1993).

Behind the scene of educational reform, North Carolina's leaders debated over who had legal authority and power to mandate educational policy for the state. In North Carolina, the governor appoints the state board of education, but the State Superintendent of Education is elected by general election. Historically in North Carolina, this role has not been one with true

power in educational policy, which can confuse the public when people believe their vote for this position will impact policy. Additionally, the General Assembly has the authority to approve or deny requests of the board. The Department of Public Instruction is another group in North Carolina's educational policy realm. This agency is expected to implement the decisions of legislative leaders. There is also an independent agency, the Public School Forum, advocating for a joint agenda in educational policy (Louis et al., 2015). With so many different 'leaders,' discord has been a part of North Carolina's educational policy from the beginning. Despite the behind the scenes turmoil, North Carolina's public education system experienced improvements because of political leadership focused on education, leadership from the business community, stability, and strong educators (Ward, 2016).

In 1998, North Carolina was recognized as one of the top states for public education. Governor Jim Hunt, along with Wisconsin's governor, Tommy Thompson, lead conversations at the National Education Goals Panel and in 1999, Governor Hunt shared with other leaders at President Clinton's National Education Summit on how the state boosted its graduation rates, test scores, and how North Carolina had achieved such progress in closing the achievement gap between white and African-American students. When President Bush began creating his national education program, he called on the leaders of North Carolina to help develop No Child Left Behind because of the state's progress in public education. Many aspects of North Carolina's education policies were embedded in the federal NCLB and North Carolina was respected as a leader in public education (Louis et al., 2015; Ward, 2016).

All in all, North Carolina public school educators have become accustomed to different federal programs with different administrations. NCLB was a program with strong principles of meeting the needs of all students, but had serious flaws in implementation (Ward, 2016). In

“winning” the Race To The Top grant, North Carolina teachers experienced similar implementation problems with Common Core and the new requirements of high-stakes testing. Even so, North Carolina teachers have weathered the storms and continued in their work after the storms settled.

The United States economy was impacted by the banking crisis of 2007 which led to the economic recession in the country. This recession, often called the Great Recession, prompted massive unemployment across the country and prompted heavy governmental management in economic issues (Davidson, 2015). Public education faced massive budget cuts as well. United States Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan noted that the economic conditions of the country were in a state of emergency; North Carolina announced that over \$1 billion in funding had been cut from the state’s education fund (Davidson, 2015).

Because of the Great Recession’s impact, North Carolina teachers experienced a new swing of the pendulum when the state governmental leadership changed in 2010 and 2012. In the 2010 mid-term elections in North Carolina, there was a great surge in conservative legislators elected. As the major budget deficit continued in the state, during the 2012 election, the public elected a new group of social and economic conservative leaders to correct these financial matters. North Carolina’s budget was divided in such a way that almost 70% of the state’s monies were spent on health and human services (about 38%) and public education (about 33%). With these two areas receiving the bulk of state funding, legislatures moved quickly to rectify the financial wrongs of previous leaders (Hogan, 2015), specifically taking the opportunity to halt or slow spending in public education (Barnett, 2011; Hogan, 2015; Louis et al., 2015). Defunding education took form in the reduction in teachers, teacher assistants, and other educational staff

members (Davidson, 2015), abolishing programs that helped subsidize educational costs for poorer families, removing textbook budgets, and freezing teacher salaries.

Labor Unions in North Carolina: Impact on Teachers

From its earliest conception, compared to other southern states, North Carolina's social, economic, and demographic diversity contributed to "a more diverse electorate, more varied political interest groups, a more competitive party system, and a more representative political leadership" (Fleer, 1994, p. 24). Because of this history, North Carolina was dubbed a progressive plutocracy (Fleer, 1994; Johnson, 2017). This label highlighted North Carolina's economy and politics being controlled by business progressives that were excited to see industrial growth in the state (Christensen, 2008; Key, 1949). Because of this focus, "a sympathetic respect for the problems of corporate capital and of large employers permeates the state's politics and government" (Key, 1949, p. 211). Just as the mill workers learned to keep quiet in North Carolina mill towns, during the progressive era in North Carolina, workers and non-elite community members were treated similarly. Business leaders and politicians provided just enough protection to keep the paternalistic ideology alive, but never enough to raise the working-class citizens to a level of personal and political power (Key, 1949). The opposition to working-class citizens gaining personal and political power in North Carolina was deeply rooted in the paternalistic relationships between employers and employees.

To keep the relationships in such a way, North Carolina leaders staunchly opposed public sector unionism. After World War II, the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 was enacted in response to the pro-union Wagner Act of 1935. Legislators were seeking to protect the United States from large labor union membership and worker strikes ("Taft-Hartley Act," 2015). North Carolina and many other southern states wrote "right-to-work" legislation to curb union representation in the

state and to maintain the paternalistic business climate in the state (Johnson, 2017; Nolan, 1978). North Carolina's law books reflected this legislation in the 1959 law that "prohibits all public employees, including teachers, from engaging in collective bargaining or strike action" (Johnson, 2017, p. 128). These were not the only changes. Teachers were hit with many reforms in the 2013 NCGA legislative action that has made some teachers “rally in red” at the state capitol buildings for protests and marches. These protests and marches were not deemed appropriate by all members of the NCGA. House Bill 249 (2017) was introduced to charge protestors with economic terrorism, which is defined as “a criminal offense that impedes or disrupts the regular course of business” (p. 1) and also includes a directive to local governments to dispatch law enforcement whenever 10 or more people block traffic to the NCGA (Campbell, 2017).

Within this established political climate what has made over 3,000 teachers leave North Carolina teaching positions because they were dissatisfied with teaching between 2013 and 2015 as shown in Table 1 (Imig & Smith, 2013; North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2013, 2014, 2015)?

Table 1. North Carolina teacher attrition, 2012-2015

North Carolina Teacher Attrition (dissatisfied with teaching or career change)		
After 2012-2013	After 2013-2014	After 2014-2015
887 teachers	1,011 teachers	1,209 teachers

What is making the joy of teaching slip away for many North Carolina teachers? These are the questions that have sparked this critical inquiry using literature on teacher professionalism and professional culture, teacher morale and teacher activism within the theoretical framework of traditionalistic political culture. This continued survey of the literature will take the reader through a historical account of teaching in America and North Carolina, the vexing issue of teacher professionalism, and finally, the reasons that cause teachers to mobilize and act in their

field of expertise. Although there are copious research and reports on each of these topics, North Carolina's teachers are facing legislative actions that seem to attack many areas at once, creating a stir with teachers. This research will provide insight for government officials, educational leaders and teachers.

Who Is a Teacher?

It is often said that anyone can be a teacher at any given point because of his/her 'expertise' gained during his/her time in school. This frustrates many educators, but for this study, teachers will be acknowledged as those who are employed in the public, pre-kindergarten -12 (PK-12) classroom setting. These individuals hold at least a bachelor's degree and have earned their teaching license from North Carolina. Also, teachers spend more than half of their work-day supervising children.

Are teachers professionals? Teaching has never been fully recognized as a profession despite the strides to categorize it as such in the public eye (Stinnett, 1968). To be categorized as a profession, occupations must have specific characteristic and meet specific criteria. Some educational scholars (Al-Hinai, 2007; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; Hoyle, 1980, 1982; Stinnett, 1968) agree on the National Education Association's (NEA; 1948) characteristics of a profession as:

1. A profession involves activities essentially intellectual.
2. A profession commands a body of specialized knowledge.
3. A profession requires extended professional (as contrasted with solely general) preparation.
4. A profession demands continuous in-service growth.
5. A profession affords a life career and permanent membership.

6. A profession sets up its own standards.
7. A profession exalts service above personal gain.
8. A professional has a strong, closely knit, professional organization.

Teaching, by nature, meets some of these requirements where it does not meet others. In actuality, the literature on teacher professionalism has “measured teachers’ work and occupational status against these criteria, and found them largely wanting” (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996). It is noted that because general college education is the major area of most teacher preparation, no specialized training or work is required. This goes in hand with the fact that extended professional preparation is not required; teachers must have a bachelor’s degree and state certification, but nothing more (Stinnett, 1968; Vairo, Marcus, & Weiner, 2007). Therefore, teaching does not meet characteristics two and three. In addition, according to Stinnett (1968), the teaching occupation is not a profession because life, career and permanent membership are not granted to all. Sockett (1993) notes that this is best exemplified when teachers do not keep the term ‘teacher’ when he/she is no longer in the classroom. Instead, once a teacher leaves the classroom, they are called former teachers. This is not done in other professions. When a doctor is promoted to Surgeon General of the United States, he/she will always be a doctor, not a former doctor (Sockett, 1993).

For some scholars, there is reason that teaching does not meet the standards set forth to be considered a profession. First, teaching is a public profession. Teachers are not able to control their profession in ways that other private professions, like doctors and lawyers, can do. Teachers are not the decision and policymakers in the education field. Why is this the case when Rousmaniere (2005) notes that teaching has always been "rife with political dynamics, social drama, and philosophical debate" (p. 1) because of the changing requirements and standards

teachers have faced since colonial and revolutionary times in America? In reading the brief history of the American teacher, historians have written about the teacher while noting that the teacher was left out of decisions to improve their status. From the 1600-1800s, teachers did not have formal preparation to be in the classroom. In fact, instructional skills were not valued; only religious background, moral character and political affiliations mattered for educators.

Moving into the common school era (1800—1880), Horace Mann, known as the “father of the common school,” advocated for teacher professionalization. Mann and his supporters promoted the idea that teaching was "grounded in a systemic body of knowledge, not merely the individual acts of adults in a room with children, and argued that teachers needed specific training in curriculum and pedagogy" (Rousmaniere, 2005, p. 6). Mann's advocacy did not change the status of teachers. Instead, the requirements remained informal and schools moved to hiring women to keep labor costs low. The "feminization of education also furthered the analogy of teaching as missionary work rather than as a profession" (Rousmaniere, 2005, p. 9).

As America found itself dealing with major changes and reforms in society and the economy after the Civil War, compulsory school laws were developed and greater organization and systemic reform were ideas pushed for schools. Teachers were not included in planning these changes. Instead, those who seemed to be or were reportedly well-versed in theory and laws, the administrators, were used to bring about “uniformity, predictability and cost efficiency” in schools (Rousmaniere, 2005, p. 14). This progressive reform met the resistance of those like John Dewey; they believed that schools should be more child-centered and that the push to have uniform schools and cost-efficient practices in place caused teachers to feel like factory workers, not professionals.

Working conditions did not change as America moved into the modern era (1930—present). Teachers remained on the outskirts of decision-making for schools. As the Cold War created major panic, the public opinion of teachers and schools became filled with more scrutiny. As the population shifted and diversity in American classrooms increased, more demands were put on teachers. The demands had little to do with preparing them for the changes. Instead, the demands restricted teachers' work. Teacher support groups developed—American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the NEA, but teachers continued to be left out of decision-making talks and had more and more tasks prescribed in order to prepare American children for college and careers in the twenty-first century and beyond.

Thus, the history of education places teachers at the bottom of the educational hierarchy and leaves them powerless (Sockett, 1993; Webb, 2006); therefore, not meeting characteristic six, referred to on page 26. Instead of being considered the content and pedagogical leaders, teachers implement what is planned for them instead of creating their own standards. When curriculum decisions are made, the teachers' voice is not the most prominent. Often, budgetary constraints and district leaders determine the final choice. The chosen curriculum is provided for the teacher; the teacher is expected to teach within the confines of the curriculum leaving little room for teacher choice (English, 1987), and Day (2007) asserted that teachers have been given prescriptive curriculum that devalues their pedagogic skills and knowledge.

Education follows a bureaucratic, top-down approach where more financial resources are used to supervise and evaluate teachers' performances using the prescriptive curriculum rather than used to develop teachers' expertise and professionalism (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Webb, 2006; Louis et al., 2015). In addition, English (1987) noted that teachers' observations rarely visit the reliability and validity of the prescribed curriculum. For example, North Carolina

teachers are evaluated using the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES). The tool has five standards of evaluation focusing on teacher leadership, content knowledge, classroom management, best practices, and teacher reflection. Administrators use the tool to focus on data-driven instruction and lesson plan alignment with the prescribed curriculum of North Carolina. If teachers implement the curriculum well, they are praised within the report. In most cases, if teachers are not implementing the curriculum in the way prescribed by the state, they receive low marks (Davis, Bangert, Comperatore, & Smalenberger, 2015). The teacher's individual choices are critiqued and they have little opportunity to question whether the curriculum was appropriate.

With so much literature that reveals the non-professional nature of teaching, how can there be evidence to support teaching as a profession? Scholars acknowledge that teaching is set up in a way that makes the public and other professions question its professional status. Teachers are paid from public funds, which come from taxes, which, in turn, lead taxpayers to believe that they are in control of all things in the public school. Although this is the case, over the years, teaching has moved in the direction of meeting the aforementioned criteria for a profession. Teacher training programs have restructured to allow for more content-specific training and teachers are required to become highly-qualified in their area of expertise (NCLB, 2001).

Alongside these moves to meet the 'profession criteria,' educational scholars have added other dimensions that support teaching as a multidimensional profession. Not only must teachers have personal commitments to change and improvements, participate in educational activities beyond the classroom, and be able to analyze student needs and meet those needs (Sockett, 1993; Webb, 2006; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2009), but as a teacher, one enters a profession that is "a moral endeavor where teachers make frequent decisions about complex ethical issues" (Webb, 2006, p. 50). According to Sockett (1993), teachers are members of a professional community,

they have professional expertise and accountability and they have a professional ideal of service. Al-Hinai (2007) added that teaching is a profession because of the dedication, skills and commitment teachers give to their practice that is deeply connected to public accountability. According to Johnson (1976), there is a professional identity, but it is guided by those outside the field. Looking at the history of teaching as described earlier, teachers are seen as instrumental for societal gain, but they are judged on their compliance with government demands and by public opinion (Day, 2007). However, with this in mind, one can even consider teaching a public profession instead of a private one that can set up its own standards as dictated by the definition of a profession. As with all fields, teachers have varied levels of professionalism, but teachers at the top of the profession take responsibility, have respect and take risks. Teachers do meet the criteria for professionals with a large degree of talent and skill and a body of knowledge to support the work they do with students.

Despite the mixed answers from this review, for purposes of this research, teaching will be considered a profession. It is noted that many things can influence one's professional status. What is deemed professional status for one profession can look different for another or be disregarded totally. In education, the teaching profession is being challenged and for many, de-professionalized. These challenges are highlighted and intensified by the educational policies set forth by the NCGA.

Teacher Working Conditions in North Carolina

It is well researched and confirmed that effective teachers are vital to students' success (Johnson, 2006; Lieberman & Miller, 1984; Napso, 2005; 2015). Johnson (2006) noted that researchers have been working for decades to identify the components that "make a difference in teachers' effectiveness" (pg. 1). From this research, factors such as personal traits, teacher

education, experience in the profession, and others have an impact on teacher effectiveness. These factors in isolation are important to understanding, but understanding how the factors are influenced by the workplace environment are now being studied (Johnson, 2006; New Teacher Center, 2015). In 2002, the North Carolina Governor's Office developed a survey (NTC Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning Survey) for North Carolina that gave direction for school improvement efforts across the state. This survey served as the base for the biennial North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWC) developed by the NCDPI, the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE), and the New Teacher Center. The NC TWC "assesses whether educators across North Carolina report having the resources and supports necessary to ensure effective teaching" (New Teacher Center, 2015, p.1). This survey reports "educators' perceptions about the presence of teaching and learning conditions organized into the following eight constructs: Time, Facilities and Resources, Professional Development, School Leadership, Teacher Leadership, Instructional Practices and Support, Managing Student Conduct, and Community Support and Involvement" (New Teacher Center, 2015). Results from the 2014 and 2016 NC TWC Survey summarized in Appendix A show that in 2014 and 2016, 85.1% and 86.5%, respectively, of teachers noted that overall, their schools were good places to work and learn; according to teachers, supportive working conditions were present in most North Carolina public schools. For researchers, this indicates that North Carolina public schools have school environments that positively influence teachers and support student learning (New Teacher Center, 2015).

Challenges to Professionalism

The Double Standard

"Regarding creating the professional knowledge base, it seems only educators are chastised for doing what other professions do as a matter of course" (Norris, 2002, p. 5). According to Norris (2002), teachers face a professional double standard where teachers are expected to do many things that other professionals (dentist, medical physician, attorney) are never asked to do. To explain the professional double standard, Norris (2002) uses a simplistic scenario of the responsibilities of a dentist and a teacher. Both are trained to improve the lives in the service recipient knowing that the provided services can be "uncomfortable and require both commitment and serious effort on the part of the client" (p.22). Neither professional has control over the previous experiences of the client and both complete their work knowing that there are numerous factors beyond their control that impact the service provided. Both must make decisions about things seen and unseen when working with their client. When thinking about both professions, neither is an exact, perfect science. In the work of a teacher and a dentist, nothing is guaranteed to make the client have success.

The professional double standard appears when the dentist and teacher release the client after services are rendered. The dentist is released from responsibility if the client decides to disregard professional advice and not keep up with regular dental visits. On the other hand, in the current policy environment, the teacher is held responsible via the one high-stakes testing score the student receives to determine learning and promotion. The teacher's abilities are called into question whereas the dentist would not. In today's educational arena, teachers are considered to be at-risk or failures in need of experts to re-train them in proper methodology and pedagogy. The professional double-standard allows room for the dentist, or other professions similar, to

have, over a period, a “good” rating even if all patients were not cured or helped. The dentist can continue their practice without concern. The public knows that everyone looking for help may not benefit from the treatment given. Unfortunately, the teacher is not afforded the same public opinion. Instead, the teacher is expected to provide all treatment needed for students successfully, and if there is one failure, the teacher is completely at fault in the eyes of the public.

On another side of the professional double standard, teachers, unlike most other professionals, are expected to complete the same caliber of work on their first day as the veteran teacher. Norris (2002) called this double standard to our attention, understanding that other professions typically have additional years of school beyond that which teachers receive, but teachers experience a first-day unmatched to other professions. In keeping with the story of the dentist, typically, the dentist's first day would not be in private practice without the necessary materials and space to adequately complete the job. However, teachers are often seen teaching in ‘private practice’ in stairwells, broom closets, and other empty spaces in schools. Norris (2002) summarizes this aspect of the professional double standard with the statement, "If practicing dentistry without the requisite materials, supplies, equipment, and space constitutes malpractice, why are teachers subjected to such?" (p. 26).

There are other aspects of professional double standards teachers face. In comparison to similar professions, teaching is something that anyone off the street could do, and it is perfectly acceptable to allow alternative routes into the profession—something that would not be tolerated in law, dentistry, and medicine (p. 28). Another example centers around the demands placed on teachers that are not typically heard in other professions. Standard business hours are set and for the most part, followed in law and dentistry practices. For teachers, business hours are not a part

of the vernacular. Norris (2002) highlights this double standard using a story of a nurse visiting her child's teacher after school hours. The teacher was preparing to leave, but met with the parent. The parent felt overlooked, holding the teacher at fault for this feeling. When confronted with the idea that teachers have responsibilities outside of school, the parent noted, "She's a teacher and that's what she's there to do" (p. 34).

The double standard permeates licensure requirements as well. At no time would it be appropriate to find dentists, physicians, or lawyer practicing their particular craft in private practice without licensure. For teaching, this practice has become part of the norm. Those interested in becoming classroom teachers can quickly find themselves in classrooms without completing 33-licensure requirements (pg. 38). As discussed in this section, there are clear examples that show the teaching profession faces a double standard in the professional world. These double standards allow for the mistreatment of teachers from state leaders and the general public.

Teacher Training

The 1957 launch of the Soviet satellite, Sputnik, prompted American interest in stronger science and mathematics education. Academic scholars from a variety of disciplines were called together to strengthen the public schools' curricula (Johanningmeier, 2010; Shipps, 2011). As a result, the United States was expecting to have more scientists and engineers to outpace other countries' arms and space missions. Then, in the 1980s, America was known to be "a nation at risk" (NCEE, 1999). This report to President Ronald Reagan in 1983 let it be known that America's public schools were failing to produce students prepared for the global marketplace and were losing the gains made after Sputnik (Johanningmeier, 2010) even though there had been great energy to improve teacher training to prepare American students better (Earley,

2000). For most teachers, reform has not been refused or unwanted, but, instead, the manner in which reform has happened has been a challenge to teacher professionalism (Gallagher & Bailey, 2000a).

Because most people in the United States attended some form of elementary and secondary schooling, many believe that teaching is none too difficult and anyone can do it (Gallagher & Bailey, 2000b). This misconception is strengthened by statistics supporting claims that teachers “are less capable, less academically prepared, not as bright, score lowest on the college admissions exams, and so forth” (Norris, 2002, p. 9). These data are supported by SAT or ACT demographic data collected during the test administration when students indicate their intended college major. Norris (2002) notes that it is an interesting phenomenon that students interested in teaching often score low on the standardized tests, but there is no correlation between low scores and a student's career desires (pg. 9). In addition, SAT and ACT scores are only predictors of a student's first-year success in college (College Board: Validity studies, 2016; Norris, 2002). Unknown to most, studies have found that many teachers outscore others in the intended area in which they plan to teach (Norris, 2002). Despite this evidence, public opinion reigns and continues to push for teacher education reform because of the misconception that teacher candidates are from the lowest of the low challenges teacher professionalism.

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), in a 1996 report entitled "What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future," focused on teacher preparation and professional development for experienced teachers. To improve both, the group took into account the large amount of evidence that a teacher's knowledge and ability makes the crucial difference in what students learn. Additionally, the way schools organize teachers' work

schedules makes a difference in what a teacher is able to accomplish (Gallagher & Bailey, 2000a). With this knowledge, the NCTAF recommended that American schools:

1. Get serious about standards, for both students and teachers.
2. Reinvent teacher preparation and professional development.
3. Overhaul teacher recruitment and put qualified teachers in every classroom.
4. Encourage and reward teaching knowledge and skill.
5. Create schools that are organized for student and teacher success. (Gallagher & Bailey, 2000, p. 8)

On the surface, the NCTAF's recommendations did not appear to be mistreatment for teachers.

The space race created a frenzy in the United States and almost everyone wanted to see the country produce stronger and smarter individuals—teachers would be directly responsible and they needed to be better prepared. This focus subtly placed blame on America's schools and teachers without directly stating it. Earley (2000) noted that teacher preparation programs were believed to have too much emphasis on teaching methods and not enough on content. The criticism continued and bills were introduced in Congress to investigate teacher training in the United States in 1983. The legislation did not pass, but would have called for a commission to evaluate the effectiveness of how teaching methods and subject matter were taught in teacher training programs (Earley, 2000). Instead of NCTAF's recommendations being taken as true ways to improve teaching, it brought out more ways to condemn teacher education programs and opened more doors for nontraditional and for-profit vendors to enter the realm of education (Mullen, English, Brindley, Ehrich, & Samier, 2013; Pullin, 2015).

Teacher Pay

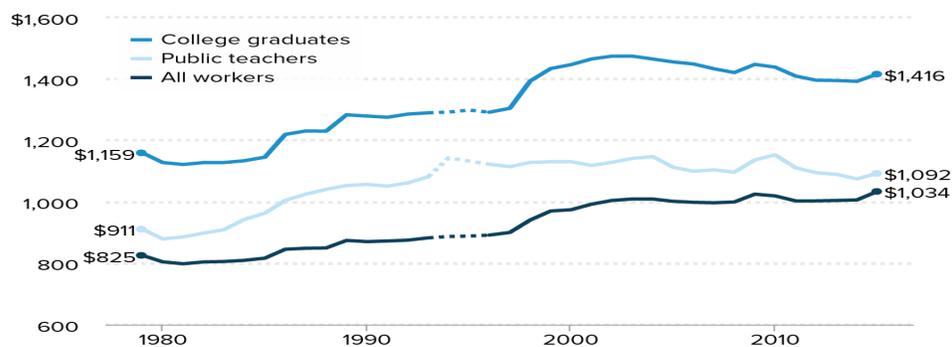
Teacher compensation plans have been a part of America's economic conversation since the early days of colonial schooling (Anthony, 1987). Anthony (1987) shared the stories of the Boston Latin School and the Massachusetts and Connecticut colonial schools' difficulty to pay the small wages of schoolmasters. In these schools, ultimately, the communities' asked school leaders to provide their services "as cheap as they can" leading to low-bidding by schoolmasters in order to obtain a job (p. 2). Being the lowest bidder for a job did not always lead to cash payments upon securing the placement. Instead, school leaders were paid with partial currency and other necessities like wheat and corn, often delayed because of financial issues the communities faced. Often, the school leader completed many tasks outside of the realm of running the town school. As women entered the profession in the nineteenth century, compensation plans did pay male teachers more than the females, but all in all, teachers' salaries were considered low (Bond, 2001). Moving into the twentieth century, teacher compensation did not see much improvement. Housing and food benefits that were provided for teachers were lost and with the profession becoming female-dominated, Americans did not believe women needed or deserved equal pay (Bond, 2001). Today, the contracted compensation plan, for most teachers, is based on 185-190 days of service (10 months) and six or seven hours of "contracted" work per day. Teachers typically work more hours each day when grading papers, creating lessons, and attending parent and other required meetings after the contracted hours end ("Myths and facts about educator pay," n.d.).

Additionally, studies have shown that teachers, compared to other professions with similar educational requirements, earn significantly less (Allegretto & Mishel, 2016; Anthony, 1987; Bond, 2001). The Economic Policy Institute report (2016) provided data noting that

teachers were earning 17% less weekly than comparable workers in 2015. In the graph below, Allegretto and Mishel (2016) charted teachers' weekly wages from 1979 to 2015 and highlighted the comparisons.

Teachers' weekly wages are 23 percent lower than those of other college graduates

Average weekly wages of public school teachers, other college graduates, and all workers, 1979–2015 (2015 dollars)



Note: "College graduates" excludes public school teachers, and "all workers" includes everyone (including public school teachers and college graduates). Wages are adjusted to 2015 dollars using the CPI-U-RS. Data are for workers age 18–64 with positive wages (excluding self-employed workers). Non-imputed data are not available for 1994 and 1995; data points for these years have been extrapolated and are represented by dotted lines (see Appendix A for more detail).

Source: Authors' analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group data

Economic Policy Institute

Figure 2. Teachers' weekly wages.

Compensation for teaching in public schools in the United States has “consistently occupied the bottom rung of the salary ladder” (Bond, 2001, p. 48). The American public takes note of this and often expresses the need for change for teachers. In the annual Phi Delta Kappa International poll completed in conjunction with Gallup (1969—2015), Americans have been in constant agreement that school financial issues are problematic overall and teacher pay is always a leading concern—salaries are too low; respondents never respond that salaries are too high. There is rarely denial that better teacher compensation will attract quality teachers (Alexander & Monk, 1987; Allegretto & Mishel, 2016; Bond, 2001; "Professional Pay," n.d.; Richwine, 2012).

Based on data presented in Table 2 from the National Education Association (2015), North Carolina ranked 47th in the United States in teacher salary during the 2013-2014 school

year. Additionally, the report noted that North Carolina teachers were subject to the largest salary decline in the nation, adjusted for inflation, at 17.4% from 2003-2014 (Table 3). North Carolina teachers are paid \$11,620 less than the national average.

C-11. AVERAGE SALARIES OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS, 2013-14 (\$)		
1.	NEW YORK	76,409
2.	MASSACHUSETTS	73,195
3.	DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	73,162 *
4.	CALIFORNIA	71,396
5.	CONNECTICUT	70,583
6.	NEW JERSEY	68,238
7.	ALASKA	65,891
8.	RHODE ISLAND	64,696 *
9.	MARYLAND	64,546
10.	PENNSYLVANIA	63,701
11.	MICHIGAN	62,166
12.	ILLINOIS	60,124 *
13.	DELAWARE	59,305
14.	OREGON	58,638
15.	NEW HAMPSHIRE	57,057 *
	UNITED STATES	56,610 *
16.	WYOMING	56,583
17.	HAWAII	56,291
18.	VERMONT	55,958
19.	OHIO	55,913
20.	NEVADA	55,813
21.	MINNESOTA	54,752
22.	WISCONSIN	53,679
23.	WASHINGTON	52,969
24.	GEORGIA	52,924
25.	IOWA	52,032
26.	KENTUCKY	50,560
27.	INDIANA	50,289
28.	MONTANA	49,893 *
29.	VIRGINIA	49,826 *
30.	TEXAS	49,690
31.	COLORADO	49,615
32.	NEBRASKA	49,539
33.	MAINE	49,232
34.	LOUISIANA	49,067
35.	ALABAMA	48,720
36.	NORTH DAKOTA	48,666 *
37.	SOUTH CAROLINA	48,430
38.	KANSAS	48,221 *
39.	FLORIDA	47,780
40.	TENNESSEE	47,742
41.	ARKANSAS	47,319
42.	MISSOURI	46,750
43.	NEW MEXICO	45,727
44.	UTAH	45,695
45.	ARIZONA	45,335 *
46.	WEST VIRGINIA	45,086
47.	NORTH CAROLINA	44,990
48.	OKLAHOMA	44,549
49.	IDAHO	44,465
50.	MISSISSIPPI	42,187 *
51.	SOUTH DAKOTA	40,023
	MEDIAN	50,560
	RANGE	36,386
	SDEV.	8,964
	CV	17

Figure 3. Average salaries of public school teachers, 2013-14.

C-14. PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN AVERAGE SALARIES OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS 2003-04 TO 2013-14 (CONSTANT \$)

1.	WYOMING	13.6
2.	NEW YORK	9.9
3.	NORTH DAKOTA	8.4 *
4.	MASSACHUSETTS	8.1
5.	IOWA	7.6
6.	MONTANA	6.5 *
7.	NEW HAMPSHIRE	6.0 *
8.	VERMONT	5.7
9.	NEVADA	4.8
10.	LOUISIANA	2.7
11.	NEBRASKA	2.5
12.	MARYLAND	1.9
13.	DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	1.8 *
14.	ALABAMA	1.0
	ALASKA	1.0
16.	OKLAHOMA	0.8
17.	CALIFORNIA	0.4
18.	KENTUCKY	-0.2
19.	WISCONSIN	-0.7
20.	KANSAS	-0.9 *
21.	HAWAII	-1.8
	RHODE ISLAND	-1.8 *
23.	NEW JERSEY	-1.9 *
24.	MAINE	-2.0
25.	CONNECTICUT	-2.3
26.	TEXAS	-2.6
27.	OREGON	-2.7
28.	VIRGINIA	-2.8 *
29.	MISSOURI	-3.1
	UNITED STATES	-3.5 *
30.	PENNSYLVANIA	-3.9 *
31.	NEW MEXICO	-4.2
32.	MINNESOTA	-4.3
33.	ARKANSAS	-4.5 *
	SOUTH DAKOTA	-4.5
35.	DELAWARE	-5.3
36.	MICHIGAN	-5.4
37.	TENNESSEE	-6.1
38.	FLORIDA	-6.6
	CHIO	-6.6
40.	SOUTH CAROLINA	-6.7
41.	UTAH	-7.0
	WEST VIRGINIA	-7.0
43.	MISSISSIPPI	-7.5 *
	WASHINGTON	-7.5
45.	GEORGIA	-8.7
46.	ARIZONA	-9.0 *
47.	COLORADO	-9.1
48.	IDAHO	-12.0
	ILLINOIS	-12.0 *
50.	INDIANA	-12.9
51.	NORTH CAROLINA	-17.4
	MEDIAN	-2.6
	RANGE	31.0
	SDEV.	6.3
	CV	-295.5

Figure 4. Percent change in average salaries of public school teachers 2003-04 to 2013-14.

However, the conversation around teacher compensation does look different across the political ideological spectrum. According to analyst Jason Richwine at The Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, there are five rules for policymakers to follow to obtain a "better way to pay" teachers:

1. Avoid across-the-board pay increases.
2. Reform pay systems to reward effectiveness.
3. Measure teacher quality, in part, through the judicious use of value-added models in conjunction with administrator evaluations and other performance-based criteria.

4. Transition teachers away from traditional pensions and toward 401(k)-style retirement plans.
5. Remember that there are no magic bullets in education policy (2012).

The National Education Association (NEA) disagrees with the five rules mentioned. Instead, NEA, the nation's largest professional employee organization, advocates for "a \$40,000 starting salary for all pre-K-12 teachers and raises that exceed the cost of living in at least 50% of NEA higher education locals" ("Professional Pay," n.d.). In addition, the NEA does not support 401(k) plans as a retirement plan. There is ample evidence on the NEA website that cites its conflict with Richwine's rules number 2 and 3, but there is an agreement on rule number 5. For most Americans, there are truly no magic bullets when creating education policy, but in which direction will the country go to provide the best educational system for children?

The New Look of Public Education in the United States

After World War II, educational organizations and unions (within certain parts of the nation) were able to represent educators without much competition. During this time until the early 1980s, educational policies were based on "embedded liberalism" (Anderson & Donchik, 2014). Europe was economically devastated and monies were not available in the continent to lend. Instead, Europe became financial aid recipients. For the United States, isolationism had not proved productive and not knowing what the post-war world would look like, United States leaders took the first step to gain international cooperation in rebuilding stability. Free trade, with appropriate tariffs, was desired because it promoted world interdependence. With this major shift in economic strategy across the world, some citizens of each country could be negatively impacted. Because of this, systems had to be put in place to take care of those individuals hurt by the country's move towards interdependence and the common good for the world. Developed

countries were in the position to control policy to benefit themselves; therefore, these countries were morally obligated to support and help developing countries (Lakes & Carter, 2011; Steffek, 2006). This “embedded liberalism” theory guided education policy. To fulfill the democratic ideal of the common good for the United States, educators, their professional organizations and unions pushed for educational policy where “markets, personal freedoms, and individual choices were embedded in regulatory and social welfare policies” (Lakes & Carter, 2011).

During the Kennedy and Carter presidential administrations, public education was not a major concern for the general population (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2015). As noted earlier, the public educational focus shifted as the country was identified as a nation at risk and in economic trouble. Social psychologists note that whether real or perceived, a crisis creates the need for a solution. With schools and teachers being the scapegoat for the United States’ economic problems, the policy window (Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005) flew open and a few corporations and some very wealthy individuals began to influence educational policy (Lakes & Carter, 2011; Miller, 2012; Ravitch, 2013). The purpose of America’s public schools began to take a turn from developing citizens to serve the common good to developing competitive students with extreme self-interest (Anderson & Pini, 2005; Lipman, 2009; Miller, 2012; Mullen et al., 2013; Pullin, 2015; Ravitch, 2013). Ravitch (2013) states that the new reform movement “is not meant to reform public education but is a deliberate effort to replace public education with a privately managed, free-market system of schooling” (pg. 4). This neoliberal ideology began to impact education via four ways: corporatization, marketization, privatization, and commercialization. These business-model ideas were forced into schools as the solution to the problems plaguing public schools (Anderson & Pini, 2005).

Who are the Corporations and Individuals ‘Reforming’ Public Education?

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) began in September 1973, when a small group of legislators from across the United States joined together to create an association that believed in "limited government, free markets, federalism, and individual liberty." These ideals were further developed when ALEC members joined President Reagan's Task Force on Federalism. ALEC, according to the organization's website, was influential in providing testimony for Reagan's goals; therefore, prompting the organization to create their task forces to work with the Reagan administration on policy development (American Legislative Exchange Council, 2015). ALEC's website states that the association grew to become a "far-reaching national network of state legislators that crosses geographic and political boundaries...No other organization in America can claim as many valuable assets – both people and ideas – that have influence on as many key decision-making centers" (American Legislative Exchange Council, 2015). ALEC lists its membership as nonpartisan, but the majority of the members are conservative and Republican (Underwood & Mead, 2012). These members are not listed on the ALEC website, but The Center for Media and Democracy (2015) lists politicians with known ties with ALEC. ALEC's valuable assets are also the corporations and other private sector groups that are allowed to join the organization. The legislative members and private sector members work together via the nine task forces of ALEC to demonstrate this claim as it promotes and passes model legislation across the country into state legislation (American Legislative Exchange Council, 2015; Hauser, 2010; Underwood & Mead, 2012).

Although operating for over forty years, ALEC had been a behind-the-scenes organization. The organization quietly maneuvered state legislation to further its vision of

limited government. This was a political strategy employed by ALEC members. Working with a majority of Republican state-level legislators, ALEC-sponsored bills that pushed legislation towards the political right. The Center for Media and Democracy, a "national non-profit watchdog organization that conducts transformative investigative research and reporting" (PR Watch, 2015), "exposed" ALEC's model bills in 2011 when the group published over 800 of ALEC's bills. ALEC gained public and media attention, most stemming from ALEC's participation in promoting voter identification laws. These laws allegedly target voters of color in larger numbers than whites. In quick succession, three states passed voter ID laws and journalists uncovered ALEC's centrality in each of these state's new laws. Because of ALEC's support of these laws several corporations and legislators canceled their ALEC membership and caused ALEC to stop the Public Safety and Elections task force (Anderson & Donchik, 2014). ALEC could no longer operate "under the radar." ALEC's website now claims that ALEC is a transparent organization.

All model policies are available online and "at meetings, journalists and the public are welcome to attend ALEC keynotes, plenary sessions, and policy workshops" (American Legislative Exchange Council, 2015). Seemingly, the veil of secrecy has been lifted on the organization. Yet, in a June 2, 2015, report by WXIA-TV in Atlanta, Georgia, a news journalist attempted to attend a meeting of ALEC members and corporate lobbyists in Savannah, Georgia. The news journalist was denied entry after several attempts while showing his credentials. Leaders in the ALEC organization requested that cameras be turned off and told the journalist that he would be escorted out of the hotel despite his having paid for a room for his stay. The journalist was able to speak with a legislator at the hotel bar; the legislator explained how they (legislators, lobbyists, and ALEC) were working to pass ALEC-sponsored legislation into state

law. Meetings like this have happened across the United States and ALEC model bills have been introduced in state legislative buildings by legislators attending the closed-door meetings (Keefe & King, 2015). According to Georgia state senator, Nan Orrock, an Atlanta Democrat and former member of ALEC, the corporations have equal standing with the legislators and "that at its core screams out inappropriate" (Keefe & King, 2015).

How Did ALEC Become Such an Influential Organization in Education?

In the late 1980's, ALEC members believed that the burden of meeting the needs of all students, especially the economically and racially disadvantaged students, was too much and unsatisfactory. ALEC documents claimed that as our society became much more mobile, educators were further removed from meeting the needs of parents and students. As a result, ALECs interest in educational policy grew in the 1980s as the 'factory' model of schooling became more prevalent in the United States. The idea that schools and other public entities should operate like private businesses offering choice had taken hold in the 1990s and ALEC's network provided the funds and narratives to make these prominent changes (American Legislative Exchange Council, 2015; Anderson & Donchik, 2014; Hauser, 2010). As a result, ALEC used its model legislation focused on educational choice to persuade state legislators to move to "expand parent choice and push educational institutions to compete with each other to provide the best product, just like providers of any other service" (American Legislative Exchange Council, 2015). For critics like Anderson & Donchik (2014) and Underwood & Mead (2012), this is a neoliberal ideology which pushes the idea of privatizing the public schools of the United States.

ALEC's ideology gained momentum because of the network ALEC created for like-minded individuals and companies. ALEC defines itself as a public-private partnership

(American Exchange Council, 2015), but opponents see the organization as a "strategic alliance" (Anderson & Donchik, 2014). To become an ALEC member, corporations and legislators must pay membership dues. For legislators, this can be seen as a symbolic gesture because those dues are only \$50 per year. Corporations, on the other hand, can pay \$25,000 or more per year for ALEC membership (American Legislative Exchange Council, 2015). Individual philanthropists can join ALEC as well. The Koch brothers, the Heartland Institute, Castle Rock, the Broad Foundation, the Heritage Foundation and several other prominent, right-wing groups are members of ALEC and publically support the ideological network (Anderson & Donchik, 2014). ALEC critics believe that the organization's underlying goal is to make profits for its corporate members by creating legislation that pushes parents and students to private and for-profit charter schools. This is done with discursive terminology like "scholarship and choice" (Underwood & Mead, 2012) that parents desire for students in low-performing public schools. These schools are deemed inadequate to serve all students; the scholarships and choice options provided by ALEC legislation claims to support low-income students although this practice creates vaster economic and racial divides (Underwood & Mead, 2012). ALEC and its supporters disagree. In creating parental choice and providing opportunity scholarships to underprivileged children in the United States, it is "allowing each child the opportunity to reach his or her potential" (American Legislative Exchange Council, 2015).

ALEC is not alone in the push for a culture shift in education in the nation and North Carolina. The Heritage Foundation, a conservative think-tank in Washington, D.C., the Broad Foundation, the Walton Family Foundation, and the Gates Foundation are headed by wealthy philanthropists who strategically work to change governmental policy with a top-down managerial approach (English, 2016; Miller, 2012; Mullen, English, Brindley, Ehrich & Samier,

2013). These organizations believe that money, markets, and competition are the best answers for the nation's educational systems (Mullen, 2013). In North Carolina, James Arthur (Art) Pope, the chairman and C.E.O. of Variety Wholesalers discount stores, is a conservative, multimillionaire with ties to the conservative John Locke Foundation, a right-wing group in North Carolina. Pope's monetary influence has been associated with political campaigns and projects to seat Republican, neoliberal candidates in the NCGA (Mayer, 2011; Melehy, 2012). While holding onto the fear of the 1957 Sputnik launch and with support of citizens' assumed belief in reform rhetoric and symbols, these reformers are attempting to shift the meaning of education in America, from equity to excellence, from regulations and enforcement to deregulation, from the common school to parental choice and institutional competition, and from social and welfare concerns to economic and productivity concerns (Boyd, 1987).

ALEC's Influence on American Public Education

One of ALEC's nine task forces focuses on education and workforce development. The mission of this task force is "to promote excellence in the nation's educational system, to advance reforms through parental choice, to support efficiency, accountability, and transparency in all educational institutions, and to ensure America's youth are given the opportunity to succeed" (American Legislative Exchange Council, 2015). With educational reform being a major political issue in the United States, ALEC's mission to improve education for American's youth could be viewed as a bipartisan approach by those reading the model bills introduced in state legislative chambers. From Anderson and Donchik's (2014) research and analysis, they conclude that ALEC is sponsoring bills that are divided into three main themes: (1) "the privatization of public assets; (2) opposition to teachers unions, tenure, and certification; and (3) the transfer of new managerialist principles to the public sector" (p. 12). Anderson and Donchik

also note that a small group of ALEC's model education bills promote "conservative and moral social values" (p. 13). ALEC does not write its model bills using language that showcases these themes. Instead, ALEC uses language that is appealing to a bipartisan audience in public and the legislative chambers of each state. This strategy is used in order to have model bills pass through legislation with little to no trouble because education should be seen as a bipartisan issue (American Legislative Exchange Council, 2015). ALEC's word choices like "freedom," "family," "individual," and "choice" are deeply rooted in individualism and appeal to conservatives and libertarians. Also noted, ALEC uses terms that create a positive response in a bipartisan audience. Words such as "accountability," "scholarship," and "quality" are used in ways to appeal to all and not cause major controversy (Anderson & Donchik, 2014, p. 24). According to Underwood and Mead (2012), these words take the place of "privatization," "vouchers," and "tax incentives for private companies." For many educators and ALEC critics, these semantic tactics seem "to undermine public education by systemically defunding and ultimately destroying public education as we know it" (Underwood & Mead, 2012, p. 52).

ALEC Proposals' Impact on Public Education in North Carolina

Although a national organization, ALEC's political strategy focuses on state-level legislation. In working with venture philanthropists like brothers Charles and David Koch, billionaire businessmen and founders of the Americans For Prosperity group, Art Pope, chairman and CEO of Variety Wholesalers discount store, the John Locke Foundation, and the Heritage Foundation (Mayer, 2011), ALEC sponsors think-tanks, publishes opinion pieces in local newspapers, and promotes the neoliberal agenda for public education in North Carolina (Anderson & Donchik, 2014). While federal legislation surrounding public education gathered

criticism and a majority of the public's focus, state-level policies flew under the radar leaving ALEC policies to pass without much objection.

One example of privatization is the move towards virtual schooling. Several states, including North Carolina, have implemented Virtual Schools, one of ALEC's model bills. This bill's beginnings can be traced back to Connections Academy and K-12 Inc., two for-profit corporations that provide virtual education (Underwood & Mead, 2012). Of all Virtual Schools in the United States, North Carolina has second largest (North Carolina Virtual Public School, 2015). In North Carolina, the State Board of Education approved two virtual schools: the North Carolina Virtual Academy, provided by K-12 Inc. and Connections Academy, provided by Connections Education (Kharis, 2015). The two approved virtual schools in North Carolina are online charter schools that promote independent learning for students in ways that are right for them. All the courses that are taught in a traditional 'brick and mortar' school are taught online. Children complete their coursework at home and interact with teachers and other students online. For supporters of the virtual schools, this is ideal for several groups of students. For example, athletes with busy schedules, students with health concerns and even those students being bullied do not have to attend a traditional school building each day. Instead, they can stay home and complete their coursework in the privacy of their own homes. For those opponents of the virtual schools, they believe that the online charter schools defund and destroy public education by taking money away from the traditional schools that are already dealing with tighter budgets.

In North Carolina, the Department of Public Instruction funds K-12, Inc. with public tax dollars. On March 26, 2015, the North Carolina General Assembly Senate Bill 510 "NCVPS/Equal Access to Education" was passed to allow any student, public schooled and homeschooled, to enroll in the Virtual school and pay no tuition. The state would provide the

funds as the policy says, up to "six million six hundred forty-seven thousand dollars for the 2015-2016 fiscal year," and "If the funds appropriated for the 2015-2016 fiscal year and subsequent fiscal years are insufficient, the Department of Public Instruction may use other funds within the State Public School Fund for these purposes" (North Carolina General Assembly, 2015). These funds provide salaries for the virtual school teachers on the state salary schedule, yet K-12, Inc. receives the bulk of the monies and home-schooled students are benefiting from public school's monetary allocations. To add to the argument that traditional schools lose money, opponents argue that the virtual schools in other states have been proven to be inadequate.

Another concern is, are virtual schools effective? In Tennessee, where the same two companies operate virtual public schools, the lack of high student performance and overall dissatisfaction has pushed the state to order all virtual schools closed next year (Khrais, 2015). On top of that, as the virtual schools increase enrollment, the CEO and other executives in the two companies sponsoring the virtual schools report high compensations. In 2013, the CEO of K-12 Inc. received over \$4.1 million in total compensations in 2013 alone (The Center for Media and Democracy, 2015). Further, the companies are linked to ALEC. In 2012, the executive vice president of Connections Academy, Mickey Revenaugh, was the corporate co-chair of ALEC's Education Task Force (Anderson & Donchik, 2014). Despite this evidence and link to ALEC, North Carolina has proceeded to develop virtual schools with the same two companies and the legislation is written in similar language as the 2011 ALEC model bill (Underwood & Mead, 2014; North Carolina General Assembly, 2015).

Accountability

Not only does the ALEC policy agenda propose changes to the types of schools offered, the organization also focuses on accountability and teacher quality. The model bills from ALEC

are plans to change teacher-training programs, teacher evaluations, teacher collective bargaining agreements and teacher salaries (Anderson & Donchik, 2014). For example, the model “Teacher Choice Compensation Act” provides for teacher performance-based salary stipends if the teacher relinquished his/her tenured contract and if his/her students reach performance goals (Ladner & Myslinski, 2014). In choosing to receive a salary stipend, a teacher loses his/her collective bargaining ability and is hired on a year-to-year contract (Anderson & Donchik, 2014). The Teacher Quality and Recognition Demonstration Act pushes for “quality teachers in improving student achievement” by “creating a new structure of the current teaching system... wherein local education agencies are exempt from education rules and regulations regarding teacher certification, tenure, recruitment and compensation” (Ladner & Myslinski, 2014, p. 119).

The model bills propose increasing private corporations' control over public schools. This control would be in the form of vouchers for private schools, for-profit charter schools, and tax incentives. One ALEC model bill example is the Parent Trigger Act. With this act, parents, with a simple majority, can change a school into a charter school, accept vouchers to send children to private schools, or close the school completely. If either of these things happens, for-profit charter schools and private schools receive the public assets—central objectives of ALEC's mission (Anderson & Donchik, 2014). Opponents noted that these incentives create segregation based on "academic ability and disability, ethnicity, economics, language, and culture" (Underwood & Mead, 2014, p. 55). Schools in low-income and urban areas are not able to compete with the for-profit companies and ultimately close.

To have these model bills introduced into the legislative chambers, ALEC seems to rely on the shotgun approach. In North Carolina, with the swift change in NCGA members, ALEC supporters were in place to attempt to push through multiple bills at the 11th hour in hopes of

overwhelming lawmakers (Anderson & Donchik, 2014; Wagner, 2015). The model bills use choice and accountability language, which is considered discursive according to ALEC critics, to legislate vouchers. ALEC sees their bills as improvements to education regardless of the delivery, whereas, according to Anderson & Donchik (2014), the 11th hour push is purposely dismantling public education.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODS

Purpose and Major Research Questions

The political power balance in North Carolina shifted in 2012 to a Republican governor and a Republican super-majority in the General Assembly. With this shift came the 2013 North Carolina General Assembly's Excellent Public Schools Act legislation that made drastic cuts to the state's public education budget and challenged teacher professionalism. Historically, teachers have been taught to remain apolitical, in their classrooms as well as in public (Marshall & Anderson, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2005). However, some North Carolina teachers have stepped out of historical coverings and protested the 2013 legislative action (Berman, 2014). This research is documenting the reasons teachers made the decision to protest the legislative actions on public education and how teachers have been impacted by the EPSA. To frame this research, traditionalistic political culture was examined to answer the following research questions:

1. In what ways has the 2013 NCGA Excellent Public Schools Act undermine teacher professionalism?
2. What affects a teacher's depth of involvement in activist movements?
3. Why are teachers remaining in the profession despite their opposition to the 2013 legislation?
4. Are teachers knowledgeable of the political culture in the state and its influence on their professional decisions?

Positionality

For me, teaching is not only a career, but it is also a passion. Like many young children, I spent hours lining up dolls and bears on the 'classroom' floor in my bedroom preparing them for the day's lesson. This became such a routine, my mother bought an outside shed and converted it into a one-room schoolhouse so I could have a real chalkboard, real desks, real students (friends and cousins), and even discarded teacher's edition textbooks from the local school system. This passion continued throughout elementary and middle school. In high school, I shadowed other professionals in physical therapy, dentistry, and athletic training. All of those careers were interesting, but none captivated my heart like teaching. I became a leader in the Future Teachers of America club in high school, and I received an undergraduate scholarship from the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program in 1997. I have continued my teaching career in different North Carolina counties since 2001. Teaching has always been demanding and tiring; knowing that children were counting on me to plan and execute engaging lessons each day was never taken lightly. Countless hours were devoted to lesson planning, classroom management plans, parent contacts, and building relationships with students. As the political climate began to change during my teaching career, I realized that my devotion to teaching was challenged by the policies and laws directed toward public education. My conversations with other teachers became filled with hopeless, demoralizing, and defeatist words and phrases; things that had not been present as frequently in years before 2012. The conversations were about challenges teachers faced in the current political climate in North Carolina: the lack of respect and lack of professional treatment teachers received from the general public and politicians, the low salaries teachers were paid in North Carolina, and the funding for vouchers and charter schools from public funds. These conversations and personal challenges have made me negatively question

my career choice numerous times and even created negative feelings towards going to work each day. Because of the challenges I have faced and my reactions, I studied how other teachers in North Carolina protested and reacted to the 2013 NCGA legislation on education.

Qualitative Rationale

Qualitative research allows for real-life interaction; moving beyond data sets that may not present the entire story (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). In North Carolina, quantitative data has been used by the Department of Public Instruction to present the state of the teaching profession. DPI shared these data to show the trends in teachers leaving the profession (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015). Although insightful to see the numbers, these numbers do not answer “why?” in the ways of qualitative research. For example, Grady (1998) noted that a dropout prevention program’s success can be determined based on the numbers presented at the end of the study. But, these numbers do not provide data that explains why the program worked or failed. The qualitative data can provide information beyond the numbers—the relationships between participants, outside influences, and even the influences within the school environment—to help explain the dropout program’s outcome. In a study of Chicago’s public schools, Pauline Lipman (2011) completed a case study of four elementary schools that were facing reform in education led by neoliberal politics. With the quantitative data, Lipman was able to analyze the reform movement policies and concluded that the policies implemented were racially motivated and influenced the studied schools differently depending on their racial demographics. To understand the impact of the neoliberal policies from a personal perspective, Lipman conducted qualitative studies where she visited the schools and interviewed members of the school community. These personal accounts helped explain the teachers' perspectives and choices as they related to the accountability models taking place in Chicago Public Schools.

Idealist philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and Max Weber believed that a person's reality is "socially constructed, complex, and ever changing" (Glesne, 2011, p.8). People's individual interpretations of the world is shaped by the cultural interactions they have with their society, and qualitative studies emerge as researchers attempt to understand how people interpret their experiences, simple and complex (Glesne, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Sherman & Webb, 1988). In this qualitative study, I gathered and interpreted teachers' stories and their experiences related to their activism in North Carolina's political culture. These data must be heard via words participants use to describe their feelings and their thoughts to truly understand the actions of the teacher activists (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Seidman, 2013). This research has been developed to document the lived experiences of several teachers in North Carolina as they describe and express how they navigate the 2013 EPSA.

Research Design

This study employed qualitative methodology. Qualitative research is grounded in the study of natural settings where researchers interpret situations through others' views (Glesne, 2011; Grady, 1998; Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Seidman, 2013; Sherman & Webb, 1988; Snape & Spencer, 2003; van den Hoonaard, 2016). Before being called "qualitative research," anthropologists and sociologists completed fieldwork to gain knowledge about people, their ideas, their culture, and how those people viewed the world. In an attempt to answer the question "why," anthropologists and sociologists use words as data to suggest solutions that numerical data cannot fathom (Grady, 1998).

These practices, now known as qualitative research, also guided educators and other professionals to gain understanding into the lives of their professional atmospheres. One prominent example in education is Piaget. Piaget's observations and studies of his own children led him to his cognitive developmental theory that is taught and used in schools across the world. Qualitative research has been accepted as an established research method; books, journals, and conferences are held to share qualitative research studies and findings (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Merriam, 2009). Social scientists doing qualitative research attempt to understand and interpret the meanings that people give to their own actions and life experiences (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2011; Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Sherman & Webb, 1988). As a researcher, I assume that individuals are constantly trying to make meaning from their social context. Because I interpreted actions of particular actors as they made meaning of their social world, I used methods that included interacting with people within their social context and having conversations with them about their perspectives (Glesne, 2011; Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Snape & Spencer, 2003). To gather and understand the different experiences of teachers and their reactions to the 2013 North Carolina EPSA, researchers needed to hear, record, and interpret them in the particular social context.

This phenomenological study focuses on the lived experiences of teachers. One cannot understand their actions without first hearing their thoughts, feelings, and ideas (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). A phenomenological study focuses on sharing the stories of several different teachers in North Carolina, not just one (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) noted that by including several voices in the research, "Common experiences can be valuable for groups such as therapists, teachers, health personnel, and policy makers" (p. 62). Sharing via in-depth interviews, each teacher provided insight into his/her story giving

researchers insight into their professional lives in North Carolina. Then, through analysis of these data, I garnered possible patterns and deeper understanding of teachers' activism within the political culture in North Carolina.

Role of Researcher

Qualitative studies require the researcher to be the instrument (Creswell, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Patton, 1990). As the instrument, I bring my own beliefs, values, and concerns, typically absent from quantitative research, into the study in addition to the ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical, and methodological philosophical assumptions embedded in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). The researcher's role depends on philosophical perspectives, the context of the study, the participants, and the researcher's values (Glesne, 2011). I consider myself to be an activist teacher. I have taught in affluent, upper middle-class schools as well as in schools where more than 60% of the students lived in poverty. In each of these settings, I have always spoken out for what I believed to be best for students, but I also have been a prominent voice in expressing the needs of teachers. I have often questioned decisions that seemed to require teachers to take on more responsibilities in schools as well as challenged the views of the public that seem to blame the teachers for all ills of public education consistently. As a member of the community of research subjects (activist teachers), I was conscious of the assumptions, biases, and ideas that are a part of my value system and life, but I wanted teacher voices to be heard. I was not trying to find the 'truth'; instead, I was gathering the multiple perspectives (Glesne, 2011) of teacher activists in the study.

The teacher's voice is often left out of the dialogue surrounding education. Instead, as Casey (1993) asserted, the dialogue surrounding public education is a part of our American fabric, but teacher voices are marginalized, and their understandings of America's public schools

are left out of the conversation. A true public discussion is not possible because the ideological initiative has never taken the form of dialogue (Casey, 1993). Most teachers' voices have been excluded from the national spotlight although many have expressed their thoughts and opinions at national educational conferences and shared their data in various research settings (Casey, 1993). It is important to hear all who contribute to the discussion so that an honest public dialogue can be had and the lessons learned can attempt to bring about necessary reform and justice within America's public schools.

The Focus of the Study

Qualitative studies are especially strong when research is focused on exploratory and descriptive work. Qualitative research values data, but also the context in which the data is shared. The lived experiences of participants is valuable (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This study is similar to other qualitative studies in which the focus is on the meaning the participants make out of the 2013 North Carolina EPSA. In most qualitative research studies, it is not critical to have a statistically representative sample from which generalizations can be drawn. Instead, qualitative researchers typically select their cases purposefully to learn as much as possible about their particular research area (Glense, 2011). This researcher chose activist teachers for this study because of the researcher's personal connection to the subject and teachers' actions and reactions to the legislative policies in North Carolina.

Site Selection

In North Carolina, Governor Pat McCrory and the North Carolina General Assembly have taken legislative actions that have met strong opposition and garnered national attention. Opposing groups in the state have gathered and created a grassroots social movement, Moral Mondays, to contest the legislative actions. To challenge the actions focusing on public

education, North Carolina teachers have joined with Moral Mondays and even created their own groups (e.g., Organize 20/20, Pay Our Teachers First) to challenge the laws in place. North Carolina is one state that is highly affected by the reform movement in education creating a perfect location to complete this qualitative research in educational policy.

Participants

With over 96,000 teachers in North Carolina (NCDPI, 2015) and each teacher having an opinion about legislative actions concerning education, this research was prompted by the teachers, among those professionals in North Carolina, choosing to acknowledge their participation in social activism in response to the policies and laws enacted in 2012. It is often assumed by the public and within the profession that the educational field is apolitical. To give clout to this assumption, often, teachers and other educators avoid political activism because of the risks associated with becoming active in social movements and pressing for changes to the status quo (Marshall & Anderson, 2009). However, this study's participants, as teachers in North Carolina, are not choosing to remain apolitical.

Sampling Strategy

Qualitative studies typically have small samples of participants and these participants have similar experiences related to the topic of study (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Also, qualitative studies have purposeful sampling relying on depth rather than large, random sampling mostly seen in quantitative studies. There are no rules for sample size in qualitative research; sample size depends on one's purpose for research and what can be done within the research constraints (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Patton, 1990). Piaget's research was completed with only two children, yet he studied his children at length and in depth

(Patton, 1990). For my research study, the participants were 13 activist teachers from North Carolina.

In order to find teachers willing to share their thoughts and feelings about their activism and the legislative actions of the NCGA, I used the snowball-networking, or chain sampling strategy (Creswell, 2007; Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Patton, 1990) where the research participants helped identify "cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich" (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This sampling strategy was beneficial because some participants were reluctant to respond to overt advertising because of the nature of the research, but were more willing to participate if other activist teachers recommended their participation. Typically, activist know other activists and are more willing to share their stories when approached from within their safe network (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Patton, 1990). In her dissertation research about National Board-certified teachers in North Carolina and their educational leadership, Bunch (2012) also used the snowball strategy to gain participation. She noted that formal documentation was not kept on the National Board-certified teachers as they changed paths in education. To gain participants, Bunch contacted National Board representatives, who then gave her information for other possible participants (p. 96). Similar to my research, formal documentation about activist educators is not kept for the public and the risks involved with participation require limited advertisement. "Locating information-rich key informants" (p. 176), Patton (1990) relied on the network of activist teachers in North Carolina.

Access

As noted before, teachers are socialized to remain neutral in political issues and to adjust to the status quo. The informal professional rules of education are mostly conservative and

maintain privilege for those in control and perpetuate classism, racism, sexism, etc. (Marshall & Anderson, 2009). Teacher activism in North Carolina has been belittled in the state and some teachers have been told and/or believe that participation in activist movements could be risky (deVille, Scioli, & Teacher X, 2014). In 2014, teachers lost tenure rights, including due process. With this loss, teachers were hired on a yearly basis and could be fired for participating in activist movements (Public Schools First NC, 2016). Being a teacher myself, I understand the assumed risks that are associated with speaking out against educational policies. My personal connection to teaching helped me gain access to teachers participating in activism. Also, with this research being a part of a larger project, other community members participated. Activist teachers' lived experiences were not the only stories collected. Their experiences are respected and valued (Glesne, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Ethics

Ethical issues must be considered throughout all aspects of a qualitative study (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Miles and Huberman (1994) provided a roadmap to help ethical issues become more obvious when completing qualitative research. First, research projects should be worth more than helping the researcher's opportunity choices. In my project, the research completed will provide space for teachers' voices in North Carolina, especially during a time when many believe that they are not being heard. Secondly, qualitative research should be completed with good quality despite the level of experience of the researcher. I know that I am a novice researcher with many things to learn; I was willing to ask questions, receive feedback and critiques, all to strengthen my study and analysis. Moving into other aspects of ethics in qualitative research, other scholars (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Seidman, 2013) join Miles and Huberman (1994) in noting that participants

must provide informed consent throughout the research process. Informed consent requires the researcher to do more than have participants sign a required form. It requires that the researcher "go over the informed consent form with their participant to make sure they understand and take the document seriously" (Seidman, 2013, p. 140). Also, although my research can be considered a sensitive topic, I was not deceptive in my description of the research project. All participants knew the purpose of the research and they volunteered their experiences and time (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Seidman, 2013).

Data Collection

Researchers must choose data collection techniques "that are likely to (1) elicit data needed to gain understanding of the phenomenon in question, (2) contribute different perspectives on the issue, and (3) make effective use of the time available" (Glesne, 2011, p. 48). In my study, I wanted to elicit teachers' thoughts, feelings, and reactions to educational policy in North Carolina. I knew that doing this with numerical data via quantitative research, sending surveys would only give me a small piece of the story (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995; Patton, 1990). Historically, teachers' voices are often left out of the conversation and this research was established to understand the meaning teachers make of their experiences in North Carolina. Therefore, I began with data collection via interview.

Interviews

Interviewing to gain data allows for the research participant to share their thoughts and feelings as they think and talk—what it means to be human (Seidman, 2013). In asking questions, talking and listening, we can gain powerful insight into teacher's interpretation of educational and political issues faced in the state (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Merriam, 2009; Wellington, 2015b). Along with Dr. Catherine Marshall and three other doctoral students, I set

up face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured interview format. The research team interviewed teachers and leaders that joined organizations and mobilized in opposition to the recent education legislation. Semi-structured interviews allow for questions to emerge during the interview that may add to or replace pre-established questions (Grady, 1998; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). Appendix A outlines the interview protocol the researchers used in each interview. Keeping the structure similar in all interviews allowed for consistency and credibility in the interviews by minimizing interviewer variations and judgment (Patton, 1990). To protect anonymity, teachers were interviewed in a location away from their work if they chose (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). Each interview was audio recorded and noted by hand with the participants' consent, and then transcribed. Each interview lasted between forty-five minutes to an hour. Participants were informed that follow-up interviews would be possible. Those follow-up interviews were conducted via person-to-person contact and via telephone.

Patton (1990) declared “qualitative inquiry is rife with ambiguities” (p. 183) and can muddy research if good techniques are not used by the researcher. When interviewing participants, it is very important to listen more as a researcher than to talk (Seidman, 2013). To encourage participants' talking, interviews must be designed for that purpose (Creswell, 2007; Grady, 1998; Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 1990; Seidman, 2013; Wellington, 2015b). After writing the questions for my semi-structured interview format, the research group took the time to practice and format the questions to avoid confusing or misguiding participants during the actual interviews (Creswell, 2007; Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Patton, 1990). There is no right or wrong way to order questions during an interview (Patton, 1990), but Magnusson and Marecek (2015) advised that an interview sequence should follow a similar format to the one listed next to complete a good interview. Interviewers should

set up the terms and create an appropriate tone for the interview, begin with demographic questions to allow the participant time to warm up, flow from easier-to-answer question to the more difficult ones, and close the interview in a way that allows the participant to add or request information.

Question-wording affects the quality of a participant's answers during an interview session. The main goal of a qualitative interview is to "minimize the imposition of predetermined responses when gathering data" (Patton, 1990). The questions in a semi-structured interview should be written in such a way that allows the participant to respond how they desire and tell their truth (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). My interview protocol follows the questioning techniques outlined by several qualitative researchers (Creswell, 2007; Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Patton, 1990; Seidman, 2013; Wellington, 2015a) in their texts about qualitative research design. These techniques include listening, asking open-ended questions, avoid leading questions, and following-up with clarifying questions when necessary during or after the interview.

"Qualitative research is not a linear, step-by-step process. Data collection and analysis is a simultaneous activity" (Merriam, 2009, p. 165). After conducting semi-structured interviews, I expected more questions would surface based on the teachers' responses. Gathering follow-up qualitative data via interview does not always require face-to-face meetings. Telephone conversations, although not best for initial interviews, are effective means of collecting data from research participants to delve deeper into topics and get trustworthy findings (Merriam, 2009; Trier-Bienick, 2012). As Marshall and Rossman (1999) detailed in vignettes describing qualitative studies that it is important to choose participants that are "most salient" (p. 72) for the study. There are many teacher participants in the activist movement, but some are not willing to

share their stories in a public space. Those who were willing were most important for this study. In the follow-up interviews for this study, I focused on those teachers that remained classroom teachers throughout their participation in protest movements. In the telephone interview, participants were asked open-ended questions to help "redirect the participant's attention toward matters that are specifically of interest to the interviewer" (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015, p. 54).

Analysis

In this study, I used the data collected in a way to understand teacher activism from different perspectives. Thematic analysis was used to complete the study. In thematic analysis, one searches the data for patterns (Glesne, 2011). Thematic analysis requires the researcher to code the data gathered to find similarities and recurring themes. The researchers used transcripts of interviews and follow-up telephone interviews to develop codes to be coded using QSR Nvivo software. Using a computer analysis program to code data allows for more systematic coding while allowing revision and flexibility to be completed in a quicker fashion (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Based on the literature and research questions, I anticipated some startup codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to be within the themes of tipping point for activism, risks, teacher professionalism, and legislative actions. Within these themes, sub-codes emerged and were included in the Nvivo software. (Appendix C)

Although telephone data collection analysis literature is extremely limited in the field, there have been studies conducted using telephone interviews as a primary means of gathering data (Ward, Gott, & Hoare, 2015; Trier-Bieniek, 2012). From these studies, participants noted that the telephone interviews were overall positive experiences and did not make them censor their responses. Our society has moved to using telephones for more things; people are

comfortable using their phones and appreciate the convenience of talking via phone rather than face-to-face (Ward, Gott, & Hoare, 2015; Trier-Bieniek, 2012).

Trustworthiness

During data analysis, it is important for researchers to question themselves. The questions asked while working with data provides researchers the opportunity to challenge their processes and assumptions. Glesne (2011) proposed four questions that researchers should use to reflect on their work with the data collected:

1. What do you notice?
2. Why do you notice what you notice?
3. How can you interpret what you notice?
4. How can you know that your interpretation is the “right” one? (p. 210)

While using these questions, the researcher considered the framework, research questions, and codes used during the study. Although there is no absolute ‘right’ interpretation, researchers can gain credibility for their work when they learn to critique their own work and help others to think and see in new ways.

Member checking, an activity that provides an "external check on the inquiry process" as explained by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 301), was used in this study as well. Informally, study participants were given "play backs" (p. 314) of their statements during their interview so that they could provide immediate assessment of the information they provided. Participants were able to clarify or edit their responses so that their responses were deemed creditable. During follow up face-to-face and phone interviews with the selected participants, the researcher allowed each participant the opportunity to review his/her transcript from their previous

interview. This provided time for participants to recall their statements and bring them up-to-date with the research project (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Miles and Huberman (1994) reminded qualitative researchers that it is very critical that the truth is shared in research. In my research analysis, the data was not manipulated to fit within my assumptions about teacher activism. The research participants should not feel betrayed when they read the final report.

Limitations

Admitting limitations in a research study is another way of developing trustworthiness. It is the researcher's responsibility to conduct the best research study possible under the conditions and circumstances given. The researcher must explain those conditions and circumstances to inform readers about the nature of the data collected and analyzed (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). Patton (1990) reminded qualitative researchers that there are no perfect research designs because there are limits on resources, time, and human ability. In this study of teacher activists, I understand that the sample is limited and small, yet purposeful. Because of this, one is unable to assume that all activist teachers will respond in a particular way towards the North Carolina legislative actions. This study may also be limited by participant demographics (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). Using the snowball strategy with purposeful sampling to gain more participation, I was not able to determine the specific number of men and women, nor was able to ensure fair geographic representation across North Carolina. Despite these limitations, this research may be influential in helping North Carolina's governmental leaders and policy makers listen to and understand the teacher voices that are being shared.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this research is to investigate the reasons teachers have decided to protest the 2013 NCGA legislation on education and how their passion/drive has been impacted because of the legislative action. Additionally, the research is meant to explore ways in which political culture may guide teacher activism in North Carolina. The research questions that directed the study were:

1. In what ways has the 2013 NCGA Excellent Public Schools Act undermined teacher professionalism?
2. What affects a teacher's depth of involvement in activist movements?
3. Why are teachers remaining in the profession despite their opposition to the 2013 legislation?
4. Are teachers knowledgeable of the political culture in the state and its influences on their professional decisions?

Data Collection and Participants

With over 96,000 public school teachers in North Carolina (North Carolina DPI, 2015) and most having opinions about legislative actions concerning education, this research is prompted by the teachers, among those professionals in North Carolina, who chose to acknowledge their participation in social activism in response to the policies and laws enacted in 2012. These activist teachers were all public school teachers from central and eastern North Carolina. As shown in Appendix B ("Teacher Participants"), the teachers varied in their content areas, school district, years teaching, and their membership in activist organizations.

For each interview, the teachers were given the opportunity to choose the location and determine if their interview could be audio recorded; all interviews were held outside of the activist teacher's local school and all agreed to be recorded. In qualitative research, it is important to allow participants to speak for themselves, but their anonymity must be protected (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Sherman & Webb, 1988). Participants' names, school names and districts have been changed to keep identifying data confidential.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2003) observed that "the process of data analysis is eclectic; there is no right way" (p. 153). For this study, the transcribed data for all participants initial interviews were saved on secure USB files and imported into the computer-based QSR Nvivo program. The coding protocol (Appendix C) was entered into Nvivo and all interviews were coded according to the initial codes. Once initial coding was complete, I analyzed the interview data and coded information for themes that aligned to the research questions. During this work, themes from the research questions emerged and were highlighted (Glesne, 2011; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

As noted in chapter 1, North Carolina's political power balances shifted when Republican governor, Pat McCrory, and a Republican super-majority in the General Assembly was elected in 2013. With this shift, more conservative legislation was introduced in the North Carolina General Assembly. The bills concerning public education in North Carolina, the Excellent Public Schools Act, caused great alarm with many public school advocates and especially public school teachers. Teachers rallied, met with legislators, organized marches and organized classroom walkouts to voice their opinions and express their concerns with the legislation. Of those

educators who have spoken out against the legislation, many are members of teacher organizations like the North Carolina Association of Educators and other grassroots organizations.

A Slap in The Face

Barth's (1990) description of a typical workday for a teacher is vivid:

A tennis shoe in a laundry dryer. Probably no image captures so fully for me the life of an adult working in an elementary, middle, or senior high school. For educators, schoolwork much of the time is turbulent, heated, confused, disoriented, congested, and full of recurring bumps. (g. 1)

This description highlights the numerous decisions a teacher has to make in attempts to provide the best for a "classroom full of real, live humans with real, live human needs and a complex collection of experiences" (Norris, 2002, p. 143). The children in the public school classroom come from various backgrounds and needs. Teachers must make decisions that are for the good of all, but also focus on each individual child; a delicate weaving process must take place to provide a positive and collective learning environment and experience. Instead of celebrating teachers for their work, in recent years, society has villainized the profession and created a perception that "teachers don't do a great deal" (Norris, 2002, p. 145). It is often unclear to determine if someone has spent time observing in a school during normal school hours or if they are completely clueless about the daily operations of public education, so teachers often dismiss public opinions about their profession when the public decides to share. But, in North Carolina, teachers have been scrutinized to a point where they are calling legislative controls "a slap in the face" towards their profession. The first research question sought to identify ways in which the 2013 NCGA Excellent Public Schools Act undermined teacher professionalism and how teachers were responding. One theme that emerged from the data is the sense of discontentment from the teachers because they are undervalued, underpaid and they are not trusted in the profession.

Misperceptions Regarding Teacher Ten-month Contracts

There is never a down moment in a school environment. Teachers spend their entire workday in full gear, often foregoing needed restroom breaks because constant supervision is necessary for school-aged children. At the close of the school day, teachers are expected to take phone calls and requests, grade assignments, attend meetings and professional development, and prepare lessons. This work is most often completed outside of work hours and teachers are not compensated for the work done. Teacher 5, “Sarah” explained her work schedule:

I'm afraid that, it's hard to find a way that you could educate the public about the fact that most of us are rocking a baby to sleep, writing a parent note home and eating our lunch at the same time during rest time. You know, that's how we eat our lunch. It's hard to educate the public that every Sunday evening I get irritable and my husband calls me on it every time. He says, "You're mad." I say, "You're damn right I'm mad. My weekend is finished and I'm writing a lesson plan, I'm doing a newsletter, I'm volunteering in my classroom. And how many containers of Lysol do I have to buy for my classroom? You know, how many toys do I buy at the thrift store for my classroom? Why do I have to volunteer my summer, every summer for the Knights of Columbus? ... You know, I clock my hours. I work over 60 hours a week. Almost every week especially in May when all of those transition meetings are due. Especially during progress note time, which is this week, 60 hours a week.

Other participants noted that they are "always on the clock, but not paid" (Teacher 1, "Lola") and "never off the clock... we work through lunch, summer and at home" (Teacher 12, "Francis").

As the teachers shared this information, most noted that their students deserved the time invested and even agreed with the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions survey results (2016) that they were overall satisfied with their individual schools, but negative public opinion about their work made them feel "dumped on and devalued in this profession that I love. Everybody's talking about teachers and how we're all lazy people and get summers off" (Teacher 9, "Tina"). They feel that this misconception is strengthened because teachers do not work at their schools during June and July. The public believes the teachers are being paid during those summer months, but as noted in chapter two, teachers only receive 10-month salaries, but many chose to

extend this salary across the entire year. Also, teachers' "days off" coincide with student breaks, but, teacher contracts are only for 185-190 days per year in North Carolina. One North Carolina state senator, David Curtis, strongly admonished a teacher when she wrote to him about her frustrations as a North Carolina teacher. In his response to the teacher, the senator wrote, "You expect at least eight weeks paid vacation per year because that is what the taxpayers of North Carolina gave you back when you were a poorly compensated teacher" (Wagner, 2014). The same state senator was met by a group of teachers including Teacher 4, "Anna." As the group walked the halls of the legislative office in Raleigh, NC, a woman yelled out to question them about the time off teachers receive each year. After a brief conversation, the teachers realized the woman with whom they spoke was the administrative assistant to Sen. David Curtis. To their surprise, Senator Curtis stepped out of his office to speak with the group. In their exchange, the senator's misconception was at the forefront of the conversation. "Anna" shared their exchange concerning teachers' time off and compensation:

He was like, "Alright, just, just tell me like, just explain it to me cause I have gotten so many hateful emails." "Well, can you...?" I'm thinking, can't you understand why you've got people all riled up, but he can't, so let's teach him. That's what we do. So, we kinda started out asking him, "Well, you know, we are ten-month employees." And he was like, "Yeah, but you get a yearly salary." And he (another teacher in the group) was like, "No, it's a ten-month salary. Some people elect to spread it out over twelve months so that could be considered a twelve-month salary." And he was like, "But you're just splitting hairs here right? Because it's a yearly salary that you're getting that you are complaining about?" And we were like, "No. It's a ten-month salary." So that was kinda this disconnect.

North Carolina public school teachers sign ten-month contracts and the salary schedule can be viewed by anyone (*Salary Guides*, 2016). Despite the availability, it is clear that some NCGA members are not aware of the specific schedules that they develop and vote for or against each year in North Carolina.

Curriculum and Testing Challenges

The professional double standard (Norris, 2002) discussed in Chapter 2 is illuminated as the teachers' discussed their work. Teacher 10, "Tom" noted that teachers have been asked to do things in the classroom without proper research; no other profession would be put in the same situation.

We were humiliated professionals, and we felt like we were being asked to, you know, put the wrong tool in somebody's mouth if we were dentists. First of all, they're about to place a test in a situation where we have brand new standards. In a corporation, there'd be beta testing and all that stuff. There's nothing. There's nothing in place.

Historically, teachers have been at the bottom of the educational hierarchy despite their pedagogic skills and knowledge (Day, 2007; English, 1987; Sockett, 1993; Webb, 2006).

Curriculum decisions have been made based on fiscal availability and professional development is often determined based on the latest "quick fix" touted across the nation (Norris, 2002). In North Carolina, new state standards were released as a result of Common Core (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2016). These state standards were not created by classroom teachers, nor were they consulted, according to those teachers interviewed. The new state standards were also embedded in new state-mandated tests for students in grades 3-12. Not only would this practice not happen with other professions, but it would also be seen as malpractice (Norris, 2002). After reviewing the new standards, some teachers in one district in North Carolina joined to share their input with their district superintendent, the state superintendent, June Atkinson, and other state representatives (a Race To The Top fund operator, a public relations officer, and an educational advisor for Governor McCrory). Teacher 4, "Anna" was a member of the teacher cohort and she shared that the teachers talked with the representatives for several hours while presenting their facts about testing. They shared that the middle and high school tests were not valid, nor reliable

for showing student learning and they offered alternative modes of assessment. "Anna" noted that the group of teachers felt that their message was being received.

One state representative came up to us afterward, and he was like, "I have to tell you. This is the best meeting I've ever been at with teachers. You all showed yourselves- how professional you are, you did not whine about things, you said, this is the facts, this is what we want to see done, and you know, this is how we want to proceed kinda thing."

But, in her next breath, "Anna" stated how her high hopes of things to come out of that meeting were quickly diminished:

June Atkinson even tweeted about us. She was like, "I just met some "Misty Springs City Schools" educators, I hope they stay." But they haven't convinced me to stay. They listened to us, but they didn't hear us. And they nodded and said these all sound great. You guys are doing a great job. And yet, you know, nothing changed.

Teachers know that test scores do not create the whole picture of a student's success in school, yet high-stakes testing remains the determining factor in schools (Norris, 2002) and teachers are blamed for the failures related to these tests. On top of that, the teachers are not allowed to make decisions about the tests.

When I have people who, based on what they're telling me, are showing me that they are not qualified to make choices about kids. And I don't care what their letters are after their name. If you're going to tell me that it's right to take some standards and then a few months later have a test that's going to tell the world or the state, this is how your teachers are doing this is how your students are doing and the fact that the test you gave is flawed and inaccurate, you're going to be fine with that? That's unprofessional. So, I think being treated as a professional is consulting the best. Consulting with the teachers and valuing our voice! (Teacher 10, "Tom")

Teachers desire to have their expertise respected and used in decisions that involve their profession; nothing different than any other professional entity.

Merit Pay

Discontentment for teachers is also linked to the 2013 legislation decisions about teacher pay in North Carolina. Part V. Pay for Excellence, Section 5.(a) of the act states:

When a robust evaluation instrument and process that accurately assesses and evaluates the effectiveness of teachers, especially in the area of student growth, is wholly implemented in North Carolina, it is the intent of the General Assembly that the evaluation instrument and process be utilized in the implementation of a plan of performance pay for teachers in this State.

In 2013, legislators introduced a merit-pay plan in North Carolina as a way to reward teachers (NCGA, 2013). This plan required superintendents to evaluate all teachers who had been employed in the district for at least three consecutive years. Of these teachers, 25% would be awarded four-year contracts based on their “effectiveness as demonstrated by proficiency on the teacher evaluation instrument” (p. 98). These teachers would receive a five hundred dollar pay raise each year of the four-year contract, but they would not continue to have career status (tenure). Teachers were deeply bothered by these legislative decisions. All thirteen teachers interviewed noted that the “25% pay” change made them feel as if teachers were not being treated professionally. Teacher 13, “Natalie” shared that the 25% contracts with tenure elimination “was the first piece of legislation that mobilized members, especially our more seasoned and veteran teachers because they have worked a long period of time, they’ve invested a lot of time and energy into the state and to remove tenure, they felt it as a personal insult.” For Teacher 12, "Francis," the 25% contract legislation was "huge, huge, huge." She notes the impact of the legislation on her and her colleagues:

That sent a lot of people at our school into a tizzy. Like, really, truly. And, you know, there were some of us who were like, “Heck no! You want me to give up my career status for a 25% increase that I might, if I’m eligible, that I might not get if enough eligible people decide they want in? You know? You are trying to bait me into giving up my career status which has been ruled as property. You’re trying to take something away that I earned, that is rightfully mine so that I might jump at the little carrot of some extra pay that’s in front of me, that you have no idea where the rest of the money is going to come from. You are kidding me? No! You know, I’m one of those people that says you are going to have to pry career status out of my cold, dead hands.

For Teacher 7, "Bill," the 25% merit-pay was extremely unfair because “it was pitting people against each other to compete for this four-year contract and it just doesn’t gel with education. Education is not a business where you have competition.”

"Bill's" statements are a reminder of private corporations' increasing control over public schools and the double standard in the teaching profession. Merit-pay models focus on data that are not inclusive of all factors that determine student success in school. The identification process is very subjective; every district could have different evaluation points under consideration when making decisions (NCAE, 2013; Norris, 2002; Richwine, 2012). And, when working with children, it must be understood that teachers are not simply crafting objects from a material. In the private, business world, the products can be quickly evaluated and rated. This is not true in education. A teacher's impact on a student is not always easy to evaluate and quantify. Business models are not proper tools to use in the educational setting. Additionally, doctors would never be accused of not providing treatment even when their patient does not heal. But, teachers are accused of not teaching if a student's test score is not deemed proficient (Norris, 2002). This double standard for teachers elicits strong feelings and words from the teacher participants. The merit-pay legislation in North Carolina has teachers noting that "it is truly a sad state of affairs when we can see such nebulous criteria determining excellence" (Norris, 2002, p. 149).

Teachers’ Salary Ladder

Merit pay was not the only demoralizing aspect concerning teacher pay of the 2013 legislative actions. The North Carolina teachers' pay scale is designed to reward teachers with advanced degrees (beyond the required bachelor's degree) and to incrementally increase teachers' salaries each year of service in the state. As stated in the literature review, compensation for

teaching in public schools in the United States has "consistently occupied the bottom rung of the salary ladder" (Bond, 2001, p. 48). Nieto (2003) adds that teacher salaries "have not kept pace with inflation in the past decade" (p. 4). To climb the salary ladder, teachers go to graduate school and earn advanced degrees to improve their teaching and their salary. Changes to North Carolina's salary schedule were implemented with the 2013 Excellent Public Schools Act. Conservative groups like ALEC and The Heritage Foundation believe that the salary schedule in North Carolina should eliminate "across-the-board pay increases" (Richwine, 2012) and eliminate earning more after obtaining advanced degrees; the NCGA agreed and teachers were angry and felt as if their dedication to the profession was completely overlooked.

The pay raise was, or lack thereof, was a really big deal because we are all on the cusp. We were all like, nine, ten, fourteen-year teachers. And, we weathered the storm, six years. We understand. We're going through a bad economic time. Things are gonna get better and you're not going to forget about us. So, we stayed, we stuck through it and then you come out and say, "Oh, we're only going to give a raise to the first, second and third-year teachers and so forth." I felt like that was a slap in my face. Literally, a slap in my face or a punch in my stomach, like both. (Teacher 4, "Anna")

Teacher 5, "Sarah" added that teachers who were in graduate programs when the legislation changed salary requirements were not grandfathered into the old salary schedule. Instead, after completing their program, these teachers would not be paid for their higher degree. "Sarah" was grandfathered into the old salary schedule, but remembered how it felt to hear her friends talk about their inability to pay their student loans because they would not receive a "decent raise for their hard work." For Teacher 9, "Tina," The lack of teacher pay increases was seen "as the main devaluing aspect of what we do as teachers. We realized that if every teacher leaves because they're not valued and paid what they're worth and given that kind of respect that they deserve, then we've got nothing." From the discussions she had with other teachers and parents, she joined with one parent to sponsor a group called "Pay Our Teachers First." This group promoted their

mission of retaining teachers in North Carolina with respectable pay and in their first few months they were able to provide every teacher in her school a bonus – "\$140, just cold, hard cash". Although not considered a significant amount of money, the bonus, given right before Christmas break reminded the teachers that parents did value all of the time and effort put into teaching children.

Overall, teachers are discontent because they are not valued, paid, or trusted as professionals in their field. This is shown in their talk about their seemingly never-ending work schedule, the misconceptions associated with 10-month contracts, the legislative push to keep curriculum decisions out of the hands of professional teachers, and merit pay. This discontent is accentuated when, in their activism, these teachers see that policymakers have little knowledge of teachers' work realities as noted in the conversation Teacher 4, "Anna" had with NC Senator David Curtis. The policymakers are pushing merit pay in order to provide higher salaries, but for these teachers, competition in the field will not help students, it will only hinder excellence. The general public does not believe that teachers are as smart as other professionals and many believe that teaching is easy because most everyone has experienced schooling in their lives (Nieto, 2003). Some teachers have stepped out of their classrooms to work with organizations to build better morale and yes, teachers have been able to push negativity away because of their devotion to their students, but many believe that discontent will lead to continued drops in teacher morale which can have a negative impact on public education (Imig & Smith, 2013).

Activism Is Risky Business

The traditionalistic political culture of North Carolina thrived off slave labor in a plantation-based economy. There was a small population of landowning elite that controlled government and a large population of chattel, the slaves, that was not allowed to have any part of

government affairs. This way of life was deemed “right” according to religious doctrine followed by those in control and the established hierarchy was a part of the “ordered nature of things” (Elazar, 1994, p. 235). Those in control of the government were at the top of the social hierarchy and the governmental power remained within the families in control. In this paternalistic structure, the government was filled with those desiring to maintain the status quo. Elazar (1994) noted that those without a direct role in government were expected to take what was given and not expect to participate in governmental decision making. Although North Carolina’s economic structure has changed, the political culture remains primarily traditionalistic. For public schools in North Carolina, the traditionalistic culture can be felt in the day-to-day operations. School policies have been developed to maintain the status quo which emphasizes standardization of teacher practices and established hierarchical controls over teachers and children. To measure the success of the standards, federal and local high-stakes tests are given and the success and failure determinates are decided by legislative decisions; leaving teachers’ professional expertise and advice out of the decision-making conversation (Napso, 2005). Despite being left out, teachers continued to do what they were told to do. In doing so, teachers were subject to public ridicule, negative perceptions, and unfair accountability (Norris, 2002), taking the blame for all that is ‘wrong’ in North Carolina’s public schools.

The 2013 EPSA created a tipping point for North Carolina public school teachers. As discussed earlier, teachers felt that the legislation was a slap in the face and many could not remain silent. How far were teachers willing to go to be involved in the activist movements in North Carolina? Marshall and Anderson (2009) remind us that “the decision to be involved in a social movement is a choice that can have varied and unanticipated effects on the lives of the

participants” (p. 12). The teachers shared their experiences and most highlighted the risks that determined their depth of involvement in the movement.

Protecting My Job Versus Activism

Teaching has consistently been seen as an apolitical profession. "The appearance of neutrality... increases the likelihood of one's acceptance among various constituencies" (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 2). When the activist teachers decided to become involved in a political movement, there was one common risk discussed: losing my job. For some teachers, losing their job was very risky. Teacher 5, "Sarah," said, "The personal risk is it will jeopardize my retirement. If I have to leave before I make those 25 years... I don't want that." Although, not too concerned about retirement for herself, Teacher 1, "Lola," agreed with "Sarah" stating, "It's just that I can see why people closer to retirement who, you know, have more to lose ... being sort of punished for their advocacy."

Other teachers, when discussing losing their jobs, shared sentiments that told a different story. Teacher 3, "Logan," was quick to mention that he could lose his job because of his activism, but he did not show any concern. Instead, he shared that he was quite upset when he heard other teachers say that they did not want to participate in Moral Monday rallies because they wanted to protect their jobs. "Protect your job? In ten years you may not have a job! There'll be no public schools! What are you talking about? Why are you so worried about keeping a job that is going to go away? Your job sucks! Your jobs is harder every single day! What are you trying to protect?"

For Teacher 10, "Tom," losing his job was a risk he was willing to take in order to give him a platform to share his story. "Yeah, the risk of our personal careers, which I didn't care. Some people cared, I was like, 'You know what, my position the past few years has been FIRE

ME, I'll make the news.' You fire me and I'll explain to everyone why." Teacher 9, "Tina" did make the news and shared her discontent with the treatment of teachers in North Carolina. She was asked to appear in a television commercial for former United States Senator Kay Hagan during her re-election campaign. In her spot, "Tina" shared her concerns and spoke about her support for Senator Hagan. For the most part, support and praise were given from colleagues, parents, and students. A few parents emailed, "Saw you on tv, thanks so much for speaking out" and other similar sentiments. But there was one negative experience that made "Tina" fear that she might lose her job. She shared that a parent asked to meet with her over a current event article she used in class that he felt was inappropriate for sixth-grade students. In their meeting, the parent not only shared his feelings about the article being violent, but he shifted the conversation to include that he believed "Tina" was deliberately choosing liberal-based information to teach her classes. From there, the conversation moved to her political commercial. The father stated that her participation in a political commercial was influencing his children to believe a particular viewpoint. Despite being well within her first amendment rights and having permission from the district to appear in the television commercial, the father did not think her participation was appropriate and took his complaint to the district superintendent. "Tina" knew that the district superintendent was fully aware of her commercial participation, but the parent complaint still troubled her.

I was perfectly within my rights. So, I knew I had covered all my bases ... but, there was some talk of this parent wanting to pass out some sort of letter to go home to all of my parents too, I guess, voice his concerns about me and my class to all of my students' parents. Which according to, I guess our district rules, he would have been allowed to do that as long as it wasn't disruptive to the school day, but he never moved forward with that. And I'm sure he's talked to other parents about me, but at least he never ended up doing anything that formalized. (Teacher 9,"Tina")

"Tina" had the support of district and school administrators as she dealt with a disgruntled parent, but some teachers shared that their environments were not as welcoming to activist teachers. Teacher 11, "Jerry," and Teacher 4, "Anna," both shared that once their school principal learned that they were participating in activist movements related to teaching in North Carolina, their principals started watching them more closely and questioning them more often than before. "Jerry" believed that his principal "was trying to make his life difficult" and ultimately trying to make him leave the school. For "Anna," her principal told her, "You can either be a force for good or a force for bad. You are a leader and people in this school are going to look up to you ... you might turn people." Her principal also told her that she was a "political liability" for him because of her activism. She has never had problems with administrators, so "Anna" was very shocked with her administrator's thoughts about her activism. Although not in fear of losing her job because of her activism, Teacher 8, "Michelle," shared information about her friends in more conservative areas being afraid to protest.

So there are principals out there who try to limit what people can and cannot do. There are school districts that are, like "Destin County" when the whole wear red thing last December, they said that schools were not allowed to wear red on Wednesdays for public education. And they had to fight back. "Destin County," their district is very conservative and so any kind of activism at the school level, you have to be very careful to mind your p's and q's.

When teachers step out of the expected apolitical role in a traditionalistic political culture, challenges arise and some can be extremely risky. Many teacher participants in this study were keenly aware that their activism could put them at risk of losing their jobs. Their responses to this threat varied; each sharing their ability to tolerate different degrees of the risks associated with their activism. "Sarah," Teacher 5, was very clear that her activism was directed towards her needs in classrooms with special-needs children. She was quick to share her support of teachers who were "fighting the fight for all of us over these demeaning laws," but she was not

willing to be “a front-line soldier.” “Stephanie,” Teacher 6, did not want to be seen as too much of an activist because of her role within her district. She felt that her “personal mission” was to advocate for the children which would help the public to see the good in teachers. Those who were members of NCAE with no other affiliation, were vocal activists. They were willing to share information given to them by NCAE and some even attended Moral Monday events, but none were willing to be in the activist spotlight. “Jerry,” Teacher 11, as a member of the Badass Teachers (BATS), found that his activism was best used in his school and on social media platforms. He noted that he would read information posted on the BATS forum on social media and share his new knowledge with his colleagues in the school. In providing colleagues with information, he believed placed him in a negative light with his principal. As written earlier, he felt that his principal was “out to get him” and “attack everything I did in class.” For the remaining five teachers, fear was present, but did not hold them back from going full force with their protests. While some walked the halls of the NCGA and demanded to meet with legislators, others shared that they were arrested on the main street as they blocked the road to enter the NCGA building. No matter their place on the activism continuum, each of the thirteen teacher participants felt that their level of activism was needed to fight the legislative actions of the NCGA.

The Political Culture Hidden in Plain Sight

As teachers shared the risky business of their activism in North Carolina, the traditionalistic, paternalistic culture of the state permeated their words, yet none shared information that would lead one to believe that they were even aware of its existence. “Educators, thus, sense the informal rules, the hierarchies and patriarchies embedded in education professions” (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 9), but do they have a clear

understanding of the political culture in the state and its influences on their professional decisions?

Collegiate teacher training programs in the United States have gone through numerous changes since the launch of the Soviet satellite, Sputnik. Academic scholars from a variety of disciplines placed tremendous energy into improving teacher training to better prepare American students (Earley, 2000; Johanningmeier, 2010; Shipps, 2011). As noted in the literature review, the changes in the teacher preparation programs focused heavily on teaching methods. This focus caused criticism to mount against teachers subtly placing blame on teachers for the assumed decline in America's public schools. Teacher education programs shifted again to build programs with major focus on content-based education. These shifts for teacher education programs were led by legislative efforts and were considered the best way to improve student learning in public schools. In these changes, teachers were bombarded with for-profit and other private vendors entering the realm of education (Mullen, English, Brindley, Ehrich, & Samier, 2013; Pullin, 2015), but nothing was provided to educate teachers on the politics of education and how they would be involved once a member of the profession.

Each participant shared their personal journeys into the field of education as they were interviewed. In these accounts were stories of favorite professors, professional dress advice reminders, late-night meetings to review content, and many more, but no one shared how their teacher training program prepared them to be political actors in their profession. "NOT AT ALL!" were the emotion-filled words from Teacher 12, "Francis." She continued, " I didn't even really know anything. I would watch the news, but not really paying attention to politics." Teacher 11, "Jerry," admitted that although he had been a teacher for over 25 years, he was not aware of the political side of education.

I really, until the legislation, when this legislature started with all this, I didn't really know much about the background. I didn't know where the Common Core came from. I didn't really understand, I mean EVAAS (North Carolina's state-wide growth model), whatever the heck that is... I mean, there's just a lot I didn't know.

Despite their lack of overt political training in their teacher education programs, as the participants shared their experiences, it was clear that the teachers were trained to be apolitical in covert ways. Ginsberg (1995) reminds us that "what educators do occurs in a context of power relations and distribution of symbolic and material resources, and what action (or inaction) educators engage in has political implications for themselves and others (pp. 7-8). For example, Teacher 7, "Bill," shared his disappointment about teachers' salaries in North Carolina, but his resolution to the problem did not involve any political motive. He understood the challenges faced by teachers, especially young teachers, when they had to make difficult monetary decisions without having a substantial raise in salary in North Carolina in over six years. For teachers in stressful situations, he expressed how difficult it is to teach young children when not being able to provide adequate resources for your own family. But, he doesn't see the answer in challenging the status quo.

I don't think teachers need to be struggling. They need to be confident enough to go into the classroom and do a good job and all that (merit-pay) served was to take our eye the ball. Took our eye off the kids. We needed to be focused on children, not focused on our own problems we're having with economics and so on.

His response is rooted in the apolitical nature expected for North Carolina teachers. Just as mill village workers did not rock the boat too much as to not be seen as outcasts and problem makers, "Bill" does the same. Teacher 12, "Francis," was adamant about the 25% merit pay being wrong for many reasons, but she shared that in her district, because teachers felt safe to be outspoken, teachers were seriously considering accepting the merit-pay. Their consideration was rooted in financial gains, never looking at the political aspect of the assumed incentive.

You know, I'm not worried about myself. I have one kid in college and another kid going to college and I could use that money. I can be vocal and not feel like I'm going to experience any retribution. If I were working somewhere else, I might not think the same way.

Those in political power in North Carolina are keepers of the status quo. Although the 25% merit-pay proposal caused major concern for many teachers, teachers were not aware of how their assumed safety is a part of the systemic ways to keep political power within the hands of those in the General Assembly.

In the Know?

After analyzing the data from each teacher interviewed for the project, it was evident that teachers spent so much of their time focused on lesson plans, meetings, differentiation, and grading assignments, that educational politics was far from most of their radars until the 2013 Excellent Public Schools Act in North Carolina. Their reasons were not given as excuses, but several teachers noted, in hindsight, that they should have been more involved.

I'm a member of NCAE and have been for a number of years now, and I was a member of PENC early on. I joined because someone told me to and that it was a liability policy. I didn't really get particularly active, politically involved or anything like that early on. I was a new teacher. Didn't feel like decisions affected me. I was so overwhelmed with being in my first years of teaching. I didn't make a point of staying educated about what was going on. I was not one to buck the system. (Teacher 12, "Francis")

"Francis's" experience is familiar to many teachers and it was exactly what led Teacher 3, "Logan" to go deeper into educating teachers about their rights and their political activism.

"Logan" has been a political activist and organizer since his college days, over fifteen years prior to this research. He began his work around educational issues in 2009. While teaching in a large, urban high school, "Logan" lead a "campaign to push the local school board to pass a budget that would not eliminate any teaching position, and then pushed the county commissioners to fund that budget, despite setbacks from state funding." With this work, he

noted that there "wasn't a lot of space for the experience that I was bringing to the table, or the politics that I was bringing to the table." In his work, he experienced a great deal of pushback from local educational leaders – "some quarters were openly hostile to the work we were doing." When he began his work with state-level leaders of NCAE, he was frustrated.

We were in the midst of this growing assault on public schools, but they (NCAE) were sitting out, largely. It didn't feel like they understood what was happening, and it didn't feel like they were up to the challenge of fighting it. I continued to have frustrating interactions with union leadership at the local-level and state-level for the next couple of years.

Out of this frustration, he sat in the back of a room during the NCAE state convention and found his opening.

So, there was about 15 of us... sat down at the back of the room. I said to these folks, "Look, I have done some of this organizing work the NCAE president is talking about. Would you be interested in learning how to do it?" And they were really excited about it. We decided that a month later we would have a training. So, we went to Greensboro and there were about 10 or 15 folks from Forsythe County, Guilford County, Durham County, and Wake County. So, I led this sort of activism, Teacher-Organizing 101. Essentially, that was the backbone. The things that we developed for that training is some of what we have continued to do, which is we start off the day talking about some of what people's vision is for where are schools could be and what we could have.

"Logan" is keenly aware of the political culture of the state and how organizations like ALEC are attacking public education and teachers within the context of the political culture. He noted that as teachers were rallying at Moral Monday events, he didn't see the NCAE joining. Because of his political involvement with the NCAE organization he had gained insight into the leadership's course of action. Instead of participating in the Moral Monday movement, the NCAE, according to "Logan," was holding back because "the Republicans would hold the line on some of the worst stuff and NCAE wouldn't come out critically against them." This course of action did not prove to be helpful and "Logan" shared his lack of trust in NCAE and the organization's inability to disrupt the status quo in North Carolina.

We had no power. We brought nothing to the table. NCAE at this point, right now, is an organization that used to have 70,000 members and now it is significantly less. NCAE had not demonstrated any ability to turn out voters and had not demonstrated the ability to put people on the streets. There is no power. So, you're trying to negotiate with people who are saying, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, we're supporters of education," but where Phil Berger (NCGA, Republican Senator) wields power over those people's ability to get things done, we don't. And so, you're beginning negotiations with a fox and you have already given away half your chickens...

No other teacher expressed awareness of the political culture in North Carolina, nor were they aware of ALEC involvement in legislation in the state. For organizations like ALEC, North Carolina is a perfect state to introduce model bills because the legislative power lies within an ultra-conservative General Assembly and North Carolina legislators are deeply involved in ALEC's network (The Center for Media and Democracy, 2015). The model bills have turned into passed legislation allowing for increasing private corporations' control over public schools and many teachers are unaware of these connections. As stated in the literature review, ALEC bills oppose teacher unions, teacher tenure and rewards for advanced certifications (Anderson & Donchik, 2014)—all issues that raise concerns with many of the interviewed teachers. Despite their concern, all but one of these teachers were aware of any political training to prepare them for challenges in their profession, especially those that placed blame on teachers for the decline in American education.

Why Teachers Stay

All of the participants in this study would agree with Nieto's (2003) statement that "Even under the best of circumstances, teaching is a demanding job, and most teachers do not work under the best circumstances" (p. 3). Because of the highly public bashing of public education, teachers are being blamed for the problems, ignored by political leaders and treated less than the professionals that they are. The participants have each protested in their own way, some more

public than others, and many shared that the end of their teaching career was near because of the policies in North Carolina.

It's a reminder that every moment with my students could be my last moment with my students. And so, I think that feeling is at the forefront of my consciousness. That what I'm bringing to them today should be good enough to leave them with if I'm no longer here tomorrow. And so I actually think that's a really good thing. Yeah, I think that a really good thing actually. 'Cause I don't ever go to work and take it for granted. I don't, you know. I know that if it comes to having to quit because of again, I can no longer make it work. It's like an expensive hobby at this point, you know, it's ridiculous. And it's not fair to my family, so I can't, I can't promise my kids that I will be there tomorrow. You know, I can't tell my students that I'll be there tomorrow. (Teacher 1, "Lola")

Teacher 4, "Anna," with strong emotion stated, "Last year ... I was spent. I was done. I'd hit my, felt like I just kept hitting my head against the wall and I wasn't getting anywhere. And I really didn't feel like anybody was listening."

Our Future Depends on Us

Despite these passionate pleas for relief and thoughts of leaving, every teacher participant in the study remained in the classroom in the public school in North Carolina during the 2014-2015 school year. This can be seen as teachers being content with their treatment, but that is not the case. The teachers shared a common theme which answered research question three: Why are teachers remaining in the profession despite their opposition to the 2013 legislation? Simply stated—the students.

What reasons should I stay besides my students? And that's the hardest part about making the decision to stay or to go. It's cause of these kids. I want to stay and I believe in public education, so I don't want to go to a private school or a charter school, or a magnet school. I want to be where we will take anybody in ... I love how we all work together and yeah, not everybody there is perfect, but nobody is perfect anywhere, but it works. (Teacher 4, "Anna")

Teacher 1, "Lola" used a factory metaphor to illustrate her reason for staying in the classroom.

People come into the profession, they become quickly dissatisfied, they feel taken advantage of, they quit. We don't want that turnover. That leaves us with no good

product. You can't start on a sandal and then quit your job and expect someone else to continue that sandal, right? If you're in a sandal making factory. It's gonna be a crappy sandal in the end. So, we don't want to do that with kids. We can't start on kids' education, quit, have somebody else come in on the middle of a process that has already been started and expect a good result. That's a terrible idea.

Not only are the teacher participants continuing in the profession, some, like Teacher 9, "Tina" are staying and doing more than what is required.

I still show up every day and I still stay late at night and I'm still being a coach, I'm the yearbook club advisor this year and I'm, you know, saying yes to too many things, you know, and still doing everything I can to make it a good experience for my students.

The professional double standard permeates teaching and teachers are trying, but teachers keep going so that the students can receive the best education.

I think it wears you down. I don't show those colors in the classroom. I'm just really passionate, so my classroom show is my classroom show, so it's crazy. And, I feel like, as a lot of teachers, your craft gets better. I have some of the best students ever and they're doing some of the best work ever, I have amazing kids that are each day becoming scholars, beautiful. So that's what's keeping me in it. (Teacher 10. "Tom")

Chapter 2 gave a clear synopsis of how the history of education places teachers at the bottom of the educational hierarchy and powerless (Sockett, 1993; Webb, 2006). Teachers have been challenged by educational policies that deprofessionalize their career choice, but they continue. As Norris (2003) writes, "there is not a group of professionals in our society who are more dedicated to their mission yet treated so shabbily by the society they serve" (p. 164), yet they return because of their commitment and passion to the profession. "Some of us sacrifice our personal lives for this. So we love it, we believe in it and we live it" (Teacher 1, "Lola").

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how the 2013 North Carolina Excellent Public Schools Act impacted teachers within the traditionalistic political culture of the state. The results from the interviews in this study indicate that these teachers believe that the act

undermines their professionalism and provided a tipping point for them to become involved in activist movements. For some, their participation in activist movements was constrained by fear of losing their job. For a few, participation was necessary no matter the situation. Despite their participation in activist movements, these teachers were mostly unaware of the political culture of the state and how that overtly and subtly impacted their involvement in protest movements. Lastly, the thirteen teachers in this study were unwilling to leave their profession, even with all the challenges written in the 2013 EPSA and seeing the attrition happening around them, because they are committed to their students and their students' success. Given these findings, what are the implications for policy and practice in education? How does this study add to previous research on teachers and political culture? Chapter Five addresses these questions.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the reasons teachers decided to protest the 2013 North Carolina General Assembly's (NCGA) legislation on education and to hear directly from North Carolina teachers about how their passion/drive has been impacted because of the legislative action. Using semi-structured interviews, this qualitative study was developed to document the lived experiences of several teachers in North Carolina; each person's interpretation of the world is shaped by the cultural interactions one has with their society and qualitative studies are developed as researchers attempt to understand how people interpret their experiences, simple and complex (Glesne, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Sherman & Webb, 1988). This chapter briefly reviews the purpose of this study, summarizes the study's findings within the context of the theoretical framework, and provides implications for policy and practice in education and recommendations for further research.

Summary of Study

This study uses political culture as a guiding framework for exploring teachers' interpretations of North Carolina's laws that affect their profession. The traditionalistic political subculture of North Carolina's local and state government today can be felt in the day-to-day operations of North Carolina's public school system. Specifically, school policies have been developed to maintain the status quo emphasizing standardization of teacher practices and established hierarchical controls over teachers and children. Many North Carolina teachers have

joined with other groups to protest the governmental actions and hearing some of those teachers' voices was paramount in this study. The 'truth' was not being sought; instead multiple perspectives (Glesne, 2011) of teacher activism were needed because often, within the political culture, the teacher's voice is left out of the dialogue surrounding education although many have expressed their thoughts and opinions in national, state, and local settings (Casey, 1993). North Carolina's political culture and recent school policies are embedded with assumptions of elite control of policy systems aimed at controlling workers within the hierarchy. Thus, it is important to examine the ways teachers perceive educational policy in North Carolina and in turn, provide an outlet where educators can find their voices in the public school political conversations and possibly plan, implement, and evaluate educational policy in this, and in other states (Anderson & Pini, 2005).

Implications for Policy and Practice in Education

The history of America's public schools was discussed in the literature review to provide the political context in which North Carolina's teachers first choose their profession, and then, work daily. As public schools and teachers were publically villainized within *The Nation At Risk* Report (NCEE, 1999), neoliberal reform movements were introduced and accepted without much ado because of the fear invoked in teachers and in the general public (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2015). The neoliberal movement created a national discourse that blamed teachers for the lack of "skill, literacy, and training essential to this new era" (NCEE, 1999) and touted market-style, business models as the answer to the crisis (Anderson & Pini, 2005). ALEC model bills that were pro-privatization and pro-deregulation quickly found their way into legislation in North Carolina, Florida, New Jersey, and Wisconsin (Marshall, Tichnor-Wagner, & Johnson, 2017). These models of governance pushed public education towards "corporatization, marketization, privatization, and

commercialization" (Anderson & Pini, 2005, p. 218) all while placing democratic equality on the back burner. Teachers saw their right to due process eliminated, they felt the economic strain when their advanced education degrees were no longer honored, and teachers realized that with teacher assistant positions being eliminated, their limited resources would be spread more thinly in the classroom. The ALEC-inspired model education bills introduced by the NCGA were not developed for the good of society. Instead, teachers felt that they had lost more of their voice and "the decades of progressive policies in North Carolina disappeared overnight" (Marshall et al., 2017, p. 92).

This reform movement greatly impacted North Carolina public school teachers in 2012 when conservative leaders took control of the state government. Many members of the conservative leadership were active members of ALEC working to develop state legislation that reflected the neoliberal ideology directly. The super-majority controlling the NCGA guided education policy with model bills written by ALEC and final legislative measures that pushed North Carolina teachers to join activist organizations and protest the laws enacted. The activist teachers who participated in this research shared their realities of working in a state where, in their opinions, their professional work is not valued by the government nor by the members of the public that they serve each day in their schools. Now that those voices have been heard, what should be done in North Carolina to change this reality for North Carolina's teachers?

Having conducted this study during the rise of teacher activism in North Carolina in response to the 2013 Excellent Public Schools Act and using the guidance of the previously written literature, it is my belief that there are pertinent implications towards educational policy, politics, and leadership present that will help guide further research and practice in North Carolina.

Knowledge Is Power

Based on the research participants' shared realities and Imig and Smith's (2013) survey of over 600 practicing teachers and administrators in North Carolina, teacher morale in North Carolina faced an all-time low when the 2013 EPSA was passed. Teachers felt "deflated by the condescension towards and lack of respect exhibited by lawmakers" (Imig & Smith, 2013, p. 12) and upset that legislators were claiming to know how to improve education despite their lack of professional training. Teachers have not been included in the conversations surrounding educational reform. The traditionalistic political culture in North Carolina lends explanations. This political culture embraces the bureaucratic style of leadership; "schools are agents of government that can be administered by hierarchical decision-making and controls" (Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 27). North Carolina teachers are, therefore, viewed as "mandated conduits" of decisions (Barone, Berliner, Blanchard, Casanova, & McGowan, 1996, p. 112) under the control of the leaders of state government.

The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions surveys conducted in North Carolina each year provide a powerful backdrop to the legislative issues teachers are facing in the state. The data from the survey highlights that most teachers across the state are satisfied with their school's environment, resources, and community. Most teachers note that they are pleased with the overall aspects of their public school. So why are teachers leaving the profession? The teacher attrition data (NCDPI, 2015) shared in previous chapters provide a glimpse of the answer. Teachers in North Carolina have left the profession because of their lack of professional treatment by legislators, specifically the 2013 Excellent Public Schools Act.

Understanding ALEC's Strategies in Public Education

The NCGA's conservatism shift has worked well for ALEC. Model bills have been introduced and passed that have changed the face of public education in North Carolina. Teachers are subject to the public highlighting of the poor performances of students, being required to take full responsibility for the failure of schools, while attempting to meet the needs of all students in the public school setting. Instead of turning to educators and educational leaders, North Carolina's lawmakers are turning to organizations that have underlying goals to make profits from public assets. Many teachers are not buying into the reform movement and have taken part in activist movements to protest the actions and demand for change.

But protest and demands alone cannot rid the state of neoliberal organizations. Teachers in North Carolina must also become knowledgeable about discursive strategies in place to promote privatization—taking the ‘public’ out of public schools. Neoliberal organizations like ALEC, use community-focused outreach approaches to gather support for their policies as well as reports and other media that provide data to support their causes (Fenerstein, 2015). These discursive neoliberal strategies are extremely prevalent in North Carolina’s political climate, and others mentioned earlier, because policy windows were opened because of the country’s economic crisis as conservative supermajorities took control of state legislative offices (Fenerstein, 2015; Marshall, Tichnor-Wagner, & Johnson, 2017). In each state, political and financial connections could be found between ALEC and conservative legislature. In North Carolina, former Speaker of the House, Thom Tillis was celebrated as ALEC’s 2011 State Legislator of the Year (Center for Media and Democracy, 2015). As Marshall, Tichnor-Wagner, and Johnson (2017) noted, the ALEC-inspired model bills in the state were easily drafted in

North Carolina because thirty-four members of the General Assembly have documented ties to ALEC, some even with leadership roles within the organization. ALEC legislation is carefully introduced to make the agenda “appear desirable” (Fenerstein, 2015, p. 8) to parents by including terms that appeal to parental control, yet do not share information about many of the hazardous effects the policies pose to the general welfare of students in public schools (Fenerstein, 2015; Marshall, Tichnor-Wagner, & Johnson, 2017).

With these strategies, neoliberal organizations like ALEC, influence the general public and persuade many to support the legislation because most do not understand the discursive tactics. Teachers must learn to identify these tactics so that the language of education is not focused on “efficiency, standardization, and competitiveness” (Fenerstein, 2015, p. 8)—all which the teacher participants in this study believe to deprofessionalize their work. Instead, with identification, these strategies can be “called out and eliminated being replaced with education that is cooperative, equitable, and focused on social justice” (Fenerstein, 2015, p. 8).

Without a Union What Can Teachers Do?

The southern United States’ economy developed using a plantation-centered system that depended on the labor of slaves. After Reconstruction, the economic model in North Carolina shifted to wage labor that was progressive, but business-dominated. Business elites were extremely cozy with legislators in the General Assembly and laws that benefitted corporate capital prevailed in the state (Johnson, 2017).

North Carolina, with its traditionalistic political culture, has dubbed labor unions as “bad” and laws have been passed to ban organized laborers from coming together for a common cause (Nolan, 1978). The literature review provides the context to show that teachers in North Carolina have learned to ‘stay in line’ and remain fearful of organizing in order to make their profession

stronger. However, for some North Carolina activist teachers, it is not acceptable to remain with the status quo. Teachers have come together to challenge the neoliberal ideologies that are attacking public schools. Organize 2020 is a caucus group that began in 2013 with a few NCAE members hoping to create a "more militant and democratic NCAE" (Johnson, 2017, p. 128). These teachers understand the political culture of North Carolina and are reaching out and training other teachers to become more active and learn more about the political culture of the state. Teachers can no longer sit idly on the side. Organize 2020 is creating an avenue that will help teachers find a way to mobilize and not be fearful of the anti-union attitudes and feelings that are ever present in North Carolina. This avenue is providing support for teachers and helping them to "push back on these norms and routines, so that they are capable of actively engaging as policy agents" (Good, Barocas, Chavez-Moreno, Feldman, & Canela, 2017, p. 517).

How Can Educational Administrators Help?

Just as there are political cultures throughout the country, organizations develop and maintain cultures within the political culture as well. There are rules, written and unwritten, that organization members follow in order to sustain the organization (Good et al., 2017). Public schools in North Carolina follow the traditionalistic political culture norms where the status quo is maintained as hierarchical controls are established over teachers. The success and failure of students are measured via local and federal high-stakes testing and the levels are decided by legislators and high-level administrators; leaving teachers' professional expertise and advice out of the decision-making conversations (Napso, 2005). Additionally, teacher training programs are designed to teach content and pedagogy, but teachers are not provided coursework with a political focus nor professional development to help teachers grow in curriculum development so they may participate in curricular decisions (Norris, 2008).

Principals and district level administrators have a responsibility to hear the teacher voices, not as token voices (Marshall et al., 2017), but as true participants in the public school discourse. Unfortunately, school-based principals do not always have complete jurisdiction over the professional development teachers receive nor the structure of the school day. These decisions are often made at the district level by leaders far removed from the daily operations of school buildings. By design, most schools are not structured to support teacher participation in public school discourse. Instead, neoliberal thoughts of competition and individualism permeate the culture (Nieto, 2003). Teachers are not afforded the time, money, and other resources to give appropriate attention to educational problems nor their own intellectual and political growth (Nieto, 2003). Although, in most cases, the structure of the school day cannot easily be adjusted by administrators so that teachers can engage in meaningful dialogue with peers and administration, other administrative actions can show support for teachers. As Wanda Legrand studied lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights (Marshall & Anderson, 2009) she noted that administrators could “provide tangible and symbolic support” (p. 105) by “assertively verbalizing public support... demonstrating support through hiring and promotion practices, and giving space and other outward encouragement” (p. 105). In relation to this study, teachers not only want to be seen only as the curriculum implementer, but as valuable stakeholders with professional opinions (Good et al., 2017). Supportive actions can be extremely risky for school leaders because of the conservative, traditional culture of schools. Marshall (Marshall & Anderson, 2009) notes that the professional career continuum plays a large role in administrative activism and support. As a school administrator, one may consider their higher position and public visibility a good way to be an activist, but also too risky as one may lose that position because of their activism. Administrators must weigh these options and decide how they will act.

Are Teachers Bamboozled?

It is evident that the teachers interviewed for this research were not aware of the traditional political culture of North Carolina. Their stories are full of frustration and concern; some even mention how nothing seems to change in education. As I listened to these statements, I wanted to scream, “Don’t you get it! This is exactly what is supposed to happen!” Elazar’s political culture theory comes full circle with this study. The political culture is so deeply embedded in the society that we all play by the rules even when the rules are made to marginalize different groups. The rules, in my opinion, are stacked against teachers. North Carolina’s attrition rate does not seem to worry the legislators because there will be those who stay in the profession because of the children. From my analysis, the teachers with the most protest activity are more willing to stay in the profession than those with less activity. The determination heard in their voices and seen in their actions exude pure passion for the profession and the children’s future. In my opinion, these teachers are fighting against organizations like ALEC and the current NCGA not only for themselves, but for future North Carolina teachers. They want to stick it out. But, North Carolina teachers seem to be hoodwinked; the political culture allows for some protest and pushback, but everyone knows their place and things will soon settle down to normal – sustaining the status quo. None of the teacher participants could link their actions, feelings, or beliefs to the political culture of the state. This is where change needs to happen for North Carolina teachers. Teachers must become knowledgeable about the political culture of the state and understand how that culture creates barriers to changes in education and teacher professionalism. With even a small understanding of the political culture, teachers will begin to “cut through the political rhetoric and expose the interests of those who control public education” (English & Bolton, 2015, p. 2). For more teachers to be activists, their apolitical neutrality must be tossed away. Teachers have to

embrace politics in their professional lives. Teachers can no longer ignore politics if they wish for neoliberal education ideology to leave North Carolina and the nation. It is important to hear all who contribute to the discussion so that an honest public dialogue can be had. But, talking about and embracing politics will not be enough. Moral Monday participation in North Carolina has provided a platform for teachers to publicly air their grievances and gain attention (Marshall et al., 2017), but institutional norms of public education and teacher preparation must undergo a paradigm shift. In their work at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Good et al., (2017), have identified a model, Wisconsin Education Policy, Outreach, and Practice (WEPOP) in which the university and K-12 teachers collaborate to gain a better understanding of policy design and to help build K-12 teachers' political capacity. The teachers are guided through teacher-driven conversations "to develop a strategy where policy goals are turned into manageable action plans so that participants can view accomplishments and change as time moves forward" (Good et al., 2017, p. 517). With careful analysis and planning, similar programs can be implemented in North Carolina. Organize 2020 members have been developing strategies to educate and mobilize North Carolina's teachers (Johnson, 2017). With North Carolina being a right-to-work state, teacher political involvement has to be supported by community members. Organize 2020 is focusing its work to scaffold and build teacher capacity and community support by first using local issues, then growing the capacity to identify and make action plans around district and state educational issues (Johnson, 2017). Ultimately, teachers will have to embrace politics in their words and actions if they want to bring about necessary reform and justice within America's public schools.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research provides a snapshot of thirteen, North Carolina public school teachers' responses to the 2013 Excellent Public Schools Act passed by the conservative North Carolina

General Assembly. The data from this study reveal that these teachers are angry and many are pushed to the brink of leaving the profession because they do not feel valued by the public that they serve. Many of these teachers noted that professional double standards and lack of salary increases have made them question their commitment to teaching, but cannot leave because the children deserve to have a devoted teacher in the classroom each day. Since this research is a snapshot, in order to track teacher attrition linked to this legislation, qualitative, longitudinal studies would contribute to the body of literature. These studies would track teacher participants to see if leaving the profession does become a reality and these studies would be able to capture differences of opinions if political leadership in North Carolina shifts in favor of the teacher activists. Also, longitudinal studies on teacher training can help determine if teacher's knowledge of politics and education grows as they proceed in their studies. These particular studies can continue as the pre-service teachers enter the profession and can be used to compare teacher activism in North Carolina for years to come.

Additionally, this study had a limited focus on teachers in PreK-12 public schools in North Carolina. The body of literature could be expanded if studies included educators in higher education and educational administrators from all levels in North Carolina, and in states with similar policy environments. This expansion would provide different perspectives and it could also lead to findings that would help teachers become stronger political activists at each level. It would be interesting to see if similar issues arise at each level of education or if each level is truly unique in their responses to legislation.

Last, teacher activism is important to understand within educational policy and leadership. This study is the catalyst to analyzing teachers' reasons for activism and how their activism is expressed on a continuum depending on assumed risks and challenges. Other states have

experienced similar legislation and this work can guide further research with hopes of providing teachers with political knowledge and better preparation to leave their apolitical history in the past.

Conclusion

As a North Carolina public school teacher and the primary researcher in this study, I walk away from the research with mixed thoughts and concerns. As the teacher participants shared their stories with me in their interviews, there was a sense of relief knowing that there were so many teachers in the state who refused to sit idle and watch our profession be devalued and demoralized. These teachers joined and rallied to let the NCGA know that the 2013 Excellent Public Schools Act was not acceptable; there would be pushback and agitation from numerous educational stakeholders in the state. Teachers met with legislators, made public speeches, participated in campaigns for education-friendly candidates, and some even walked out of their classrooms to formally register their complaints about the legislation and to persuade legislators to change the law. All of these actions showed that teachers were involved and prepared to stand for the profession. On the other hand, there was a sense of dread. Although teachers were doing so many things to protest the legislation, most did not know about the neoliberal agenda that is sweeping the nation and taking control of public schools. Without understanding this agenda, teachers in North Carolina will not be able to take full advantage of the protest movement surrounding public education in North Carolina and across the country. As Marshall, Tichnor-Wagner, and Johnson (2017) highlight, "Whenever the dominant system's values and policies greatly offend, marginalize, and exclude citizens who share deeply held core beliefs, then new arenas for politics can emerge" (p. 101). The political culture of the state is designed to maintain the status quo and not allow any room for those at the bottom of the hierarchy of political power to successfully challenge the power and influence of traditional leadership. Instead of forcing

change that respects professionalism and values teachers socially and monetarily, teachers will only find themselves back in the same situation time and time again unless they can grasp the political movement that is taking place and demand change within their schools, districts, and legislative buildings.

The teaching profession is being challenged by neoliberal ideology and teacher activists are finding ways to push back despite the seemingly uphill battle that they face. There is a plethora of research that can be completed since the neoliberal agenda in education is gaining traction in and beyond North Carolina. This study is a contribution to continued research effort in educational leadership.

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol for Educators

Interview Guide – Activist/Organized Educators –Semi Structured

1. I'd like to start with some background on your teaching/school administrator career. (How long have you been an educator in North Carolina?)

a. Where do you currently teach/work as an administrator?

b. What do you currently teach?

c. Prior teaching/administrative positions?

2. I would like to learn about your personal involvement protesting recent education legislation.

a. Did you join any organizations/groups?

3. I understand that your group got involved in protesting against recent conservative legislation in your state. What particular legislative proposals compelled members to agree you should put energy into protesting?

a. Probe about vouchers, teacher salaries, teacher evaluations, and teacher tenure if not mentioned

b. How long have you been active in [ORGANIZATION NAME]?

c. Why did you choose to join?

d. What is your role within [ORGANIZATION/S NAME]?

e. Have you been involved in any other activist organizations?

f. **Repeat 2a-2d for additional organizations**

4. Shifting to overall organization membership, which groups are a part of your organization? (e.g., teachers, administrators, parents, school staff, students)

a. Where in the state are most members located? (Is there accurate representation across the state, or are some locales more represented than others?)

b. How does [ORGANIZATION NAME] recruit new members?

5. Tell me about the basic goals of your organization? (shared values, traditions, common hopes and backgrounds)

6. What strategies does your organization use to reach these goals?
 - a. What events/activities does your organization host or participate in?
 - b. What type of information does your organization disseminate? To who? How?
 - c. [Insert additional questions to probe specific strategies that interviewer has background knowledge of]
7. Other organizations were protesting too. How did your organization decide whether and/or how to work in coalition with other groups?
 - a. Which groups have you worked with? Around what issues?
 - b. What common strategies have you used?
 - c. Has the NCAE assisted your organization? In what ways?
 - Does your organization work with the School Administrators Association?
 - d. Were there drawback or hesitations about working with any of the groups you mentioned? Like what?
 - How do you feel about teacher unions? Do you believe North Carolina's teachers should be allowed to join a union?
8. Could you tell me some of your stories about particular successes that your organization has had?
9. What challenges has your organization faced? What future challenges do you perceive?
10. What challenges do you face in your role as an educator in participating in this organization?
11. Where do you see the future of your organization?
12. **If you haven't joined an organization**, what other strategies have you used to advocate for public education? (i.e. blogs, letters to editors/calls to school board etc.)
 - a. What kind of reaction has your approach received? Do you feel you achieved success?
 - b. Were there any reasons that led you to decide not to join an organization?
 - c. How has your activism affected your work?

13. What are the risks associated with being an activist educator?

14. Who else should we ask these questions of?

Follow-Up Phone Interview Protocol for Teachers

1. Explain your teacher training process. How did your training prepare you for political issues in education? What rights are guaranteed/not guaranteed to North Carolina teachers?
2. How was the 2013 Excellent Public School Act introduced to you? Have you read the act and attached budget?
3. Why do you think political elites of North Carolina are in favor of the 2013 legislation?
How would you describe the political culture of North Carolina?
4. How has politics in North Carolina shaped your teaching career?
5. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

APPENDIX B

Teacher Participants

Teacher Alias	Years Teaching	Content/Teaching Area	Organization	School District
1. "Lola"	7	Social Studies	Organize 2020	"Duncan Public Schools" 1 of top 10 largest in state; rural, suburban & urban
2. "Patricia"	10	2 nd Grade	North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE)	"Carrington County Schools" 1 of top 5 largest in state; ethnically diverse; transient students
3. "Logan"	11	Social Studies	NCAE Organize 2020	"Duncan Public Schools" 1 of top 10 largest in state; rural, suburban & urban
4. "Anna"	10	Social Studies	The Disruptors	"Misty Springs City Schools" One of the top academic school systems in state; located near research institutions
5. "Sarah"	22	Special Education	None "Independent Advocate"	"Palt County Schools" 1 of the largest school districts in the nation
6. "Stephanie"	18	District Instructional Coach	None "Personal Mission"	"Carrington County Schools" 1 of top 5 largest in state; ethnically diverse; transient students
7. "Bill"	20+	1 st Grade	NCAE	"Carrington County Schools" 1 of top 5 largest in state; ethnically diverse; transient students

8. "Michelle"	11	English Language Arts Social Studies	NCAE Organize 2020	"Duncan Public Schools" 1 of top 10 largest in state; rural, suburban & urban
9. "Tina"	8	Social Studies	NCAE Pay Our Teachers First The Disruptors	"Misty Springs City Schools" One of the top academic school systems in state; located near research institutions
10. "Tom"	10+	Social Studies	The Disruptors	"Misty Springs City Schools" One of the top academic school systems in state; located near research institutions
11. "Jerry"	25	English Language Arts	Badass Teachers (BATS)	"Avery Bliss Schools" 1 of top 20 largest districts in state; rural and suburban
12. "Francis"	18	Spanish	NCAE	"Misty Springs City Schools" One of the top academic school systems in state; located near research institutions
13. "Natalie"	8	Music	NCAE	"Carrington County Schools" 1 of top 5 largest in state; ethnically diverse; transient students

APPENDIX C

Research Project Codes

- **Challenges**
 - Doing what's not expected
 - Resources
 - Risky risks
 - Safe risks
- **Coalition**
 - Conservative or neoliberal networks
 - Fusion (or not) among educators, cross-division of labor
 - Fusion movement
 - How connections made and maintained
 - Longevity (future of movement, sustainability)
 - Specific Networks
- **Contact with Opponent**
 - Email
 - Face to face meetings
 - Petition
 - Phone calls
 - Policy briefs
 - Protest
 - Social media
 - Testimony
- **Defunding**
- **Education Policy**
 - Charter schools
 - Common Core
 - Merit Pay
 - Pay
 - Pay Freeze
 - Teaching assistant
 - Teaching assistants
 - Tenure
 - Testing
 - TFA
 - Vouchers
- **Goals**
 - Advancement of liberty
 - Agricultural workers
 - Developmental democracy
 - Dismantle status quo
 - Environment

- Goal
- Healthcare
- LGBTQ rights
- Liberty
- Minimum wage
- Privatization
- Protect democracy-equality
- Protect Public Education
- Protect Teachers' Rights
- Quality education
- Voting rights
- Women's Health
- Women's Rights (Health, Family, Repro Justice)
- **Goals of Organization**
- **Impact on Children**
 - Disability
 - Economic Justice
 - Education (quality, access)
 - Education quality, access
 - Health and nutrition
 - Health or nutrition
 - Other
 - Race
- **North Carolina Political Culture**
 - Anti-unions
 - Collective Bargaining
 - Historical forces and events
 - NC Constitution
 - NC Pro-Education Past
 - Paternalistic
 - Pro-business
 - Progressive Southern state reputation
 - Race relations
 - Reactionary government
 - Traditionalistic culture
- **Organization**
 - Goals of organization
 - Membership
 - Organizational structure
 - Origins (History)
 - Personal Involvement
- **Personal Involvement in Organization**
 - How long
 - Role
 - Why did you join?
- **Political Strategies**

- Campaign donations
- Coalition, alliances
- Counter-protests
- Defunding
- Defunding in budget
- Direct contact with legislators
- Discursive strategies
- Fundraising
- Lawsuits
- Lobbying
- Media
- Mobilizing voters
- Model bills
- Organizing activists
- Position statements
- Presentations (public speaking)
- Tempered advocacy
- Training for political participation and advocacy
- **Reasons for Activism**
 - Citizenship
 - Democratic ideals
 - Identity
 - Identity (upbringing, organizational ties, familial responsibility)
 - Job responsibilities
 - Morality
 - Pride in taking a stand
 - Self interest
 - Social justice
 - Social justice for students
 - Tipping point
- **Strategies To Exercise Voice**
 - We Heart Public Schools Campaign
 - Walk-in
 - Town hall meetings
 - Speaking with parents
 - Social media
 - Red for Ed
 - Rallies
 - Providing services
 - Protest (Moral Monday)
 - Petitions
 - Personal leave
 - Op-ed
 - newsletters, e-letters
 - Leave the profession (added 8 14)
 - Leave the Profession

- Decline to sign
- Collective action
- Civil disobedience, arrest
- Civil disobedience
- Arrest
- **Symbols and Language**
 - Expressive
 - narrative of conflict
 - othering
 - slogans
 - Strategic
 - us vs. them
- **Teacher's Role**
 - Apolitical
 - Professional
- **Working Conditions**
 - Access to professional development
 - Autonomy
 - De-professionalism
 - De-professionalization
 - Job Security
 - Morale
 - Role of teacher
 - Stress, mental health
 - Support
 - Time

APPENDIX D

State Summary Comparison Results NC TWC 2016

North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey Summarized Results

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC TWC 2016) 85.46% responded North Carolina Public Schools (NC TWC 2014) 88.63% responded	<b style="background-color: #00FF00; padding: 2px;">% Agree
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction NC TWC 2016	North Carolina Public Schools NC TWC 2014

Time for 2014 & 2016

Q2.1 Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about the use of time in your school.

a. Class sizes are reasonable such that teachers have the time available to meet the needs of all students.	61.9%	60.2%
b. Teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues.	76.4%	73.1%
c. Teachers are allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions.	71.3%	67.2%
d. The non-instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient.	66.4%	62.8%
e. Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork teachers are required to do.	65.0%	57.2%
f. Teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students.	71.8%	66.0%
g. Teachers are protected from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students.	74.3%	71.2%

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC TWC 2016) 85.46% responded North Carolina Public Schools (NC TWC 2014) 88.63% responded	<b style="background-color: #00FF00; padding: 2px;">% Agree
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction NC TWC 2016	North Carolina Public Schools NC TWC 2014

Facilities and Resources

Q3.1 Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about your school facilities and resources.

a. Teachers have sufficient access to appropriate instructional materials.	75.4%	73.6%
b. Teachers have sufficient access to digital content and resources.	84.9%	.0%
c. Teachers have sufficient access to instructional technology, including computers, devices, printers, software and internet access.	79.7%	78.7%
d. Teachers have access to reliable communication technology, including phones, faxes and email.	91.6%	90.6%
e. Teachers have sufficient access to office equipment and supplies such as copy machines, paper, pens, etc.	81.8%	81.1%
f. Teachers have sufficient access to a broad range of professional support personnel.	83.7%	83.3%
g. The school environment is clean and well maintained.	83.5%	86.0%
h. Teachers have adequate space to work productively.	89.0%	88.9%

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC TWC 2016) 85.46% responded

North Carolina Public Schools (NC TWC 2014) 88.63% responded

% Agree	
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction NC TWC 2016	North Carolina Public Schools NC TWC 2014

Community Support and Involvement

Q4.1 Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about community support and involvement in your school.

a. Parents/guardians are influential decision makers in this school.	73.2%	72.6%
b. This school maintains clear, two-way communication with the community.	90.1%	89.9%
c. This school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement.	90.1%	90.0%
d. Teachers provide parents/guardians with useful information about student learning.	95.7%	96.0%
e. Parents/guardians know what is going on in this school.	86.8%	86.5%
f. Parents/guardians support teachers, contributing to their success with students.	73.5%	72.5%
g. Community members support teachers, contributing to their success with students.	83.6%	82.5%
h. The community we serve is supportive of this school.	85.3%	84.9%

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC TWC 2016) 85.46% responded

North Carolina Public Schools (NC TWC 2014) 88.63% responded

% Agree	
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction NC TWC 2016	North Carolina Public Schools NC TWC 2014

Managing Student Conduct

Q5.1 Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about managing student conduct in your school.

a. Students at this school understand expectations for their conduct.	83.9%	85.1%
b. Students at this school follow rules of conduct.	69.7%	71.9%
c. Policies and procedures about student conduct are clearly understood by the faculty.	82.8%	84.2%
d. School administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct.	71.6%	72.2%
e. School administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom.	81.1%	81.9%
f. Teachers consistently enforce rules for student conduct.	79.8%	80.5%
g. The faculty work in a school environment that is safe.	92.5%	93.2%

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC TWC 2016) 85.46% responded
 North Carolina Public Schools (NC TWC 2014) 88.83% responded

% Agree	
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction NC TWC 2016	North Carolina Public Schools NC TWC 2014

Teacher Leadership

Q6.1 Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about teacher leadership in your school.

a. Teachers are recognized as educational experts.	84.2%	82.0%
b. Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	84.8%	82.9%
c. Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.	83.4%	81.0%
d. Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.	92.5%	92.3%
e. The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.	78.6%	77.4%
f. In this school we take steps to solve problems.	84.0%	82.9%
g. Teachers are effective leaders in this school.	88.3%	87.5%
Q6.5 Teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in this school.	71.4%	69.8%
Q6.6 Members of the school improvement team are elected.	78.0%	76.1%

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC TWC 2016) 85.46% responded
 North Carolina Public Schools (NC TWC 2014) 88.83% responded

% Agree	
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction NC TWC 2016	North Carolina Public Schools NC TWC 2014

School Leadership

Q7.1 Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with statements about leadership in your school.

a. There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school.	75.6%	73.1%
b. Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	73.5%	72.1%
c. The school leadership consistently supports teachers.	80.6%	79.6%
d. Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction.	93.9%	93.8%
e. The school leadership facilitates using data to improve student learning.	94.5%	94.0%
f. Teacher performance is assessed objectively.	88.0%	86.4%
g. Teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching.	86.8%	85.4%
h. The procedures for teacher evaluation are consistent.	86.2%	84.0%
i. The school improvement team provides effective leadership at this school.	84.8%	84.2%
j. The faculty are recognized for accomplishments.	85.8%	85.0%

Q7.3 The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about:

a. Leadership issues	81.2%	81.4%
b. Facilities and resources	86.4%	87.0%
c. The use of time in my school	80.2%	79.6%
d. Professional development	84.1%	83.4%
e. Teacher leadership	86.8%	86.4%
f. Community support and involvement	88.5%	88.5%
g. Managing student conduct	79.3%	80.0%
h. Instructional practices and support	88.6%	88.1%
i. New teacher support	83.8%	83.8%

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC TWC 2016) 85.46% responded

North Carolina Public Schools (NC TWC 2014) 88.63% responded

% Agree

North Carolina
Department of
Public Instruction
NC TWC 2016

North Carolina
Public Schools
NC TWC 2014

Professional Development

Q8.1 Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with statements about professional development in your school.

a. Sufficient resources are available for professional development in my school.	81.4%	78.3%
b. An appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development.	81.1%	77.2%
c. Professional development offerings are data driven.	84.9%	83.1%
d. Professional learning opportunities are aligned with the school's improvement plan.	91.5%	90.4%
e. Professional development is differentiated to meet the individual needs of teachers.	68.0%	66.1%
f. Professional development deepens teachers' content knowledge.	76.9%	75.6%
g. Teachers have sufficient training to fully utilize instructional technology.	75.9%	73.3%
h. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice.	94.1%	93.1%
i. In this school, follow up is provided from professional development.	75.8%	73.5%
j. Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices.	81.4%	79.1%
k. Professional development is evaluated and results are communicated to teachers.	66.9%	64.5%
l. Professional development enhances teachers' ability to implement instructional strategies that meet diverse student learning needs.	84.9%	83.3%
m. Professional development enhances teachers' abilities to improve student learning.	87.8%	86.2%

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC TWC 2016) 85.46% responded
 North Carolina Public Schools (NC TWC 2014) 88.63% responded

% Agree	
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction NC TWC 2016	North Carolina Public Schools NC TWC 2014

Instructional Practices and Support

Q9.1 Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about instructional practices and support in your school.

a. State assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices.	65.5%	51.9%
b. Local assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices.	85.3%	79.4%
c. State assessments accurately gauge students' understanding of standards.	43.0%	44.5%
d. Teachers believe almost every student has the potential to do well on assignments.	88.6%	90.5%
e. Teachers believe what is taught will make a difference in students' lives.	92.7%	93.1%
f. Teachers require students to work hard.	94.8%	95.1%
g. Teachers collaborate to achieve consistency on how student work is assessed.	87.5%	87.5%
h. Teachers know what students learn in each of their classes.	83.2%	85.2%
i. Teachers have knowledge of the content covered and instructional methods used by other teachers at this school.	83.1%	83.6%
j. Teachers use digital content and resources in their instruction.	95.5%	.0%

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC TWC 2016) 85.46% responded
 North Carolina Public Schools (NC TWC 2014) 88.63% responded

% Agree	
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction NC TWC 2016	North Carolina Public Schools NC TWC 2014

Overall

Q10.6 Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn.	88.5%	85.1%
Q10.7 At this school, we utilize the results from the 2014 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey as a tool for school improvement.	83.5%	81.2%

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