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PROFESSIONAL CAPITAL ACROSS THE CAREERS OF FOUR VETERAN TEACHERS

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University in partial fulfillment

of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

STEPHANIE BROWN TARNOWSKI

Montclair State University

Montclair, NJ

May 2021

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Jeremy Price

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THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

We hereby approve the Dissertation

PROFESSIONAL CAPITAL ACROSS THE CAREERS

OF FOUR VETERAN TEACHERS

of

Stephanie Brown Tarnowski

Candidate for the Degree:

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program:
Teacher Education & Teacher Development

Dissertation Committee:

[redacted]

Dr. Jeremy Price
Dissertation Chair

[redacted]

Dr. Monica Taylor

[redacted]

Dr. Emily Klein

Certified by:

[redacted]

Dr. Scott Herness
Dean of The Graduate School

April 28, 2021

Date

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigated veteran teachers' professional experiences over 3 decades of their teaching careers. Drawing from professional capital theory (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), I present 4 veteran elementary public-school teachers' experiences and development of their professional capital over nearly 3 decades of their careers. I examined 3 dimensions of the professional lives of teachers: (1) the ways in which they developed their teaching expertise; (2) the kinds of decision-making possibilities they experienced; and (3) the kinds of interactions and relationships that were fostered in their professional communities. The research question that shaped my study was: In what ways do veteran teachers experience and develop teaching knowledge, decision-making possibilities, and collegial networks across 3 decades of their careers? In this way, I captured the ways in which veteran educators negotiated the terrain of ever-changing work environments while sustaining their involvement and commitment to their craft. Overarching themes which emerged are categorized into 5 main areas: professionalism, development of teacher expertise and knowledge, teacher opportunities and school culture, collegial relationships and collaboration, and administration support of teacher collaboration. Various studies (Cohen, 1990; Kremer & Hoffman, 1981) have shown a correlation between autonomy and longevity in one's field, concluding that employees' levels of enthusiasm for their work increases when granted sufficient freedom and independence to fulfill responsibilities. Building leaders who acknowledge teachers' capabilities and assets, while also providing autonomy and support, enhance teachers' enthusiasm and inspire them to grow as professionals (Meister & Ahrens, 2011). This study reinforces the connection, as it was clear that the participants' professional experiences throughout their careers were remarkably positive when the teachers were given decision making possibilities and, in their words, treated as

"professionals." They were inspired and motivated when given leadership roles and their autonomy most often aligned with their enthusiasm for their job. A possible interpretation of this finding is that these collegial relationships, along with the teachers' passion and devotion to their students, kept them grounded in their teaching careers over time. Overall, this study provides support for the validity and importance of supportive administrative leadership, as the participants' experiences often mirrored the positivity or negativity of the direct leadership.

Keywords: veteran teachers, professionalism, teacher knowledge, teacher decision-making, collegial relationships

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Thank you, God, for the gifts you have bestowed upon me. I know how blessed I am, and I owe it all to You.

DEDICATION

This is for Todd, Anthony, Owen, Mom, and Dad -- my beautiful world.

Nothing means more to me than the 5 of you.

Thanks for always having my back and for loving me unconditionally.

I hope I make you proud.

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CHAPTER ONE: PROFESSIONAL CAPITAL ACROSS THE CAREERS OF FOUR VETERAN TEACHERS

This dissertation study aimed to better understand veteran teachers' professional experiences over 3 decades of their teaching careers. Drawing from professional capital theory (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), I studied how teachers develop their professional capital over nearly 3 decades of their careers through examining 3 dimensions of the professional lives of teachers: (1) the ways in which they developed their teaching expertise; (2) the kinds of decision-making possibilities they experienced; and (3) the kinds of interactions and relationships that were fostered in their professional communities. The research question that shaped my study was: In what ways do veteran teachers' experience and develop teaching knowledge, decision-making possibilities, and collegial networks across 3 decades of their careers? Through my research, I uncovered the experiences of veteran teachers and their development of professional capital: (1) the development of their expertise and knowledge; (2) their decision-making possibilities, and (3) the various kinds and forms of professional communities to which they belonged. It is important to not only understand the 3 dimensions of professional capital that I explored, but also the relationship among these 3 dimensions. In this way, I intended to capture the ways in which veteran educators negotiate the terrain of ever-changing work environments while sustaining their involvement and commitment to their craft. This chapter begins with an appraisal of the need to look at teachers' professional lives and then outlines the purpose and significance of this study along with dissecting my research question. Background information which focuses on veteran teachers' professional experiences, lives, and identities is presented in addition to divulging prior research of teacher professionalism and federal policies in education.

Statement of the Problem

One of the most important challenges in the field of education is developing strong, competent teachers and creating work environments that sustain educators' involvement and commitment (Alvy, 2005; Billingsley, 2004; Day et al., 2005). For decades, issues such as teacher attrition and shortages have plagued our profession and have been of great concern to administrators and policy makers who work to recruit and retain the best teachers. Given this attrition, it is important to understand teachers' professional lives and how they develop professional capital over their careers (Day & Gu, 2009). Much of the research on teachers' lives has focused on the early years of their careers and much less attention has been given to understanding the professional lives across the phases of their careers, particularly veteran teachers who have been teaching the larger part of 3 decades, more than 23 years. Most of the literature has not explored the experiences of veteran teachers that have been teaching longer than 23 years. Moreover, there has been even less attention given to understanding meanings that teachers themselves give to their professional experiences across their careers. The effectiveness of these veteran teachers, as with all teachers, has been challenged and subjected to intense focus. Teachers have been rated by using their students' test score data as a dimension of their professional evaluations (Braun, 2005). In addition, there has been increased scrutiny and criticism from the public, and consistent policy challenges during their professional careers as educators (Billingsley, 2004; Day & Gu, 2009). Over the last 25 years, teachers have experienced many policy changes, initiatives, and mandates that have impacted the professional lives of teachers, yet we persevere. It is important to understand teachers' professional lives and what sustains them, and also how they develop their professional capital over their careers, as that is my focus in this study. To be clear, I did not study the influence of policy on practice,

however, I acknowledge that policy has the potential to shape practice and the professional lives of teachers.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the professional lives of veteran teachers who had taught across 3 decades of reform: (1) the early to mid-90's; (2) the 00's; and (3) 2010-present, looking specifically at how these teachers changed and developed professional capital over their careers. I wanted to better understand the meanings that veteran teachers gave to their professional experiences across each of these 3 decades, and whether these meanings changed, or not, over time. Casey (1993) wrote of the significant need to hear and take seriously the voices of ordinary teachers. A qualitative design often uses interviews as a tool to learn about teachers' meanings of their experiences. The qualitative tool of open-ended and semi-structured interviews helps seek to better understand a particular phenomenon and particularly to understand the meanings that study participants give to their experiences. This study fit well with this research design, because its primary goal was to understand the meanings that teachers gave to various dimensions of their professional lives

The 4 participants in this study were all elementary school teachers in the same east coast suburban school district. Participant names, school names, and district names have been changed to ensure anonymity of the participants. The 3 female and 1 male teacher participants have each met the study criteria, most importantly, teaching in a public-school setting for 24 years or more in order to best capture their experiences prior to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 and the two decades after its implementation. NCLB was the first federal major educational policy of the 21st century and consisted of strict timetables, penalties, and rigorous testing. NCLB connected funding to student performance.

Significance of Study

In spite of changes in policies, practices, and teachers' work, and the fact that many veteran teachers do stay in the profession, this study intended to understand how teachers make sense of their professional lives in the context of varied changes over time. As noted above, I focused on understanding the professional lives of teachers over the course of almost 3 decades, to ensure wide-ranging experiences. As I was interested in veteran teachers, I wanted to ensure I was able to capture parallel changes in educational policy over their 24+ years of teaching experiences. NCLB saw a major shift on the policy landscape, and I wanted to guarantee that the teachers in this study had at least 3 to 4 years of teaching experience prior to the implementation of NCLB. I looked at the ways in which they developed their teaching expertise, the kinds of communities of which they were part, and the community and interactions that fostered them. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) defined professionalism as a teacher's "quality and character" along with "how one is regarded by others" (p. 80). Teacher professionalism has the potential to enhance their capacity to help students learn and achieve. Working conditions, how teachers work together, and the system at large, all contributed to Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) notion that it is the meanings that teachers give to their experiences "on the job" and lie at the heart of this study.

According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), a professional capital view of teaching is the product of 3 intertwined parts of human, social, and decisional capital. They argued that professional capital "is being generated, circulated, and reinvested all the time because it is endemic to the culture of the profession and is embedded in the daily work of teachers" (p. 87) (see Figure 1). Hargreaves and Fullan contended that when teachers exemplify the power of professional capital, "they become smart and talented, committed and collegial, thoughtful and

wise. Their moral purpose is expressed in their relentless, expert-driven pursuit of serving their students and their communities, and in learning, always learning, how to do that better" (p. 5).

Research Question

The power and importance of high-quality peer interaction between professionals, the effects of the conditions of work on their professional lives, the expectations for student learning and curriculum engagement, school leadership, and collegial interactions all contribute to a teacher's power of professional capital over time. The meanings and experiences of teachers in their third and fourth generation in relation to their sense of professional capital is important to investigate. As stated previously, the research question which shaped this study was: In what ways do veteran teachers' experience and develop teaching knowledge, decision-making possibilities, and collegial networks across 3 decades of their careers?

I used a qualitative research design approach in my study to understand how veteran teachers "interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). I conducted 4 extensive, in-depth interviews with each of the 4 participants, (3 individual interviews with each participant and 1 final interview with all 4 participants together), about their experiences throughout their teaching careers. In conducting this study, I wanted to note that much of the research on the stages of teachers' careers tends to portray teachers moving through each stage in predictable ways (Day & Gu, 2009). In reality, teachers' careers and lives vary among different kinds of teachers and across different cultures and times (Goodson, 2013; Hargreaves, 2005). My study focused on 4 public-school teachers, presently still teaching, who each have more than 23 years of public-school classroom teaching experience. An important aspect of my study was understanding veteran teachers' professional experiences who have navigated teaching throughout their careers

from the early 1990's through 2018. While many teachers have left the profession, there is much to learn from those who have stayed.

Background

Understanding the Meanings of Veteran Teachers' Professional Experiences

Day and Gu (2009) defined veteran teachers as older teachers in their later years who have experienced the impact of policy and social change on their work. In addition to the amount of years teachers have been teaching, veteran status includes what teachers know, their decision-making capacity, and their social relationships over their careers. Besides the dearth of research on the meanings and experiences of veteran teachers as professionals, there is an absence in the research literature of a common agreement as to the length of experience which meets the requirements for a teacher to be categorized as a 'veteran.' The constructs of veteran and experienced are often used synonymously in research, while the teachers' experience ranges from 7 years of experience to 35 years or more (Brundage, 1996; Cohen, 1990; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Rich & Almozlino, 1999; Snoeyink & Ertmer, 2002). For the purposes of this study, I define a veteran teacher as one who has been a teacher for more than 23 years. Much consideration was given to the amount of years for this definition. I wanted the teachers to have classroom experience beyond 2 decades, including some teaching experience before the first major federal education policy of the 21st century: the enactment of the 2001 No Child Left Behind act (NCLB). These veteran teachers entered the teaching profession decades ago and having navigated over 3 decades of change may hold the key to understanding teachers' experiences in the profession.

Teachers' Professional Lives

To investigate the meanings of experiences of veteran teachers, I focused on understanding the professional lives of teachers over time, the ways in which they developed their teaching expertise, their decision-making capacities, and the kind of professional communities to which they belonged.

Nieto's (2003) scholarship has raised an important question about the lives of teachers. She asked: Why do veteran teachers stay? In her study, Nieto argued that teachers stay for many of the same reasons they entered the profession. What motivates teachers on a day-to-day basis is grounded in their rationale for becoming teachers in the first place: making a difference in the lives of students (Nieto, 2003). Research shows that the central reason teachers stay is the opportunity to make a difference while doing work they enjoy, enhancing the lives of children, and reaping job satisfaction (Alvy, 2005; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Collinson, 2012; Day & Gu, 2009; Goodson, 2013). Many teachers enter the profession to change the world and improve the lives of students. They are influenced by factors such as seeing children make progress and engage in serious learning, along with the enjoyment teachers may get from the interpersonal aspects of attending to students' various needs (Cochran-Smith, 2003).

Research data suggests that teachers stay because of their students, their work conditions and the ability to work with other teachers, freedom to make decisions, and to be part of a professional community (Littrell et al., 1994; Nieto, 2003). Moreover, if school management is consistent and new teacher opportunities in the system are available, teachers often stay (Day & Gu, 2009). Teachers enter the profession, because they feel that their work in education will be significant and may change lives around them for the better. Conditions of employment, such as the amount of remuneration or vacation time, are significant but a less important reason that

teachers report for entering the profession (Beard, 2010; Cochran-Smith, 2005; Collinson, 2012; Freiberg, 1998; Hansen & Childs, 1998; Hargreaves, 2001; Johnson, 2012; Morgan et al., 2010; Nieto, 2003; Peneul et al., 2009; Watson, 2001).

My Identity as a Veteran Teacher

Some of my own experiences as a teacher have led me to this study. In my 34 years as a teacher, I have experienced a variety of changes in administration, colleagues, grade level and content, and policy initiatives. Policy initiatives and mandates have focused on further developing my pedagogical knowledge through engaging in basal reading groups, whole language instruction, project-based learning, flipped classrooms, site-based management, reflective teaching, technology integration, common core standards, and standardized testing. I have welcomed these changes and varied experiences and viewed them as avenues to develop my knowledge and practice as a teacher. I feel I have successfully tackled these changes head-on, not alone, but with strong support from the teacher networks I have been part of, and I have felt a sense of agency for much of this time. The sense of professional community amongst my colleagues and with my administrators was constant as the changes were thrust upon me. However, it was this community that was integral to my development and wellbeing as a teacher. Much like teachers in the work of Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), I saw networking and community building as integral and pivotal to the knowledge and understandings I developed and the kinds of decisions I made as a teacher.

Over the last several years, I recognized that, due to recent changes in my work context, and in the public education system, my sense of belonging in my professional community had shifted and changed. Feelings of collegiality, camaraderie, and community had turned to feelings of isolation, competitiveness, and stress. Continual changes and shifts in the educational

landscape have induced a data-driven education system which has impacted the structure and people who influence the culture of our schools. Schoen and Fusarelli (2008) reported that the ever-present threat of failing to make adequate yearly progress, with its public embarrassment, stigma, and outcomes-or-else philosophy, produces fear and conformity among educators. Consistent changes in district policy[1] have often resulted in teachers struggling to keep up to date with and improve knowledge development, experiencing dramatic changes and confusion regarding decision-making roles, and consequently working through the changing faces of their social relationships in school. Researchers have found that some teachers are overwhelmed and are feeling far less confident. I have experienced many colleagues becoming introverted in an attempt to fly under the 'administrative radar,' and this change has caused me to take a step back and ask myself: How am I connecting with my colleagues in my building? Why do we spend less time talking about our classroom and our students? Why do I feel that I have less control over my work? As my awareness of the dramatic shift grew, and bureaucracy seemed to intensify, I realized that in order to understand what makes veteran teachers stay, it would be necessary to look at understanding how these teachers developed knowledge and grew over time, their sense of agency in decision-making, and the desire and need to have social relationships, a network, and a community. The relationship amongst knowledge and experience, networks, and decision making, and understanding these 3 strands and their interactions and the effects on veteran teacher retention is essential to understanding the meaning that teachers give to their professional lives (Morgan, et al., 2010; Penuel, et al., 2009). Nieto (2003) said what keeps teachers in the profession is "emotional stuff" and research for her published *What Keeps Teachers Going*

[1] Policy changes include, for example, the teacher evaluation process, student growth objectives, and data driven curriculum.

uncovered many lessons from the work of teachers about staying in the profession. Research shows that schools can be alienating places where teachers feel a sense of isolation (Collinson, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Schlichte et al., 2005; Westheimer & Kahne, 1993; Zielinski, & Hoy, 1983). In studying the professional lives of teachers, it is imperative to understand the constructs of the teaching, professionalism, and their relationship to federal policy. These concepts are examined in the next section of this chapter.

Teaching, Professionalism, and Federal Policy

Teachers as Professionals

Darling-Hammond (2000) wrote of teachers as professionals. While teachers are viewed as professionals, they are not always considered by outsiders as professionals. The events that motivate teachers on a day-to-day basis are grounded in their reasons for becoming teachers in the first place such as making a difference in the lives of students (Nieto, 2003). Teachers stay because of their work conditions and the ability to work with other teachers. The freedom to make decisions and opportunities to be part of a professional community are also significant. (Beard, 2010; Cochran-Smith, 2005; Collinson, 2012; Freiberg, 1998; Hansen & Childs, 1998; Hargreaves, 2001; Johnson, 2012; Morgan et al., 2010; Nieto, 2003; Peneul et al., 2009; Watson, 2001).

Teachers' sense of professionalism has been shaped by their experiences as teachers over time. In the 1930s, Dewey's theoretical concept of a community of inquiry and how teachers' spirit of inquiry inspired and awakened intense mental activity in those they come in contact with has remained influential for decades. But there were also changes that were initiated by the federal government. For example, changes emerged in the 1950s that saw schools, and by default teachers, being blamed for larger societal challenges, such as a backlash to the innovation and

launching of Sputnik. A popular theory that emerged as a result of Sputnik was that the Russians beating the United States into space was a result of their better schools that had better teachers. Moreover, the media depicted a failure in American education and many placed blame on public school teachers themselves. Pervasive anxiety and concern in American society began to serve as the driving force behind the federal government's effort to design a new educational identity, thereby putting policy makers in the role of shaping the organization of school communities (Steeves et al., 2009). In 1983, approximately 25 years after the Sputnik-related school reform, there was a resurgence of the fear that other nations were outperforming the United States when the federal government released *A Nation at Risk*. This report outlined what was wrong with the U.S. system of education and suggested how to fix its vast and complex problems, again allowing policy makers to play a major role in the organization of school communities. The shifting paradigms of professionalism continued to change.

During the 1990s, Darling-Hammond (2000) analyzed United States education policies and reported the need for investing in teacher quality and the professionalization of teaching. As a result of her work and research, research on the professionalization of teaching became a central agenda to teachers, teacher educators, and researchers. Understanding the professional lives of veteran teachers is the central focus of this study. Veteran teachers' sense of professionalism has been influenced by policy changes in public school funding over the decades, and teachers and students have directly been impacted by these policy changes. The effect of educational policy on teachers' work and sense of professionalism is clear as Labaree (1992) stated, "the relative balance of historical components that make up the movement help to establish its central thrust and thus provide us with information about the political baggage that this reform effort carries with it," adding that in one report after another, critics charged that

"schools were failing to provide adequate levels of academic achievement and that this would undermine worker productivity and threaten the United States' competitive position in the world economy" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, 1983; Twentieth Century Fund, 1983; p. 125). In 2002, Spillane spoke of reform initiatives which called for more intellectually demanding content and pedagogy for everyone "challenging deeply rooted beliefs about who can do intellectually demanding work and questioning popular conceptions of teaching, learning, and subject matter" (p. 387). Spillane named these initiatives as attempts to "change what counts as teaching and learning in K–12 schools" adding that reformers were "using public policy to press for fundamental and complex changes in extant school and classroom behaviors" (p. 387). The impacts of standards and policies continued to affect teachers' work and sense of professionalism.

No Child Left Behind Act

Twenty years after the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, NCLB (2001) also emerged as a response to an educational crisis. As previously mentioned, it was the first federal major educational policy of the 21st century and consisted of strict timetables, penalties, and rigorous testing. NCLB connected funding to student performance. Since the enactment of NCLB, education in the United States has become increasingly data driven, whereby standardized tests and scores of students are used to "rate" teacher success. Extreme focus on testing and scores due to NCLB's influence has changed teacher practice dramatically. Teachers often feel pressure to teach to the test thereby many putting aside their own pedagogical knowledge. Teaching in this context is seen as a process of delivering information. Students tend to be disconnected from lessons, and teaching becomes a process of simply delivering information and testing students for its reception and retention (Schön, 1992).

The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* was reauthorized in 2001 as the NCLB Act, which federally mandated that on receipt of Title 1 funds, schools were to be held accountable for their students' achievement. On January 8, 2002, NCLB was signed into law, replacing the *Improving America's Schools Act of 1994* as U.S. federal education policy. NCLB is the most recent reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, which Congress enacted in 1965 to address the educational challenges of children living in poverty. As with most United States federal laws, the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* required reauthorization to be continued. It provided funds directly to local school districts and schools through competitive grants (Evans & Hornberger, 2005).

In schools' accountability systems, standardized tests were to be used to gauge student proficiency rates in math and English/language arts. Schools falling short of the targets set for them by their individual state would be labeled as 'failing schools' (Davidson et al., 2015). Thus, the passing of the NCLB act spurred a significant change in U.S. schools, because school community control was effectively wrested from local control and local tax revenues and given over to each state and monitored nationally. This shift from local, public school community control to state and national funding being tied to student performance provoked change in school organization. Results of this shift were visible in schools and evident in administration and teachers' roles in the professional community and the effects on teachers' collegial relationships. A top-down push for higher test scores evoked collegial competitiveness (Westheimer, 1998). Fullan (2001) argued that mandated change is unlikely to be effective in that, "mandates alter some things, but they don't affect what matters" (p. 38). Even mandated change will not be implemented if the culture of the schools does not correlate with the beliefs

and ideology (Hinde, 2004). These policies and mandates are tied to the changing school communities (Westheimer, 1998) and are the focus of the next section of this chapter.

Policy Mandates and Teachers' Sense of Professionalism

Effects on teachers' sense of professionalism are often overlooked in the research. As a result of these policy mandates and changes since 2001, teacher's experiences and practice have largely been impacted. In my experience, I especially see the dehumanization of students, in that students are seen as numbers, scores, and budget entries, which undermines efforts to create a caring and connected community. It also leads to the dehumanization of teachers as well. Data driven policies dictate not only teacher practice and instruction but play a major role in teacher evaluations (Braun, 2005). With these changes in policy, practice structure, and evaluation, teachers are regularly compared to other teachers, based solely on their students' scores. This can have negative repercussions of competitiveness and lead to a cessation of sharing amongst colleagues, as well as teachers feeling obliged to "teach to the test" resulting in teachers and students being ill-served by the entire process (Braun, 2005; Darling-Hammond et al., 2012).

In an effort to adhere to policy mandates relating to data-driven teacher evaluations, school cultures have shifted teachers' sense of professionalism. Building or rebuilding a teacher's sense of professionalism takes time and can be challenging. A multitude of factors contribute to the growing pressure for competition amongst teachers and schools for quality data can deter a strong sense of professionalism amongst teachers. Ever increasing encroachment on a federal level in our schools continues during the present time period, which has most recently seen NCLB replaced with the newest accountability act for our schools, *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), put into effect in December of 2015.

Conclusion

Research into these veteran teachers' meanings of their experiences as teachers across their professional lives helps us better understand not only why teachers stay, but the sense that they make of their professional lives. It also brings to light the importance of developing work environments that can sustain educators' involvement and commitment to the profession. I focused on understanding the professional lives of teachers over time, looking at the ways in which they developed their teaching expertise, the kind of communities they are part of, and the community and interactions that have fostered them. By uncovering the dynamics of veteran teachers and their professional lives, I contribute to the understanding of how veteran teachers give meaning to their work over time. This study offers insights into not only how and what teachers learn and do, but how they work together over time, across different decades and contexts.

In sum, I examined the professional lives of teachers and drew from professional capital theory to understand veteran teachers' experiences across their careers. This study looked at veteran teachers over 3 decades of teaching and examined how these teachers developed professional capital and change over their lifespans. In the context of teacher lives, professional capital is best defined as the systematic development, integration, and interaction of three kinds of capital: human, social, and decisional (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). These 3 dimensions connect with the study of the professional lives of teachers and may be used as lenses that offer partial views of the veteran teachers' professional lives. The human capital lens represents the knowledge and understandings that helped teachers develop and grow as professionals, the social capital focuses on the desire and/or need for teachers to have a network and community, and the lens of decisional capital looking at the sense of agency in teacher decision making. It is the

interaction of these 3 forms of capital, particularly social capital, that helps us understand what veteran teachers know, do, and love. In relation to Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) professional capital theory, relatively little is known about the challenges and tensions facing so-called veteran teachers, or teachers who have had a substantial amount of experience in the classroom, and how these teachers managed to stay in the profession for more than 2 decades (Day et al. 2005; Day & Gu, 2009; Meister & Ahrens, 2011). As with any experience that a person would have who works for a prolonged period of their life in a single occupation, these veterans, as they gain experience and age, have been confronted with policy and social reforms, school leadership changes, curriculum and placement changes, changing attitudes and behaviors of young people, all of which may change their own professional agendas.

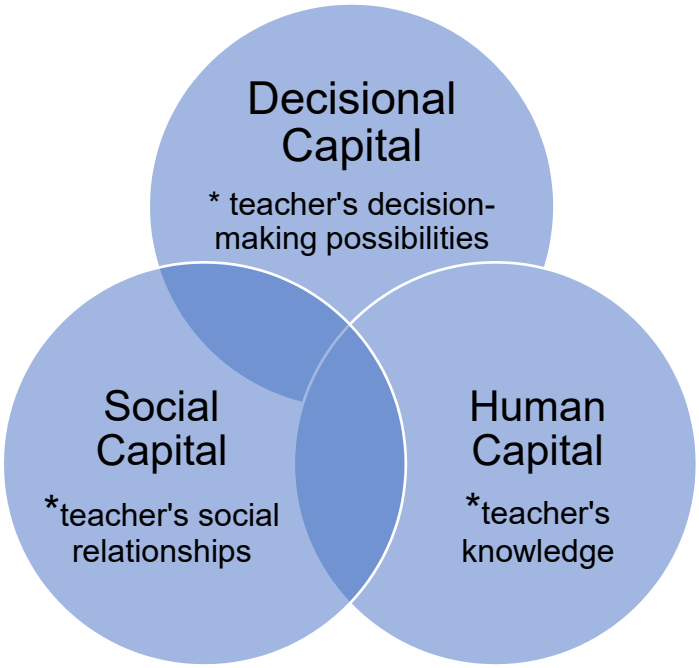
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

As I examined the professional lives of teachers, I drew from the concept of Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) professional capital theory to understand veteran teachers' experiences across their career. Within this theory, *capital* is defined in terms of one's own or a group's worth, particularly concerning assets that can be leveraged to accomplish desired goals (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). One type of capital invested in and adopted by the highest performing education systems in the world is professional capital. As stated previously, in the context of teacher lives, professional capital is best defined as the systematic development, integration, and interaction of 3 kinds of capital: human, social, and decisional (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). These 3 dimensions may be used as lenses that offer partial views of the veteran teachers' professional lives as they connect with the study of the professional lives of teachers. The human capital lens represents the knowledge and understandings that helped teachers develop and grow as professionals; the social capital lens focuses on the desire and/or need for teachers to have a network and community; and the lens of decisional capital looks at the sense of agency in teacher decision making. The interaction of these 3 forms of capital, particularly social capital with human and decisional capital helps us understand veteran experiences. (See Figure 1).

The idea of professional capital has grown largely out of the ongoing research of Hargreaves and Fullan (2012). They in turn developed their construct from Bourdieu's work of social capital. Bourdieu (1986) argued that social capital is accumulated labor and when appropriated on a private basis enables one to access appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor. In addition, he added that social capital is made up of social obligations or

Figure 1 Professional Capital and Dimensions of Teacher Development



connections which may be converted in certain conditions and into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu and Wacquant define social capital as the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationship of mutual acquaintance and recognition. Adler and Kwon (2002) explained that the source of social capital can be found by looking into relationships. Veteran teachers' social capital is a strong focus for this study, due to its impact on teachers' career and sense of professionalism.

Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) construct of professional capital expands Bourdieu's construct of social capital and connects it to both human capital and decisional capital. Human capital is considered talent and is made up of individual knowledge, disposition, experiences, and

the ability to teach. This concept refers to the skills that can be developed in people, especially through education and training. Important to note here is that human capital is developed and organized by social capital. Social capital includes conversations, interactions, and feelings of trust and closeness and is based on the belief of the power of individuals to change the system. It exists in the relationships among people and can be a resource which contributes to productive activity and is shown to help people get better at their work. The third kind of capital completes the trio: decisional capital. This form of capital consists of making decisions and discretionary judgments in complex situations and allows the ability to learn from any mistakes made. In total, professional capital is the foundation that supports and outlines the key elements of what is needed to create extraordinary quality and top performance in the professional practice of teaching. Professional capital is vital, and all 3 elements are essential to the development of professional capital.

A critical layer within a school's culture comprises community and relationships among teachers themselves and how these relationships are established and fostered. Relationships in this sense refer to good working associations, which include establishing knowledge and sharing practices to create collaborative cultures (Fullan, 2001). Donaldson's (2006) research suggests that collaborative leadership is pivotal to building strong, positive relationships among teachers but if underdeveloped can be a huge factor in poor relationships as well. When the organization of schools promotes joint action amongst the school community it helps equip and organize schools as a strong environment for teaching (Little, 1982). This collaborative culture builds social capital, and therefore also professional capital, in a school community (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

The central themes found in the literature on veteran teachers and professional communities tended to focus around teacher's commitment, resilience, and sense of professionalism. Many of these studies focused on measurable constructs, such as teachers' attitudes and behavior, with little attention given to the meaning of their experiences at any moment or over time. In my own school, I have witnessed a change in the positive school community and teachers' sense of professional community firsthand. When I think about my own sense of belonging as a veteran teacher, I reflect on how it has developed throughout my 34-year career in education, filled with a multitude of positive experiences along with continuous gradual changes since 2001 and the implementation of NCLB. I have experienced the nurturing feeling of a family amongst colleagues along with the supportive feeling when treated as part of a strong professional community. I have felt respected by administrators and mutual respect amongst colleagues. Seemingly, the major changes in our education system have drastically impacted the culture of the school district I work in, and the single-minded focus on standardized testing has tainted my sense of belonging to the professional community that I needed and valued. That feeling of support and respect from administrators has since vanished and has been replaced by data-driven analysis meetings and my success noted mainly by a number value which is representative of my students' test scores. Very little notice is taken of classroom happenings and classroom visitation from administration is limited to the procedural observations governed by state policy. Current literature, since NCLB, has begun to outline the repercussions of this age of accountability and the role of professional communities during this time (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008). This study offers insight into teachers' sense of connection with each other, how they learn together, and how they make sense of their professional community in these changing times.

Teachers' Commitment, Resilience, and Sense of Professionalism

Historically, the research on veteran teachers has tended to focus more on their commitment, resilience and sense of professionalism. It is only recently that we see more attention given to what knowledge they develop, how they participate in decision making, and how they interact and work with others. It is to the earlier literature that I now turn.

I define commitment as comprising a strong belief in, and acceptance of, a profession's goals and values, a willingness to exert significant effort on behalf of the profession, and a strong desire to maintain membership to the profession (Mowday et al., 1982). Hong (2010) found that teachers defined commitment as becoming a lifelong learner, always looking for better ideas or a better way to improve teaching, and staying with teaching regardless of difficulties. Studies suggest that teachers with higher levels of professional and organizational commitment are more likely to stay (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Gersten et al., 2001; Litrell et al., 1994; Miller et al., 1999). Research suggested that for veteran teachers, in-school support played a major part in their continued commitment and their sense of professionalism. Interactions between teachers, the environments in which they work, and emotional and professional resources available, allow them to bounce back from adversity, and helps them to uphold their commitment to the profession and their effectiveness. Veteran teachers' experiences, their values for education, and their sense of assisting as sources of wisdom and strength, enable them to endure adverse circumstances and continue to succeed in their original call to teach (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Boe et al, 1999; Day & Gu, 2009).

School contexts in which teachers can make connections between the priorities of the school and their individual, personal, and professional commitments are reported by research to be vital to sustaining high-quality teachers. Core values are often formed at an early life stage

(Lortie, 2002; Rokeach, 1989), and are extremely difficult to modify or change (Lewis, 1990; Lortie, 2002; Wilson, 1990). Policy makers and school leaders must work to establish connections which link to the teachers' principles of care and commitment to pupils' learning and achievement. Neglecting to acknowledge and value teachers often results in a decline of sustained commitment over a career through times of challenge and change (Day et al., 2005).

For every teacher who leaves the profession, there are many who stay. For those who stay, they are likely to experience more policy and social change and more sustained challenges as the years go on. Resilience is defined as the ability to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions and can also be defined as the ability to be confronted by challenges to one's beliefs and practices while maintaining the capacity to continue to do one's best even as commitment may weaken and is a key characteristic which helps manage professional life phases, sustaining motivation in the face of adversity (Day & Gu, 2009). Sustaining such resilience is an important quality retention issue. Veteran teachers have made a long-term investment to teaching and should be at the peak of their expertise and teaching wisdom. Adding to this expertise and wisdom, is the quality of resilience.

While some of the literature speaks about the resilience and commitment of veteran teachers, it is the literature on professional capital that offers a deeper and more complex understanding of the professional lives of teachers. In relation to Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) construct of professional capital, relatively little is known about the challenges and tensions facing so-called veteran teachers, or teachers who have had a substantial amount of experience in the classroom, and how these teachers managed to stay in the profession for over 2 decades (Day et al., 2005; Day & Gu, 2009; Meister & Ahrens, 2011). As with other professionals who work for a prolonged period of their life in a single occupation, these veterans, as they gain experience

and age, have been confronted with policy and social reforms, school leadership changes, changes in placement and curriculum, and changing attitudes and behaviors of young people, all of which may change their own professional agendas. These teachers have been confronted with challenges and changes within school and the larger society. All of this takes a toll on the commitment and capability of teachers to sustain excellence in teaching. The resilience, commitment, and motivation of veteran teachers during these changes and a shift in national priorities, which are now more focused on defining student achievement by scores on national tests and examinations, are ideas to be looked at. The effects of national standards and systems of inspection and evaluation have been shown to diminish teacher autonomy and challenge traditional identities (Friedson, 2001; Ozga, 1995; Sachs, 2003). In the workforce as teachers age, and as less-experienced, younger teachers enter teaching, it is necessary to explore associations between teachers' works, lives, and effectiveness in order to understand and reflect on what makes veteran teachers stay (Day et al., 2007). Benard's (1993) research on resilience contends that the presence of at least one caring person in an individual's environment can provide the support a person needs for healthy development. Henderson and Milstein (1996) maintained that an educator's resiliency can be strengthened by an increase in bonding with colleagues. Individual support systems can help educators bounce back from career frustrations and challenges (Meister & Ahrens, 2011). Another theme that is often found in the literature about the professional lives of teachers is the nature of support of the administration and the degree of collaboration amongst colleagues.

Collaborative Culture and Administrative Support

Existing research has focused on the impact of school culture, the collaboration of colleagues, and the support of administrators on teachers' experiences. It is important to look at those findings to gain better understanding of the effects and significance of these essential ideas.

Collaborative Culture

Rosenholtz (2000) found that collaborative cultures increase teacher sustainability and are likely to lead to long-term teacher commitment. There is evidence that work environments are extremely important to teachers' job satisfaction (Billingsley et al., 1992; Meister & Ahrens, 2011). Three large scale studies (A High-Quality Teacher for Every Classroom, 2002; Billingsley, 2004; Miller et al. 1999) all suggested that teachers who view school climate positively are more likely to stay than those who have less positive views. Although many researchers attempt to separate work-related influences, it can be difficult as they are indivisibly connected (Billingsley, 2004). In a national study, Boe et al., (1999) reported that teachers who stayed in their positions were almost four times as likely to strongly perceive administrators' behavior as supportive and encouraging.

Administrative Support

Litrell et al. (1994) found that emotional support from administrators, such as showing appreciation, taking an interest in teachers' work, and sustained open communication, was identified as most important. Active support helping teachers with work tasks, such as providing needed materials, space, and resources, and warranting ample time for teaching and nonteaching duties, also related positively with both job satisfaction and school commitment. Miller et al. (1999) found that lower levels of collegial support were associated with leaving the teaching profession and higher levels of collegial support with staying. Principals can increase teachers'

commitment through cultivating a collegial environment. This can be achieved by sharing goals, values, and professional growth to promote supportive and collegial learning communities (Singh & Billingsley, 1998). Appropriate and responsive leadership support in the work context is found to sustain veteran teachers, despite negative influences in their work and lives. Trust built through genuine regard and sustained interaction is a must for teacher well-being.

Social Capital and the Development of Collegial Networks and Communities

Throughout our country's history, public schools have been habitually described as inefficient, broken, and lacking, and policy makers are always in a constant state of trying to fix what is perceived as broken (Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008). While policy initiatives offer solutions intended to address the perceived problems plaguing American schools, they are filled with appeals to repair what is faulty. This mindset, a direct result of the post-Sputnik way of thinking, has taken over education discourse in the United States. The federal government has monopolized this shift in America's educational identity, and this atmosphere of discontent has become the dominating voice in education. Teachers, on the other hand, have not always responded to the new curriculum, standards, or preparation by just following along, but some have begun to explore alternate ways to advocate for themselves to use their acquired knowledge and experience to control their own environment (Steeves et al., 2009). I have found that it is becoming increasingly more difficult for teachers to employ a sense of professional community. Times have certainly changed in the past century imposing constraints on educators in our country. Teachers are hamsters on a wheel with no ownership of their professionalism. This has caused a drastic shift for our communities of educators. Accountability has increased, and expectations have changed, and while some educators have waned under the pressure, this shift has also created an increasingly savvy group of educators. Teachers, who must ultimately have

control of their classrooms and who are a part of a community of inquiry know that the goal is not comfort, rather movement and meaning. Several functions are provided by such concepts of community contributing to teacher professionalism. Knowledge is built and managed, and shared language and standards for practice and student outcome, which are vital aspects of school community, are sustained (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Culture in the context of a school is affected by the conditions and contexts in which it operates (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 103), however, one size does not fit all with community (Grossman et al., 2001).

School community is an important dimension of successful schools, yet, it is more complex and fragile than often portrayed. Contrary to Dewey's definition (1916), mentioned earlier, Calderwood (2000), defined *community* as "specific social relations among people within a social group" (p. 6) and explains community as more of a "process, rather than a commodity, which emphasizes social practices that generate social relations and particular kinds of feelings about them, such as common beliefs, values, and goals" (p. 7). School community as a concept (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), would include those committed to having collective responsibility or a shared educational purpose, where they are dedicated to cultivating their practice and respecting and caring for each other's lives as people.

Fullan's (2001) framework brings into focus the importance of teachers' collegial relationships. Collegial relationships are defined in the literature as productive peer relations among teachers and teachers working together collaboratively as a result of these relationships (Hargreaves, 2001; Lieberman, 1988). Much can be gained in schools when teachers work together, just as much can be lost when collaboration is absent. Gains can include increased student success, improved teacher retention rates, and positive school culture. Losses can include the loss of teachers, student failure, and low morale. The importance of teachers' professional

encounters with one another is magnified as demands are substantially increased on the teaching profession. Teachers need one another for the relationships, which include the needed guidance, understanding and support, as they are often expected to be teaching the same lessons in the same time frames as their colleagues. Essential to promoting teacher collegiality is the need for administrators to promote collegiality (Lieberman, 1988).

Some research in this area shows that a school's community has a profound effect on teacher sense of professionalism (Donaldson, 2006; Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Kardos et al., 2001), and also points out that an environment that promotes a teacher's sense of professional community takes time. Ironically, in times of shifting policy mandates and external pressures, maintaining a sense of professional community can be challenging. Teacher knowledge and practice are important parts of a community which need social support, and a multitude of factors contribute to this. Westheimer (1998) argued the traditional norms of schools often hold back the development of school communities due to "a long history of individuality, an emphasis on autonomy, and competition in schools and society" (p.22). He explained that those traditional norms of working alone in a classroom can deter growth of a sense of community. Longstanding norms such as individual classrooms, no substantive contact with colleagues, and teachers forced to rely on students for their own sense of professional identity due to lack of access to collegial interaction can negatively affect school communities (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Westheimer, 1998).

Support between colleagues is also a key component to building school community. School cultures, which provide space and time for collegial support, can positively impact a teacher's sense of belonging. Westheimer (1998) provided the following example:

> Teachers meet during lunch, after school, and during preparatory periods to discuss curriculum, pedagogy, and individual students. These teachers are able to foster for their students and for themselves what John Dewey calls a 'social' mode of learning. Rather than the isolation and professional alienation that seem so common in many of today's schools, these teachers experience a sense of membership. They are part of a community of teachers. (p. 10)

Westheimer (1998) described interaction and participation in the professional workplace being both personal and communal at the same time. While teachers will inherently work collectively, with shared beliefs often emerging from these shared experiences, chance gatherings along with deliberate gatherings can "foster conditions in schools that make teaching and learning vital, collegial, and socially as well as personally rewarding" (p. 3). This can help to build a sense of professional community. However, practitioners can face challenges and tensions can arise when such conditions are not promoted and supported. It is a necessity that concerns for individual and minority views, varied beliefs, and other shared interests be attended to when building community. While community is mainly collective, its complexity must also have parts of individualism which maintain individual protections and freedoms (Beard, 2010, Gardner, 1991; Greene, 1985; Hargreaves, 2001; Selznick, 1994; Walzer, 1983). Many theorists argue that individual differences are not only inevitable, but also necessary to foster growth within the community (Lieberman, 1988; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Sergiovanni, 1994; Westheimer, 1998). The complexities of professional communities in schools are often further complicated by educational policymakers.

As we witnessed the imposition of constraints on the professional lives of teachers in our country over the past century, accountability has increased, and expectations have changed, and

we have seen a drastic shift in our communities of educators. While some educators have struggled under the pressure, this shift has also created an increasingly savvy group of educators who have stayed in the profession. Teachers, who must ultimately have control of their classrooms and who are a part of a community of inquiry know that the goal is not comfort, but movement and meaning. Changes in educational strategies have spawned from policy constraints, such as the whole language movement where the teachers wrote their own curriculum - to school-based management and action research, where teachers ideas were valued and listened to, and most recently school-based teacher learning communities. Several functions are provided by such changes such as contribution to teacher professionalism as knowledge is built and managed and shared language and standards for practice and student outcome vital aspects of school community are sustained (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006).

Since 2001 and NCLB, however, tension has grown between control and community. NCLB's publicly accessible school report cards have been proven to create tensions in a school community as teachers and administrators feel conflicted by the student data showing adequate yearly progress (AYP) while also maintaining innovative, creative lessons that foster critical thinking in students. Schools in which any subgroup fails to make AYP in 2 consecutive years, face a loss of students and funds, and students receive the option to transfer to out of district public schools at the home district's cost. While local responses to federal mandates differ across districts in terms of impact on teacher learning communities in schools, many states have aligned curriculum with their state standardized testing, and this strong dependence on achievement tests to determine educational quality has seemingly become more important than instructional methods and the learning process (Braun, 2005; Goodlad, 1984; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). NCLB has created multiple negative consequences for schools if

they fail to attain state set goals such as sanctions at all levels from student to teacher to school to district levels. This accountability system has changed the way teachers feel compelled to teach and how they feel about their work (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). High anxiety and fear, along with feeling a lack of control fuel a negative mindset which would not promote a teacher's sense of community or professionalism (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008).

Human Capital and Development of Teachers' Knowledge

Looking through the human capital lens, the development of knowledge as teachers should focus more on behavior and attitudes of teachers over time and less about the nature of work over time. The sense of belonging and professional community that teachers experience is connected to their social relationships among one another. A bond of friendship and sharing amongst community members is the meaning of colleagueship implied in the professional ideal. (Hinde, 2004; Penuel, et al. 2009; Price, 2012; Sergiovanni, 1994; Thapa et al., 2013). Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) 4 subsets of collaborative culture help to increase the value and multiply the interest of professional capital. The first subset, called balkanization, is a culture of separate, and sometimes competing, groups whose members identify and are loyal to those they work most closely with. The second collaborative culture, called contrived collegiality, is forced by bureaucratic procedures to increase teacher collaboration, and can prove to be successful in kick-starting relationships, or its arranged nature can backfire, causing a false sense of collaborative teacher cultures. Professional learning communities are the third collaborative culture and make up a place where teachers work together to improve in areas important to them and then implement their learning throughout their days. Rounding out the 4 is the cluster,

network, and federations subset which allows for teachers to be involved in school-to-school collaboration to remove the isolation that is often found between schools.

One of Dewey's (1916) measures of the health of a community is the presence of numerous and meaningful connections. Teachers count on their colleagues. The quality of interactions with those colleagues weighs heavily on a teacher's sense of professional community. McLaughlin and Talbert's (2006) research showed that the most effective learning opportunities take place in learning communities made up of peers with varying perspectives. Strong learning communities and collaboration in an environment of trust and respect resulted in a strong sense of the teachers' sense of professional community. Teachers can be largely affected by prevalent norms and interactions which make up school culture and exist within the school, and professional communities can be interpreted differently amongst colleagues depending on the construct of relationships (Kardos et al. 2001). Westheimer (1998) stated, "while attending to teachers' professional communities we gain an understanding of the ways in which the teachers' relationships structure their work and their lives in schools" (p. 9). This interdependence in a community can eliminate teachers' feelings of isolation and can create a more united and cohesive culture. George's (1983) research found that,

> Middle school teachers find themselves involved in a professional community of shared concerns, rather than being isolated in self-contained classrooms or assigned to departments where their common concerns may be limited to the scope and sequence of a single subject area, the entire school experience for teachers becomes more unified and connected. (p. 77)

While teacher relationships are integral to professional communities, individualism must not be relinquished, as independence is also necessary. Many scholars argue that inevitable

individual differences foster growth within the community (Lieberman, 1988; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Sergiovanni, 1994; Westheimer, 1998). Communities with strong collective orientations must also maintain a balance which includes individual protections and freedoms (Noddings, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1994).

Teacher Agency and Decision Making as Decisional Capital

Instead of trying to undermine teachers, a positive action is to allow teachers to take part in decision making. Zeichner (1991) spoke to the empowerment of teachers by giving them more control over their work and the necessity for more teacher participation when determining school goals, policies, curriculum, and instruction. This empowerment along with more professional and collaborative work environments can produce good schools. Zeichner (1991) saw the potential for some negative impact with teacher empowerment, such as increased workload for teachers, diverting teacher attention from academic missions, and possible divisions between schools and communities.

Various studies (Cohen, 1990; Kremer & Hoffman, 1981) have shown a correlation between autonomy and longevity in one's field, concluding that employees' levels of enthusiasm for their work increases when granted sufficient freedom and independence to fulfill responsibilities. Building leaders who acknowledge teachers' capabilities and assets, while also providing autonomy and support, enhance teachers' enthusiasm and inspire them to grow as professionals (Meister & Ahrens, 2011).

Teachers are on the front lines with the students and carry out their classroom work activities making decisions to meet the changing needs of their clients, the students. It is the individual responsibility of each teacher to make immediate work decisions due to their direct and ongoing contact with the students. The teacher's role in basic policy decisions is limited and

the exclusion of their input into management functions is insufficient which leads to the importance of school organization and its impact on school culture and teacher's sense of professional community (Bacharach & Conley 1989; Conley, 1991). The role teachers are allowed in regards to policy decision-making varies dramatically and may be connected to the third function of school culture, which is organization.

Gardner (1991) warned of groups of individuals trying to maximize their own interests, and theorists contend that successful organization of a school community depends on a system that maintains a level of coherence while allowing diversity (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Lieberman, 1988). The ideal community should include the voices of all members (Westheimer, 1998). Studies of organizations have shown that participation in a professional community is greater when stakes in organizational decisions are higher and when members can influence decisions that affect their work. The way decisions are made and the ways teachers participate in other events and interactions are interrelated (Bolman & Deal, 1998). According to Metz (1986), goals for the structural organization of the professional school community should be for shared leadership, responsibility, and accountability amongst teachers and between teachers and their principals. Attainment of these goals would result in teachers perceiving the school as a professional community.

While there is a great deal of existing research focusing on teachers and professional communities, the professional lives of veteran teachers deserve more research attention. Previous studies have focused mainly on teacher commitment, resilience, and sense of professionalism. Relatively little is known about the knowledge teachers develop, how teachers participate in decision making, and how teachers interact and work with others over the span of their careers.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Methodological Approach: Qualitative Design

Merriam (2009) explained that "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). It is this approach that I drew from in this study as my goal was to better understand the meanings that veteran teachers give to their professional work and lives as teachers. Through my research, I examined how teachers developed their professional capital over nearly 3 decades of their careers through examining 3 dimensions of the professional lives of teachers: (1) The ways in which they developed their teaching expertise; (2) The kinds of decision-making possibilities they experienced; and (3) The kinds of interactions and relationships that were fostered in their professional communities. I looked at the sense that teachers made of various changes and how changes impacted and developed their professional capital over the decades. In part, my aim was to explore how they experienced each of these 3 dimensions, and if and how their experiences of each of these dimensions changed across 3 decades of teaching. According to Billingsley (2004), time spent as educators resulted in veteran teachers being subjected to more sustained challenges. Merriam (2009) stated that through a qualitative research design "research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making a difference in peoples' lives" (p. 1). As an educator, I hoped to learn more about what veteran teachers came to understand about their work as teachers.

I conducted this study with 4 participants, each veteran teachers, in my quest to better understand the development of teachers' professional capital over time across their careers. I

conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with these participants for the purpose of collecting first-person narratives of their experiences throughout their teaching careers.

Through my research, I uncovered the experiences of veteran teachers and their development of professional capital. It was important to not only understand the 3 dimensions of professional capital that I explored, but also the relationship among these 3 dimensions. In this sense, important to this study was understanding the relationship of the dimensions: (1) development of their expertise and knowledge; (2) their decision-making possibilities, and (3) the various kinds and forms of professional communities to which they belonged. I hoped to capture the ways in which veteran educators negotiate the terrain of ever-changing work environments while sustaining their involvement and commitment to their craft.

Context and Participants

My study focused on public elementary school teachers who had more than 23 years of public-school classroom teaching experience. I included participants with more than 23 years of experience, because I wanted my participants to have extensive experiences in the classroom beyond 2 decades. An important aspect of my study was understanding veteran teachers who had navigated teaching through 3 different decades of changes. While many teachers have left the profession because of the multitude of changes and the challenges in their professional work contexts and tensions from them, many teachers have also stayed in the profession. I believed there was much to learn from those who have stayed. The teachers were all elementary school teachers from the same small suburban school district on the East Coast of the United States, and I recruited one teacher from each of the 4 elementary schools in the district. Other factors that I attended to while recruiting participants included variations such as length of time teaching in the school district, roles played within the school, demographic characteristics such as race, class,

and gender. The sample represented the teacher population of the district. Shared teaching context of the elementary school teachers offered similar experiences of teaching practice and their contexts shared similar educational policies and administration structures. While there are similarities in elementary school teachers' experiences, this approach also allowed for the possibilities for accounts of different experiences across schools within the same school district.

Park Knoll Township School District is a PK-12 suburban school district on the east coast with a total enrollment of 4.630 students. Teacher average experience is 10.9 years. 12.3% of the population in the district are economically disadvantaged. Enrollment by racial and ethnic groups were reported as follows: White 61.1%, Hispanic 16.1%, Black or African American 6.6%; Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 0.2%, American Indian or Alaska Native 0.1% and 2 or more races 3.0%. There are 363 teachers employed in the district with an average of 10.9 years of public-school teacher experience. 78% of the teachers are female and 22% are male. Of those teachers 97.2% are White, 0.8% are Hispanic, 1.4% Black or African American, 0.0% American Indian of Alaska native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or two or more races. 79.3% of Park Knoll teachers have 4 or more years in the district. The ratio of students to teachers is 13:1, and the ratio of teachers to administrators is 15:1. There are 25 administrators in the district, with an average of 10 years of public-school experience and an average of 10 years-experience in the district.

Participant Selection

In direct support of this study, my 4 participants were acquaintances I have known from my 29 years of teaching in the same school district and completed my initial survey. According to my original study design the participants were selected prior to the summer, giving both the participants and me time over the summer months for the research interviews. The teacher

participants consisted of 3 females and 1 male, all who had been teaching for 24 years or more, in a public school. All of these participants taught in the same northeast suburban public-school district, but each in a different one of the district's 4 elementary schools. There was no unit of analysis judging the quality of the teachers but rather focused on the variety of participants and experiences that represented the population of the school district.

Participants' names, school names, and the district name are all pseudonyms. In fact, all school statistics were taken from each school's website, but these websites were not cited in the text so they could not be identified.

Table 1 below summarizes the teacher-participant's characteristics as well as the characteristics of their teaching contexts.

Table 1.
Pertinent Demographics

Teacher	Background	Gender/Age	Ethnicity	Experience
Francesca	Entire career in same district	Female/49	White	25 years Public school K-5 657 students Teacher average experience: 12.1 years
Sienna	Reading specialist teacher	Female/53	White	25 years 2 different states Public school Presently PK-5 503 students Teacher average experience: 11.7 years
Lawrence	Changed careers to become a teacher	Male/62	White	36 years 2 different states Public school Presently K-5 457 students Teacher average experience: 11.2 years
Bridget	Began career teaching at a Catholic school before moving to teach in the public-school setting	Female/56	White	35 years Private and public Presently K-5 454 students Teacher average experience: 11.9 years

Francesca Savard-Pondview Elementary School

At the time of this study, Francesca, of Italian and French-Canadian heritage, was 49 years of age and had been teaching in the same public-school district for her entire 25-year career. Francesca was a divorced mother of 2 children. Her oldest was age 18, and her youngest was 15 years old. Francesca held a union position in her district for the past 12 years and took pride in helping to negotiate 4 contracts for her district.

Francesca, presently teaching third grade, described herself as an "excellent teacher with a lot of experience" but who as a veteran teacher often felt "unappreciated and judged" by many around her, including colleagues, administrators, and parents. Francesca had a special interest in science and in the first decade of her career organized family science nights for her school. She enjoyed leadership roles in her school and was the Safety Patrol moderator, and she organized and ran the fifth-grade fundraisers and the school's spelling bee each year.

After suffering through her divorce and back-to-back health issues, Francesca took on a part-time job in the evenings and on weekends and continued to find herself exhausted mentally and physically. As a veteran teacher, Francesca has vowed to make attempts at a career "comeback" during this last decade of her career, coming back stronger and reclaiming her "respected good name."

Francesca explained that her personal teaching philosophy was to close her classroom door and do her own thing and considered herself a traditional teacher. Francesca always had confidence in knowing how to do "what works" and she chose to follow through on her beliefs throughout her career. Through years of poor administrators at her school level and the district level, Francesca vowed to just do what she knew worked. Using criteria set by grade level curriculum standards, Francesca worked with each student's individual needs and created lessons

that helped them find success. She felt that she set the bar high for her students and pushed them to do their personal best. Francesca believed that she ran a strict classroom, where she taught in a firm, yet loving manner. Excuses were not accepted, and students worked hard to meet the goals she set for them. Francesca said this strategy worked for the first 2 decades of her career, but she spoke of a change in what had worked in the past. Questioning what has changed, Francesca expressed discontent with the feeling that her "little bag of tricks" did not seem to be working anymore. Francesca continuously reiterated that children are in school to learn and the importance of keeping them focused and learning and engaged in projects. But in recent years, challenging students with research projects and having them find success through the process had become increasingly more difficult. Working with small groups is something Francesca has consistently done throughout her career, but her students are not working as well independently as she had seen in the beginning of her career. Francesca said,

> I have never seen kids as I have seen these past several years. I think they are going home and playing video games and up all hours of the night. They blame it on baseball. They do not follow through with scheduling and due dates. These are the responses I get from my 9-year old students. Today you are the bad guy, the teacher is the bad guy. The students do not see you as authoritative anymore. So, if I am losing that power, then what validity do I have anymore? If you do not have control of your class, you are not effective. I recently had a student removed from my class because the student did not like my rules, and he complained to his mother, and she claimed to not want to hear him anymore. The mom went to the principal, and the principal moved him out of my class. So, what are you teaching these children? They don't have to listen to anybody or to the

> rules, and I can get my way? Maybe the parents will be left someday saying, "Where did I go wrong?" (Int. # 1, p. 8)

Punitive responses such as recess detention, behavior plans, deficiency notices, and communication with parents do not seem to work as they have in the past, according to Francesca. This brought Francesca to share that she is looking at this time as the end of her career and is ready to retire.

Sienna Smith-Valley Elementary School

At the time of this study, Sienna was 53 years old and had been teaching for 25 years. Sienna was of English and Scottish descent, and she began her career in a mid-western state teaching Kindergarten for 2 years and then relocated to the east coast to teach. All of her teaching experience has been in the public-school system. She had a 23-year old daughter, a son who passed away at age 16, and a 16-year old son. Sienna made a change a few years ago and accepted her present position as a reading specialist after 2 decades of being an elementary classroom teacher.

Sienna described herself as being passionate about the need for good professional development since she began teaching and prided herself in constantly reinventing her lessons to make her teaching more interesting and different for her students. "I don't use the same lesson plans over and over, I am very particular about what I use with my kids. Each year I will tweak it, to make it a little more interesting and to give myself that sense of newness." Sienna had strong beliefs about the importance of keeping herself current with research on the best teaching strategies, and she prided herself in being a self-professed lifelong learner.

Leadership roles were often scooped up by Sienna throughout her career, and she took great pride in always receiving phenomenal evaluations, "I don't think I've ever gotten a poor

one." Seeing herself often as a pioneer, willing to try new strategies and practices in the classroom, others began turning to her as a leader. Sienna often created and shared professional development workshops on district professional development days, and she offered workshops on the latest teaching techniques after school for her colleagues.

Age and experience had enabled Sienna to abandon her once "people-pleasing" ways and had given her the confidence to speak up and often advocate for colleagues as well as students. Sienna used her voice to bring teacher concerns for student needs not being met directly to administrators. She supported new teachers with solid advice from her experience and worked hard to ensure their needs were met. However, Sienna lamented the lack of respect the career educator often received from the outside world. "The perception in our country is often one of disrespect as opposed to other careers such as an accountant or attorney." That being said, Sienna has always been proud to be an educator and continues her avid reading from the latest researchers in education to keep herself at the top of her game.

Lawrence Joseph-Mountain Brook Elementary School

At the time of this study, Lawrence, of European descent, was 62 years of age and had been teaching for 36 years. Lawrence was a special education teacher, presently teaching 4th grade in an inclusion classroom with a co-teacher. A divorced father of grown children, Lawrence looked forward to his first grandchild who was on the way.

Lawrence credited his own school experiences as a youth which brought him to become a special education teacher. As a star athlete and All-American football player at his high school he had heard the director of special education and the head of the education department from a local college speak and was moved. He decided he had to visit this college, because they had a program that put college students into classrooms with special needs kids their freshman year.

Although Lawrence had been sought out by many colleges to play football, he chose to give up football, and played baseball for that college. Lawrence said,

> It was a great learning experience, and it taught me how to reach multiple levels of kids, because we had everything from kids that were institutionalized and living at a developmental center that came to our campus every day to our learning facility. We had kids that were coming from the public-school system into the building for a couple of hours a week, and I got to see all the different levels and learning disabilities that were there and the range. (Int. #1, p. 4)

Lawrence's college experience was the intrinsic motivation the propelled him to develop himself into the type of teacher he wanted to be. He vowed to move forward and develop himself as a teacher who would be able to reach every student.

After college graduation, however, Lawrence found himself working in the steel business making significantly more money than he would have as a teacher. This did not last long, and with his college experiences with special needs children Lawrence was motivated to leave the business world, take an enormous pay cut, and begin his work as a teacher. Lawrence taught 7 years in the same southern state he had grown up in. During those first 7 years of teaching, Lawrence taught in a high school and became increasingly aware of many kids that were "hardened and angry, and not wanting to be in school." He felt the need to get to students and change students when they were younger before they got to high school. That became Lawrence's professional goal, and he moved to the east coast where he has taught for 29 years as a special education in the same elementary school. During his 29 years in his present school, Lawrence has worked under the administration of 6 different principals and has become one of the most well-respected teachers in his district. Passionate about all children deserving an equal

education, Lawrence is a fierce advocate for all of his students. He worked tirelessly to ensure needs of all of his students were met both in and out of the classroom. When he noticed that some of his students struggled to focus and get motivated in the mornings, he created and organized a before school program where students came in one hour early each day. During the initial planning stages, Lawrence researched similar programs in the area and met with the physical education teachers in his school. He arranged for a sliding fee scale so that all families were able to enroll their students. Lawrence designed the morning program to get the kids moving and to develop both motor skills and social skills. By the time the school day began, those students were up and running and ready to go. Lawrence put this same energy into his work in the classroom as a motivational and dedicated professional.

Bridget Wolff-Sunnyside Elementary School

At the time of this study, Bridget was a 56-year old female and is of Irish and German descent. Bridget was the divorced mother of 2 grown children and had been teaching for 35 years. Bridget's teaching experience began in a Catholic school, but within a few years, she had obtained her first public school elementary teaching position. Bridget was currently teaching third grade and considered herself an experienced professional and has spent the majority of her career at Sunnyside School under the administration of 4 different principals over the years. Over the decades of her career, Bridget has focused on the need for administrative support for a positive school culture, and she views herself as a leader on this front. Extremely involved with her first 3 administrators, Bridget had been viewed as a well-respected, knowledgeable professional. It has only been over the past few years that she feels that her veteran teacher status has begun to be disrespected and underappreciated.

> I'm naturally a leader, so it is difficult for me to take a step back at this point in my career to let the young people get more involved. When I see things happening that I don't agree with, and I speak up, I sometimes feel as if the young people who have come in, don't value us as veteran teachers. The culture and the school community have changed. It's a different era. (Int. #3, p. 21)

Bridget mentored several novice teachers over her career and was in charge of the staff Rainbow committee, which organized staff holiday parties, retirement parties, baby and bridal showers, and supported staff members in need. Bridget's attainment of her Master's degree +30 credits beyond stands out to her as one of the major accomplishments of her lifetime. Her school days included several hours of daily planning and organizing for her lessons, keeping her at school most evenings past 6:00 PM. Bridget's dedication to her students and her job took priority in her life.

Data Sources

My study drew from three sources of data: (1) interviews, (2) documents, (3) researcher journal, and (4) informal conversations after interviews had ended.

Interviews

For my approach to data collection, I used Merriam's (2009) unstructured/informal interviewing which included open-ended questions which were flexible and exploratory. I conducted three 60-minute interviews individually with each participant and 1 group interview, for a total of 4 interviews per study participant. I centered each interview using parts of each of the 3 themes in this study (See Figure 1), ensuring that conversations focused on the meanings and experiences of the themes in each of the 3 decades of the teacher's professional teaching lives. I conducted these interviews in a location that was most comfortable for the study

participants and conducted the 1-on-1 interviews over a period of 3 months. I coded and analyzed each full round of interviews, before moving on to the second and third interview rounds. I provided enough time in between interviews, so that I could conduct a close analysis of each transcript. While all 3 dimensions of professional capital were intertwined into each interview, the main focus of each interview session was as follows:

Interview Theme One: Professionalism and what it means to be a teacher

Interview Theme Two: Collegial relationships and experiences with administration; teacher 's knowledge and teacher 's social relationships

Interview Theme Three: Teacher thinking and what has sustained them

At the end of the 3 individual interviews with each participant, I conducted a final group interview. The group interview explored some of the key themes that I had identified from my preliminary analysis of the individual interviews. The central focus of the group interview was to explore some of the key themes that emerged from my analysis of the interviews. It also offered an opportunity for me to ask teachers for their meanings of my emerging understandings. In this way, I was able to gain a 'member check' (Merriam, 2009) in my emerging analysis of data. I explored veteran teachers' ideas about their careers, their previous experiences, and their expectations for their futures. At the same time, I provided space for participants to insert their own questions and ideas into the conversations. The group and individual interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded.

Initial Round of Interviews

The initial interview was conducted with individual participants. During this interview, demographic information was collected, including educational and work experiences along with a description of their current teaching contexts (i.e., school and grade assignment, etc.). After

those preliminary questions, the focus of the first interview was on professionalism, and what it means to be a teacher. In each of the 3 themes, I used 4 domains of teaching (teaching, curriculum, students and context) as beginning avenues to explore: teachers' knowledge, their decision-making possibilities, and their sense of professional and collegial networks over time. Questions included asking about their experiences with changes in teaching and as a professional over the decades of their career. As we pursued the questions, I asked them to think about if and how things had changed from 10 years ago, and also from when they first entered teaching. This pattern was followed as I engaged in conversations with my study participants.

Second Round of Interviews

The second interviews were again conducted individually with each participating teacher. In this interview I aimed to gather information about the human capital dimension of professional capital by way of curriculum and teachers' knowledge. I analyzed answers from Interview One and built upon answers that participants had shared. Participants were asked open-ended questions focused on gathering data related to the teachers' collegial relationships (social capital) and experiences over the decades of their careers.

Third Round of Interviews

This third interview with each participant focused on how the teacher's thinking had changed over the decades along with more of their experiences over their careers. Guiding questions focused on unpacking all 3 dimensions of professional capital and on gathering data related to the kinds of experiences teachers had over the decades of their careers. I ended by asking each participant to review a basic timeline I had illustrated of his/her career, from the beginning up until the present. I illustrated it for myself for future reference.

Final Interview

The final interview was a group interview that included all 4 of the participants together and explored some of the key themes that I had identified from my preliminary analysis of the individual interviews. The central focus of the group interview was to explore some of the central themes in the study. I particularly focused on both the similarities and differences in veteran teachers' meanings of experiences so as to better understand potential explanations for those similarities and differences. At the same time, I provided space for participants to insert their own questions and ideas in the conversations.

Documents

In qualitative research, documents are sources of data that include written, visual, and digital materials that are relevant to the participants and/or study (Flick, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My research consisted of primarily interviews along with documents pertaining to curriculum, administration directives, education reforms and policies, beginning from the year 1990 through present day. Such documents included: curriculum guides, and district policies for teachers including added responsibilities, new initiatives, and scheduling changes.

The use of a personal ongoing journal assisted in reflecting on interview content and the process of interviewing, as well as thorny issues that arose during the interview process.
I used my research journal and analytical memos to create an audit trail of my methods and decisions as well as for the purpose of reflexivity. In addition, I participated in a critical friends' group as I collected and analyzed data and discussed every stage of data collection and analysis with a group of critical friends, fellow doctoral students in my program, who are familiar (Costa & Kallick, 1993; McNiff et al., 1996). Multiple sources of data and collaborative analysis of these data increased the credibility of this study (Denzin, 1978). Outlying examples and

discrepant evidence within the data was carefully considered and included in my interpretation of what I learned from this study (Maxwell, 2005).

Data Collection and Analysis

This study focused on how veteran teachers developed their professional capital over nearly 3 decades of their careers through examining 3 dimensions of the professional lives of teachers: (1) the ways in which they developed their teaching expertise; (2) the kinds of decision-making possibilities they experienced; and (3) the kinds of interactions and relationships that were fostered in their professional communities. As noted earlier, the overarching research question shaping my study was: *In what ways do veteran teachers' experience and develop teaching knowledge, decision-making possibilities, and collegial networks across three decades of their careers?* Through my research, I hoped to uncover the experiences of veteran teachers and their development of professional capital. It is important to not only understand the 3 dimensions of professional capital that I explored, but also the relationship among these 3 dimensions. The participants' work over their careers was examined through our interviews. Recordings and transcripts of our meetings provided a record of collaboration and evidence of how talking about experiences and sharing policy documents and cultural artifacts helped us to construct our interviews. Data collected from our interviews was supplemented and compared with my data memos and documentation sheets.

Recordings and Transcripts of Interviews

I audio recorded each 1-hour meeting, because I wanted to be an active participant in our discussions and undistracted by the need to take notes. I recorded my impressions and reflections about what happened into my tape recorder immediately after each meeting in order to gain perspective and capture my "in the moment" thinking for later analysis. I transcribed these audio

recordings immediately. Soon after each meeting, I coded the transcripts. My original coded transcripts were preserved for future analysis.

My Documentation Sheets and Data Memos

I used what Flick (2009) called a "Documentation Sheet" for each participant. According to Flick, documentation of data is not just a technical step in the research process, but it also has an influence on the quality of the data that can be used for interpretations. The documentation sheets helped me to be aware of special occurrences in the interview. This process helped me to ask questions of my data, such as, "Did location influence the interview?" I filled out each documentation sheet immediately after the conclusion of each interview session while details of the session were fresh in my mind. These documentation sheets were helpful tools as I began to analyze data.

Merriam (2009) stated that data analysis requires the necessary act of "conveying and understanding" (p. 203). The wide range of data collected from interviews "may present disparate, incompatible, even apparently contradictory information." This can cause great difficulty for the researcher who is trying to make sense of the data. This is where data management is of particular importance and also where data analysis may prove to be most challenging. In this study, open coding methods (Merriam, 2009) were used to analyze all data collected through interviews and documents. During the first cycle of analysis, initial codes (words and phrases) were developed after each piece of data was collected. Some examples of these initial codes were support and experiences with administrators which led to developing more questions about administrative involvement and influence on the teachers' professional lives. Another initial code was collegial interactions which led to questions delving deeper into relationships and what brought them together. These initial codes informed subsequent data

collection, such as developing interview questions. Initial codes were listed in a coding register along with their definitions and examples from the data. During the second data coding cycle, initial codes were further refined and ultimately categories were developed. These categories reflected my research question and framing construct and were used to generate themes from the collected data.

Trustworthiness

I recognized that my role as a researcher in this study was a "privileged position of power" (Genat, 2009, p. 111), because I ultimately determined how our collaboration and practice was represented when I completed my dissertation. MacClure et al., (2010) cautioned researchers to consider the importance of questioning how one can write what one is seeing, taking into consideration the identity or subjectivity of the observer. In order to address potential bias and enhance the trustworthiness (Merriam, 2009) of this study, I shared my thoughts about the study, and I invited participants to clarify and elaborate on my understanding (Genat, 2009; McIntyre, 2008). I began each interview with this statement:

> I am looking at the professionalism of teachers over time and how that has changed. I am trying to understand your world as an educator, from your point of view, from your standpoint. I am hoping this will be more of a conversation, rather than an interview. I will not share your name, school name, or district name in this study. Pseudonyms will be used. Generally, the research literature does not talk about the professional experiences of veteran teachers. That is what I want to learn about.

As mentioned earlier, I also used the group interview as an opportunity to get the teacher's input on my emerging understanding of any analysis.

Merriam (2009) wrote about concerns about the validity and generalizability of qualitative case studies, she particularly highlighted the five misunderstandings about case study research:

1. Generalizations about a group of people, called universals, cannot and should not be found
2. Attempts must be made to understand the meaning of participants' experiences.
3. The case study is not limited to generating and testing hypotheses but can be useful for both.
4. Any preconceived ideas I have will need to be dismissed.
5. Every attempt must be made to not generalize general theories. (p. 53)

Many of these limitations involving validity and generalizability could have potentially come into play, but I felt that being aware of the common misunderstandings about qualitative research assisted me in understanding the nature of my study and analyzing my data. Negotiating my "insiderness" was in the forefront of my mind throughout each interview session. I listened and did not agree with or show any physical notions, such as nodding, to affirm or deny any experiences shared by any of the participants. I found this to be challenging, but I was successful at it throughout all interviews. My follow up comments during the interviews were never judging any experiences shared, but rather requesting elaboration or moving forward to another question I had planned to ask. These structured elements were important to ensure that although I was able to relate to some of the experiences my participants shared, I kept my experiences, preconceived ideas, and generalizations private and absent.

My Role and Positionality

Herr and Anderson (2015) suggested, "The degree to which researchers position themselves as insiders or outsiders will determine how they frame epistemological, methodological, and ethical issues in the dissertation" (p. 30). I have worked in the district I am interviewing in for 29 years. Although I now work in a middle school in this school district, and have not taught in the elementary schools in over 8 years, I have worked with some of the interviewees. I am therefore an insider of this school district which assisted me in my analysis due to my familiarity with the district as a whole. However, I have worked at only 1 of the 4 district elementary schools. Through my previous teaching experiences in this and another district, I came to understand that teachers are the experts of their own experiences (Grant et al., 2008), and I developed respect for the value of their knowledge of teacher learning (Genat, 2009). I believe that my insider knowledge and experiences of teaching has informed who I am in this study. My personal experiences, the time I have spent in the district, and my feelings of kinship for the teachers could have complicated and challenged my ability to negotiate the multiple roles I played in this study. These challenges were non-existent and documented as such in my research journal.

Although I am a middle school teacher for the same school district in which study participants teach, I have not been involved with the elementary schools in the district for over 8 years. Therefore, I was positioned as an "outsider in collaboration with insiders" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 38) in this study. Since I work in the district where I am researching, I was an insider, however, I was also an outsider, since I interviewed elementary school teachers, and I teach in the middle school. Although I did know every person I interviewed, I did not know the

extent of all the interview questions I would be asking, so it was imperative that data were analyzed as collected (Merriam, 2009).

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The overarching themes discussed in this chapter are categorized into 5 main areas: 1) professionalism; 2) development of teacher expertise and knowledge over time; 3) teacher opportunities and school culture over time; 4) collegial relationships and collaboration over time; 5) administration support of teacher collaboration. The first theme I discuss is professionalism which encompasses teachers' experiences with professional capital, being professional, being *a* professional, outside perceptions of teaches, teachers' lack of autonomy, and veteran teachers feeling disrespected. The second theme I discuss is the development of teacher expertise and knowledge over time including teachers weathering curricular change, feeling ill-prepared for new challenges, and weathering a school paradigm shift. The next theme covers teacher opportunities and school culture over time and includes teacher involvement in school and union leadership and administration-driven cultures. The fourth theme focuses on collegial relationships and collaborations over time and is made up of experiences of negotiating relationships with administrators, a shift to administrative surveillance and lack of trust, and administration too far removed. The fifth and final theme focuses on administration support of teacher collaboration and experiences of a collaborative culture and a sense of community. A major idea that cuts across much of the participants' insights about their experiences is being most unhappy over the decades because of the increasing lack of autonomy afforded to them as classroom teachers.

My research question, as stated earlier, was: In what ways do veteran teachers' experience and develop teaching knowledge, decision-making possibilities, and collegial networks across 3 decades of their careers? The development of professional capital of veteran teachers over nearly 3 decades of their careers was conducted through this study with a focused

examination on 3 dimensions of the professional lives of teachers: (1) the ways in which they developed their teaching expertise; (2) the kinds of decision-making possibilities they experienced; and (3) the kinds of interactions and relationships that were fostered in their professional communities. This chapter is organized into several themes all examined over time: professionalism, development of teacher expertise and knowledge over time, teacher opportunities and school culture over time, collegial relationships and collaboration over time and administration support of teacher collaboration. As noted in my methodology chapter, 4 teachers participated in this study: Francesca, teaching 25 years, Sienna, teaching 25 years, Lawrence, teaching 36 years, and Bridget, teaching 35 years. I begin this chapter with a discussion of professionalism. In this section, I distinguish between being professional and being *a* professional and the teachers' meanings of professionalism. This was a constant theme that was discussed throughout all my interviews with all the participants. This section is followed by the way veteran teachers experience and develop teaching knowledge, teachers' opportunities and school culture, collegial relationships and collaborations, and administration support of teacher collaboration across 3 decades of their careers. Each of the components of my research question are addressed in conjunction with the overarching themes mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Professionalism

In recent years, researchers have become increasingly interested in the professional lives of teachers (Peneul, et.al, 2009; Meister & Ahrens, 2011; Johnson, 2012; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), however, a focus on veteran teachers and their meanings and experiences of professionalism is often overlooked in the literature. In particular, few studies in the field of education have sought to examine veteran teachers and the ways they navigate and experience

their professional lives over time. The effectiveness of these veteran teachers has been challenged and subjected to intense focus. Few attempts have been made to investigate the challenges of professionalism to teachers over time.

Professional Capital

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) point out 2 ideas that come to mind when one hears the word *professional*, being professional and being *a* professional. While these 2 conceptions are certainly connected, they are not the same. They define these concepts in this way: Being professional is more behavior and actions, conducting oneself and performing while maintaining high standards. Being *a* professional is more in line with how others look at you and the effect their esteem has on your own personal feelings. Do outsiders look to the profession of teaching and deem it a true profession? Do members of the profession of education have collective autonomy and freedom from outside scrutiny? When comparing professionalism of other professions, working conditions, resources, supports, trust, autonomy, where do educators stand? The participants in this study all spoke of their experiences over time of both being professional and being *a* professional. In the next section, I will provide an account of their meanings of these ideas of being professional and being *a* professional, each an important construct to all of the participants.

Being Professional

I came to learn that the participants' experiences reflected the ebb and flow of being professional. While they differed in how they talked about these ideas, there were some common threads that they spoke to me about in my interviews with them. As noted earlier, a major commonality across much of the participants' insights about their experiences is being most unhappy over the decades because of the increasing lack of autonomy afforded to them as

classroom teachers. Below I discuss each of the participants' meanings of being professional. For example, Sienna addressed how she felt whenever she put her name on something, she was particular about making it the best it could be, especially when it came to academic activities she would create and use to teach her students. Her clear priority was servicing her students to the best of her ability. Sienna spent hours of her personal time preparing for the needs of all of her students, gathering information from her research in professional journals, colleagues, and books written by experts in elementary education. She felt that this was where she was completely professional, as she believed that this research and time invested in planning and educating herself was how professionals prepared to be their best selves. Being able to reinvent oneself may be seen as another quality linked to being a professional. Sienna believed that reinventing herself over the years kept her at her best as a professional. Sienna added that there were times when she had felt worn out and believed doing the same things over and over could lead to professional burn out. Sienna strongly recommended that every 5 years teachers should change roles to avoid this feeling of professional burnout. Sienna also spoke of newer teachers being "rule followers" and not sharing her sense of creativity and understanding as teachers. While she noted a very small percentage who possibly did their own reading and own research to try new things in the classroom, she saw them as "people-pleasers." While being a people-pleaser may be a quality seen in professionals, Sienna did not view this quality as a positive characteristic, as those teachers, in her opinion, were doing this just to please others and appear professional. Sienna saw herself in the first of the following two categories of veteran teachers: ones that want to try something new and the others who say "I don't have to, what are they going to do to me?" Sienna tries to offer her professional support to her colleagues in an attempt to improve the professionals around her, yet another definition of professional. In contrast to Sienna,

Lawrence thought similarly as Sienna with regard to being professional requiring a great deal of thorough preparation for his lessons, but he also shared some different meanings of professionalism through his experiences over the decades of his career.

Being professional, to Lawrence, meant not just doing something to do it right, but he defined professional as putting a lot of thought into his approach and into each and every student. When expectations given by his administration were unrealistic, Lawrence would point that out but always set the goal to try his best. He would ask his superiors to trust that he was professional enough and secure enough in what he did, and that he would do it his way, knowing his students would find success. Lawrence added that this self-assuredness took some time for him to gain, perhaps his entire first decade of teaching. His carefully built relationships with his students, along with setting the bar high for his students, have kept his classes fun, yet demanding. Lawrence credited experience and knowledge which boosted his self-confidence and allowed him to be professional. Lawrence added that over the decades, he has worked equally hard, but it all came naturally to him.

Bridget defined professionalism differently from both Sienna and Lawrence and focused on respect as the number one quality of professionalism. She explained that she always exhibited respect over the decades, but she shared concern that her younger colleagues may not see the importance of this type of professional behavior. A few of the issues that she spoke about for example was giving respect to administrators in small ways, such as addressing the school principal as “Dr. Greene” and not “Rod” in the presence of students, staying at school to fulfill expectations after the students leave, (not working “bell to bell”), along with following through on administrative directives were some examples she shared. Being professional clearly had different meaning to Bridget’s colleagues, in her opinion.

While Sienna and Lawrence spoke of their autonomous efforts to prepare extensively as professionals over the decades, Francesca's view of being professional strongly focused on the need for collegial support in this preparation. "Teaching is not a game where everyone competes individually," Francesca explained., "teachers must realize that they must rely on each other and work together to win together." Witnessing teachers "playing the game" by being focused on making a name for themselves and not on their job left Francesca unsettled about her profession. Francesca defined working together in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as action toward professionalism. She was disappointed to find the contrary. "We would meet with our colleagues, and then an administrator would join and begin dictating what we had to do during that time. We were being given time to do their work," she said.

As noted earlier, professional behavior means different things to different people, (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). All the participants mentioned the significance of working together. They each mentioned ideas of teacher preparation, collegial support, and building relationships, and a variety of specific qualities were also included by some such as respect, reinventing oneself, and trying one's best. Francesca's example of her PLCs situation made being *a* professional even more challenging, as discussed in the next section.

Being *a* Professional

The participants all spoke of how they felt the world's perception of teachers has changed and how unsettling this was to them. As noted earlier, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) define being *a* professional as how other people look at you and the effect their esteem has on your own personal feelings. Participants spoke in depth of no autonomy, endless changes in curriculum and policy, cultures that evoked competition amongst teachers rather than collaboration, all factors that fight against each of them in their ongoing efforts to be a professional. They spoke of the

challenges of attracting high quality teachers. Once again, these teachers describe being most unhappy over the decades because of the increasing lack of autonomy afforded to them as classroom teachers. This and all the reasons they feel they are not respected collectively detract from being a professional.

Outside Perceptions

Francesca spoke of the outside perception of teachers and the drastic changes she has seen over the decades of her career. According to Francesca, people older than her seemed to hold teachers in high regard, complimenting teaching as a very respectful career. To the contrary, Francesca felt that people younger than her (<52 years of age) considered her similar to a daycare worker who babysat children all day and had short days, long vacations, and summers off. Francesca confessed disappointment and anger with others' views reiterating that she went to college and graduate school and is constantly attending teacher trainings, added that she does not make a lot of money and her unpaid summers are often spent preparing for the following school year. Francesca spoke of the disappointment and the pain she has experienced with the change in her profession. Francesca said:

> Sometimes you have to defend what you do. I think it is real, our profession has changed, our country has changed. Think about the fact that we have tons of school shootings, and kids can sue teachers and look at how many teachers are being arrested for saying this, or doing that. I think those teachers have given the profession a bad name.

Newly constructed effective teacher initiatives were of concern to Francesca, because the emerging construct was different from the one she had previously developed. She had navigated many changes in education policy and curriculum over the decades. Francesca continued:

> You have to be so hands-off today. If you are hands off, how can you really be effective and teach and how are these kids really learning. And now we are doing standards-based grading, which means no grades and seems to limit the understanding parents may have of their children's academic growth.

Lack of Autonomy

Equally disappointing to Francesca was the slow disappearance of her decision-making capacity as a veteran teacher. Francesca said:

> It's a culture of just doing what you are told…nobody wants to hear what I have to say, and yet I am being told I'm a dinosaur because I've been teaching since the nineties…my heart has broken.

Similar to Francesca, when Bridget was asked to share her feelings on being *a* professional she focused on the amount of change over the decades in how others view teachers. Bridget spoke of the feeling of being respected by outsiders during her first two decades of teaching, to the contrast of the most recent decade and present climate, where the public looking negatively at teachers, often resenting their paychecks, hours, and summers off. In Bridget's opinion, this change may have been due to the presiding state governor, who Bridget described as a "teacher-hater." Bridget expressed her feelings clearly: "I maintain my pride in being a teacher, but it hurts deeply when outsiders view us poorly." Bridget spoke of the negativity taking a toll on her motivation, sometimes leading her to thoughts of not working as hard. The consequences of the changes in public opinion of her beloved career weighed heavily on her and her colleagues. But Bridget carried on, knowing in her heart that her focus was her students and confident that she knew she was always giving her best effort for them. Bridget worked to block out the pessimism of public opinion.

As noted earlier, Lawrence looked at his profession as a commitment. Teaching was not a job, not a career, but a commitment to someone beyond himself. Lawrence said, "As a teacher, just as a parent may do for their child, I have given myself to my students. Along with the parents, it is my job as well." Lawrence spoke of experiencing great scrutiny from administrators while being observed teaching over the years. He explained that this scrutiny often resulted in him confronting his superiors, imploring them to trust that he was a professional and professing that he was secure in the students' ultimate success resultant from his teaching.

Being *a* professional necessitates "seeking" according to Sienna. Having a different take on it than the others, Sienna described seeking as making a concerted effort on her own to seek and find what strategies would work best for her students to achieve success. While she did not see a significant change in the definition of teacher as a professional over the decades, she did feel that many of her colleagues in the past decade did not live up to the task of "seeking." Sienna explained that the district never handed teachers opportunities outright, and teachers had to be their own advocates by trying new things and not waiting around for the district to create professionalism for them. Teachers need to say to themselves, "What am I weak in? How can I help myself improve for students?" If you're a professional, you have to be self-motivated.

Confident in her craft, Sienna joined literacy associations and regularly read professional books and journals throughout her career, but she did share a time as a beginning teacher, when she felt defeated and unappreciated by her superiors. This did not stop her efforts completely but weighed heavily on her for over a decade. It was not until she began teaching at a local university in the evenings, that she became extremely motivated and began reading a professional book a week. Sienna said:

> If I was the person giving the knowledge, I had to know it all. Philosophers, researchers, I was reading so much. You should see all my books with sticky notes in them for whatever I was teaching that night in class.

Veteran Teachers Feel Disrespected

Bridget Wolff, from Sunnyside Elementary School, recalled a total lack of support and what she viewed as the disrespect of her professionalism as a veteran teacher during the third decade of her teaching. After being sought out for the coveted position of Basic Skills Instructor in her school, Bridget changed positions by choice, from classroom teacher to basic skills small group teacher. In this role, Bridget's new supervisor, Karen White, observed her teaching a lesson. At her post-conference, Bridget questioned being rated a 3 out of 4 for professionalism. She was told that because she was in a new position it was not possible for her to continue receiving the highest rating in professionalism. Bridget recalled the day it all "turned bad" for her. "I said, 'You can't tell me I am not professional' and that's when she turned on me. I questioned my supervisor, and she made it miserable for me from then on. She was not nice." Bridget's account of being "bullied" by an administrator into changing teaching positions to another that she was not sure she wanted, ended in an abrupt exit from the position. This left Bridget accused of stealing program supplies and being screamed out by the administrator in front of students. Bridget's tumultuous relationship with her administrator resulted in a barrage of negative experiences. The importance of a positive work ethic was underscored by Bridget. Bridget said:

> Being a professional ties into work ethic. I have a very strong work ethic. I have always wanted the administration to respect me and know that I am doing a good job, and that

> the time I am putting in is changing the lives of those students and getting them what they need.

Teachers navigate through policy changes, initiatives, and mandates that play throughout the decades of a teacher's professional career. They are expected to maintain high standards while often being the targets of negative public opinion. Teachers have been rated and judged by using their students' test score data, and there has been increased scrutiny and criticism from the public, and consistent policy challenges during their professional careers as educators (Billingsley, 2004; Day & Gu, 2009). Over the last 25 years, teachers have experienced so much that has impacted their professional lives, yet they persevere.

All of the participants in this study spoke about their changing sense of professionalism over the three decades of their careers. Societal views of both teachers and administrators seemed to show a lack of respect for teachers as professionals and their lack of voice in decision-making. Shifting societal views were expressed by the participants such as outsiders not having respect or appreciation for teachers and the profession as they had experience in the earlier decades of their careers. Changing administrative views left the participants feeling a lack of voice and authority to make decisions. Francesca said:

> What I don't like is that throughout my whole career in this district, it has gotten worse and worse. Teachers are not looked at as professionals. We are not respected for our professionalism, our years of service, years of experience or years of higher levels of education and expertise, what we do, how we do it, and how well we do it. How do I know this? No one ever confers with the teacher. I mean, no one.

A theme that emerged from my research findings that the teachers' experiences of professionalism changed over time, shifting the meaning for them. These shifts were shaped over

the decades by 3 main factors: 1.) Their professional development experiences (changes in professional responsibilities, student needs, curriculum changes, expectations placed on teachers); 2.) Larger societal changes (families, student work ethic, technological advances and outside perception of teachers); and 3.) Their relationships with colleagues and administrators. In the next section, I will identify the key factors shaping the teachers' experiences of professionalism over three decades of their teaching careers. I will first turn to a discussion of the development of teachers' expertise and knowledge over time.

Development of Teacher Expertise and Knowledge Over Time

The second theme which emerged in the findings of my research was the participants' experiences of developing knowledge over time throughout their professional development as teachers. Teacher expertise had been gained by experience and knowledge through professional development in the earlier years of the participants' careers. The process of learning expertise and knowledge had changed over the decades for participants, as professional development opportunities were not offered, and teachings were often assigned development dictated by administration. Policy changes hindered the growth that the teachers desired and felt they needed. Professional responsibilities also changed over the decades for the participants. Changes in professional responsibilities and curriculum changes along with increased expectations placed on teachers forced new ideas on the teachers that they did not feel prepared for. The teachers felt pressure to rise to the changes but felt out of control. One of the biggest challenges for the teachers over time was developing expertise amid the changes.

Weathering Curricular Change

The pendulum swing in educational philosophies and curricula were topics all 4 of this study's participants talked about. Cuban (1995, 2007) mentioned this point in his study of

teaching in the United States during the 20th century. He noted that teaching in the United States tended to move back and forth from teacher centered to student centered curriculum as school districts responded to community need and political pressures at the state and federal levels. I noted these external influences in chapter 2, where I noted the impact of NCLB on teaching and curriculum decision making. Changes in educational policy and culture influenced the teaching profession. Francesca explained the constant changes in both policy and culture that she had seen in her career, with educational philosophies changing "like the wind." Francesca said:

> I truly feel like in my career I've seen the pendulum go from here to here. We've come back here and they realize, it doesn't work, so we are going over here, oh this doesn't work, so let's go back. First everything was whole language in the 90's, language, creativity, thinking outside the box, independent learning projects, and then we went back to standardized tests and basal readers and anthologies and workbooks.

The constant changes did not work, according to Francesca, as she added how time was never given to settle in and fine tune the methods used. Francesca added that the lack of teacher involvement with the decision making of the changes added to the breakdown in success. Francesca expressed concern with recurring administrative changes and their impact on the curriculum, along with the challenges of technological advances. Francesca continued:

> The administration changes, and then we are teaching a canned curriculum, we're all looking like clones. We all do the same thing, the same day, at the same time. Then they realized that kids don't know how to think, they're not able to be creative or work in groups, no one is artistic. Then we get away from that philosophy and let's go back to blended learning, which we all know is back to Whole Language. There is also the

> technology component that we did not have 20-something years ago. So that is a learning curve for veteran teachers.

Francesca spoke about the influence these changes had on the kind of knowledge that teachers were expected to learn and be able to do. Oftentimes the ways in which policies were created and implemented ignored teachers' expertise and knowledge, thereby implicitly disregarding their prior knowledge and understanding.

In contrast to Francesca, Sienna did not see the changes in philosophy over her career as dramatic, but she attributed her various teaching experiences influenced her perspective. "Having the benefit of teaching in the Midwest and also on the east coast, I see a difference in philosophy. Over the years I feel that some of the terminology has changed in education, but I think some of the best practices are still infused in much of the terminology." Sienna defined best practices as using leveled readers according to a student's individual ability, sometimes called Guided Reading. This was the technique used when Sienna began teaching, but it was just under a different name. Similarly, Sienna saw the same situations in language arts and other subject areas. She explained that the same good practices have been used, but they have often simply been re-named as the years have gone on.

Lawrence expressed less concern with the constant changes but expressed that the foundation of education has remained the same, and viewed the course as improving and strengthening student learning as years have gone on. He viewed the changes as more of a helpful and necessary "evolution." Lawrence said:

> I believe the reach of education has gone far beyond my expectations when I was in college. Learning to be a teacher, what the expectations of learning were going to be for students, I could only base it on my own experiences up to that point. But I have seen it

> evolve about every 5 years into something that incorporates much more learning that has to take place in the classroom and a lot further reach with questioning and answering. We don't know what lies ahead, but we're reaching a lot further in our education. So, it has been a big change from thirty years ago when I was approaching this from a new teacher aspect.

Some participants spoke of the dehumanization of students wherein students were merely looked at as test scores of budget entries. It is important to look through Hargreaves and Fullan's professional capital lens at the need for status over quality in schools, inclusive of mandated staff professional development, policies around testing, and lack of teacher autonomy throughout my participants' decades of experience. Just as Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) speak of, many community strategies have been implemented and imposed simplistically, rather than developed. As far back as 1949, sociologist Robert Merton labeled this type of heavy-handed design as *goal displacement* -- where the original purpose is displaced and the innovation or means to that end becomes the new end in itself.

Another clear example of this is Bridget's low expectations focus on teacher professional development. Bridget said, "We are rarely trained properly for new curricula and programs. There was a time when I was a new teacher, and I worked with three veteran teachers. We were given resources and curriculum, and sent for training. This was a short period, and I have not seen that type of training and support since." This is an example of veteran teachers working together with novice teachers and developing their knowledge together.

Feeling Ill-Prepared for New Challenges

Participants spoke of significant changes in student needs over the decades of their careers. Changes in behaviors such as follow-through, independence, attention span, and

academic challenges. Dynamic increases in student motivation and work ethic, along with actual medical diagnoses such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), numerous Autism Spectrum Disorders, and other identifications of special education needs have changed the landscape of teaching and education. Francesca shared the changes by giving a glimpse into her present-day classroom. Francesca said:

> 15 years ago, 10 years ago, seriously, you would give children an assignment and there would be follow-through. You maybe had one or two kids you kind of had to redirect. Today, you maybe have one or two or three kids that can handle it. The rest are off the wall. Who can't sit still, who's the behavior problem, who's going to the bathroom constantly, who has to go out for occupational therapy, who has to get modifications? I am wearing so many hats. I have to be all over the place. I can't even be at a table working with a small group because of the needs.

While Francesca experienced a difference in students over the decades, she did not feel that the students were to blame. Her frustration was her inability, as one person, to meet increasingly diverse needs of each child.

Education reforms over the decades sometimes brought teachers together and sometimes tore them apart, in Lawrence's experience. The rigor put onto teachers as a whole with stringent standards to be met added pressure to the staff and negatively affected the school culture. Lawrence said:

> There are times when we are expected to teach 2 grade levels above what we should be. I think that not only does this bring people together, but it can tear them apart. I've seen it. It's not until we have been through most of the school year, that we realize we are pushing these kids so hard, increasing the rigor, all because they have state testing. Then

> you realize you are truly not preparing them. This strains teachers and affects the culture of the entire school.

Lawrence experienced similar frustration as Francesca with students' needs not being met. His experiences not only affected his students and his colleagues, but negatively affected the culture of the school. The teachers clearly feel overwhelmed and are not sure how to navigate the uncharted waters.

Weathering a School Paradigm Shift

Participants noted seeing significant changes toward the end of their second decade of teaching as new teachers showed signs of a changing work ethic. This was attributed to societal changes in values and a generation of young teachers who were seemingly overconfident, in the eyes of my participants. Inexperienced teachers and new administrators seemed to have a different mentality and often did not want to put the extra time in that the veteran teachers felt was necessary for success. "Too many cooks in the kitchen, too many chiefs in the district. Big brother was watching." Francesca recalls those years at the end of the second decade as very difficult, but was able to see the positive, as she also felt she learned a lot and grew up a lot during those years.

The third decade of teaching was described as the most challenging as professionals for the participants in this study. As professionals, both Bridget and Francesca referenced being treated as the "scapegoat" when problems occurred, while also being in charge of "everything under the sun." When students misbehaved and faced consequences, parents often blamed the teachers. When students failed assignments, teachers were questioned and often held completely responsible for the failures. Teachers were experiencing increasingly high expectations of additional responsibilities to their workloads along with additional hours of teaching time and

preparation time. Responsibilities for additional student needs increased, while teachers were being given less help, less support, and less respect by parents, children, and administration. Francesca spoke of having hopes of her veteran teaching years to be somewhat idyllic, but experiencing the opposite. Francesca said:

> You're just like a player. I really thought by the time I got to this point in my career, I be the teacher that could waltz into the hallway, and everybody would part ways, because, you know, *this teacher* was walking down the hallway, *this teacher* who has been teaching forever and is at the top of her profession. That doesn't exist anymore, in my opinion. I'm kind of like an aging model, I just don't belong anymore. I don't feel like I count anymore.

Aging seems to be at the forefront of the minds of some of the participants, and veteran teachers have the challenging task of keeping up with the times, as may hold true with any profession. According to Lawrence this can make the veteran teacher feel no longer valued and quite uncomfortable in a role they have been in for decades. Speaking to a teacher's comfort level, Lawrence explained that most people are comfortable in what they already know and are often not comfortable with what it is they have to learn. The most successful teachers are those who are willing to learn and keep up with the newest and latest in education. Lawrence said:

> I'm not comfortable with a lot of technology, in fact, I lose passwords all the time, but at the same time, I have learned to find a password. You have to be on the same page as the kids or you lose the connection with a student. A teacher needs to be someone who is willing to do whatever it takes. This is not a job, this is not a career. This is a commitment. A commitment to someone beyond yourself. As a teacher, it is my job to keep learning and changing for my students.

When asked if Lawrence felt his colleagues would share his perspective, he was optimistic that many did, but he stopped short of expressing that the majority do. Lawrence added that children's needs should be at the forefront of every educator's agenda.

Over decades, teachers are faced with endless professional changes, and lifelong career teachers continue to grow and develop. While curriculum is constantly being changed and professional responsibilities modified and adjusted, teachers work to best meet student needs. These expectations placed on teachers throughout their careers were met head-on by the participants in this study. A key component directly related to teacher development of expertise and knowledge over time was the opportunity teachers were afforded in the making of decisions which affected their work. Throughout the changing decades teachers are given opportunities to be a part of decision-making. This next theme of teachers' decision-making possibilities will be explored next.

Teachers' Opportunities and School Culture Over Time

The third theme identified through my study is a clear picture of Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) complex notion of teacher's decision-making possibilities over the decades and the larger societal changes that impact this capacity. Teacher participation in decision making about issues relevant to their work has been shown to increase teacher efficacy and feelings of value, as this participation allows them to become part of solutions and reaffirms them as professionals. This next section addresses the issues and examples of decision-making which took place over the 4 participants' decades of experience as educators.

School and Union Leadership

Lawrence's experience with leadership roles in the teachers' union and in his building were the avenues where he was consistently involved in decision-making throughout the second

and third decades of his career. As Crisis Management Coordinator, Lawrence was given the reins to plan and implement student safety drills along with coordinated meetings with the school's security specialist. Lawrence spoke with enthusiasm about how he worked diligently to develop quick and efficient emergency drill plans. His efforts supported his goal of automatic and fluid drills and effective emergency management strategies focused on the safety of his students, colleagues, and all school staff. Lawrence was also an active participant throughout the second and third decades of his career on the school's Liaison Committee, working tirelessly to be the connection and communication between the teachers and the administrators. Decision-making in the form of problem-solving strengthened Lawrence's sense of professionalism and helped him feel valued amongst the school community. These leadership roles allowed Lawrence to be both connected with his colleagues and administrators while also giving him a level of decision-making capacity. These volunteer opportunities helped Lawrence to be viewed as a leader in his building while earning the support of his administrators.

Administration-Driven Culture

Participants spoke of a culture created by administrators as a kind of "Do what you are told" mentality, where veteran teachers were viewed as antiquated and were not listened to. Teachers were to simply follow orders "Nobody listens to me. Nobody wants to hear what I have to say, and I'm told I'm a dinosaur, because I've been teaching since the nineties. How do you think that makes me feel? My heart has broken." Francesca went on to express how she didn't feel valued by her administration. A recent abrupt forced change from a classroom teacher position to a small group basic skills teacher position rattled Francesca leaving her feeling disrespected and commenting that her principal was "putting me out to pasture." A follow-up discussion with her principal, Mr. Walsh, left her feeling bereft, after he remarked that she

needed to “get over” her hurt feelings and then questioned out loud, as shared earlier in this chapter, how he would get her through her last five years of her career, using a former teacher as an example of someone who had gotten “crusty” and stayed too long. He suggested she move schools and denied her request to return to teach 4th or 5th grade, where she felt she really belonged, and where she felt her heart was. Not long after, when comparing her present principal Mr. Walsh to her second decade principal, Ms. Kretch, Francesca began recalling some fond memories of Ms. Kretch. She spoke of Ms. Kretch’s appreciation and respect for Francesca’s abilities to reach and make a difference for all of her students, even the challenging ones. Francesca attributed Mr. Walsh’s actions to not knowing the history of his veteran teachers. She had taught for 20 years prior to working under him. He had become her principal just as she had separated from her husband and her life began to change dramatically. “He doesn’t know my history. He knows me only in a way that is not the true me.”

Francesca spoke of her first decade of teaching with much fondness recalling her administrators. Her administrators were who she would go to for guidance and support, and she felt they always “had her back.” Along with the support of her principal, Francesca spoke of a science teacher, (who had been Francesca’s own science teacher in middle school), who received a stipend to support teachers as a department head. Francesca spoke of his great support and credited him for guiding her through her early leadership roles running science nights and recycling nights for families. Francesca summarized this time in her career, her first decade teaching, “I was on fire!” Francesca attributes her positive attitude and confidence at the end of her first decade to the supportive culture along with the feeling of being somewhat experienced as a teacher.

Sienna recalled early on in the first decade of her career when her principal came into her kindergarten classroom. She remembered her panicked feeling as she watched him bend down and pick Play-doh out of her classroom carpet, but he never criticized her, and left her alone to do her "own thing." Contrary to that, Sienna did bump heads that same year with her instructional supervisor who had handed her a Basal reader and teacher manual. Sienna said:

> I went home and cried all night. I said, 'I don't know how to use one of those!' I had never been told what to say as a teacher. I thought I was a professional, I thought that I should know what is best for kids based on all my reading, and now I have a manual telling me what I am supposed to say with literature that is so stupid! How can kids possibly comprehend any of this stuff? I hit a wall, and I think at that point in my career, my professionalism, my drive was really deteriorating, because I was a pioneer on the east coast, but not everybody was on board. I was a little deflated. It was hard. It was hard for me to work in a really structured district on the east coast.

This quote by Sienna shows a deficit in the culture of her school which Sienna labeled as non-progressive. This should not imply the notion that a good administrator should just let a teacher do whatever they want. There is a need for autonomy with a balance of supportive administrative guidance.

Sienna's big takeaway from these beginning experiences was that she needed to be a rule follower. She was young and she wanted tenure and played no part in the school's decision-making processes. Although she was being advised to do what she was "told" and this made her feel "deflated" philosophically, she knew that what they were telling her was not what was best for her students. This was a struggle for Sienna, but she credited her inner strength and

surrounding herself with supportive, like-minded colleagues with similar philosophies for her survival. “It is hard to find, but it is important,” Sienna revealed.

Over time as the teachers in this study become experienced, the leadership roles they chose or were assigned were sometimes driven by the culture which the administration evoked. Veteran teachers in this study often found it conflicting as they developed their craft but felt less respected as they did so. It was often their colleagues whom they turned to sustain them through their challenges. The formation of collegial networks was of utmost importance to all four of the participants in my study and is explored in the next section.

Collegial Relationships and Collaborations Over Time

A predominant theme in my conversations with these teachers was *relationships*: their different relationships and collaborations over time. Professionalism and the meaning of professionalism to these teachers primarily focused on their relationships with colleagues and administrators which often seemed connected to the culture of their schools.

Over the years, an enormous amount of research has been conducted to determine the role relationships play for educators. Considerable research attention has been given to the importance of teacher support. As shared earlier, Litrell et al. (1994) found that emotional support from administrators, such as showing appreciation, taking an interest in teachers’ work, and sustained open communication, was identified as most important to teachers and their success.

How Will I Get You Through Your Last Five Years?

All 4 of the study participants shared personal and professional experiences and their triumphs and struggles in being a professional. All spoke of multiple and varied personal and professional relationships over the decades of their careers. However, out of the 4 participants, 2

stand out. The ebb and flow of changes for Francesca and Bridget, their stories of then and now, seemed to come down to not *what* these teachers knew, rather *how they were treated.*

Francesca's experiences were the most notable and complex of the study, as they involve personal losses as well as complicated professional experiences. Her career timeline began in the early 1990's and she quickly rose to being a teacher leader, well-respected by colleagues and parents, and often the most requested teacher in the school. She was known for running science nights and workshops for students and parents and looping with students from one grade to the next. Francesca spent her first decade and a half "flying high" and loving every piece of her career. Supportive colleagues, supportive administration, and mutual respect were how Francesca described that time as a teacher. Slowly, at the end of her second decade, things began to change dramatically for Francesca. Personally, she went through a divorce and a change in principal and grade level. Collegial support was not as strong, and Francesca felt disrespected by her principal. Gone were the "glory days." Her life was spinning out of control personally, and rather than feel support professionally, Francesca experienced the opposite. Suddenly being watched by colleagues who secretly reported back to administration, Francesca took a mental health leave of absence. Upon her return, her struggles continued. The lack of support Francesca spoke of came to a head when her principal sat her down and asked, insinuating Francesca's eventual retirement, "How are we going to get you through the next five years?" She shared with me the emotional toll this comment took on her. Her relationship with her administrators had drastically deteriorated which left Francesca dismayed. She shared that this principal did not know the "real Francesca," referring to the Francesca that was a respected teacher leader and most requested teacher, was who she was before she worked for him. Francesca spoke to me of "getting that back" and "showing" her principal the teacher that she truly was. She wanted to

reclaim her power and respect that she had been given for the first half of her career. As a professional, she had not changed, but her administrator's perception of her and the lack of a supportive, caring community had. Informal follow-up conversations with Francesca after the interviews had ended unfortunately brought to light more sadness for Francesca. She shared another incident of a colleague "watching" her and reporting back to administration. Francesca was deemed "mentally unstable" and put on a short, paid leave under doctor's care. According to Francesca, this administrator-contrived situation will likely result in her transfer to another school in the district. Francesca's experience speaks to how quickly social capital is used up. In her case, she had social capital and when there was a change in administration, it was reduced to nothing.

Negotiating Relationships with Administrators

"Supportive administration produces better teaching. The positive environment produces teachers that are more motivated." This statement by Sienna was echoed by the other three participants. Lawrence has experienced, what he described as administrators who "bought in" to his teaching style and beliefs and let him do "what I needed to do for my kids to be successful", but he also explained periods of time over his career where different administrators had been hired who were not as supportive.

Going on his third decade in his school, Lawrence detailed times he had to have tough conversations with new administrators. He said:

> Since I came to NJ, I have been in the same building. I am part of this community rock solid. I've told new principals, 'You're the boss and I respect you and appreciate that, but I'm the man here, right? There's going to be people that are going to walk right by you, and they're going to give me a hug, or they're going to shake my hand. They're going to

> say, "Thanks for being here for my kid." It's because I've been here. I have students in the building whose parents were children in the building, and there's nothing better than that. When they want me to have their kid in my class, that's great.

Lawrence's directness was a characteristic he embraced regardless of the type of administrator change he was facing. To Lawrence it was about trust and respect. Lawrence said:

> I have had administrators that were a little more into micromanaging, and I have told them, 'You need to trust me as a professional, let me show you what we can do here. You're my administrator, please don't tell me how I need to run my classroom. Direct me in how you want to see it at the end, and let me get there.' And they have all agreed to that.

Bridget also spoke of the respect she had for her longtime Sunnyside principal, Rod Greene. Bridget said:

> When he told me to do something, I would do it. Part of the reason I had respect for Rod and he had respect for me is because I gave him the respect he deserved, because he was the administrator. He had trust in his teachers and, in turn, because he gave us that trust, we had the utmost trust and faith in him. I would do umpteen things to make sure he got what he needed.

Consistent with various studies (Cohen, 1990; Kremer & Hoffman, 1981) there is a correlation between longevity in one's field, concluding that employees' levels of enthusiasm for their work increases when granted sufficient freedom and independence to fulfill responsibilities. Building leader s who acknowledge teachers' capabilities and assets, while also providing autonomy and support, enhance teachers' enthusiasm and inspire them to grow as professionals (Meister & Ahrens, 2011).

Lawrence's experiences with micromanaging by administrators was something Sienna echoed. In the third decade of her career, Sienna noticed a great deal of collegial concern, feeling that administration was always watching them and hanging over their heads. She gave the example of teachers coming upon a language arts unit that included use of a required book that the teachers felt was ineffective for their students. Sienna suggested using a different piece of literature that they agreed would motivate their students while still teaching the same concept. The teachers declined, stating their fear of someone (administration) walking in and seeing that they are not doing the "right thing" and then getting in "trouble." Sienna worried that teachers were teaching more out of fear than out of passion. That fear seemed to drain the social capital and change the collegial relationships that Sienna once recalled having.

Throughout the decades, all agreed with one exception, according to Lawrence's recollection, which ended in his personal request to change positions in his building. Lawrence recalled:

> I said I don't want to leave the building, but I will, I will ask to be in a different position. I was leaving a situation where I had three different grade levels. We were far beyond the state maximum of kids in the room, and I felt like I was managing adults who were teaching my kids. And I said, that's not how I'm going to teach. And I'm managing adults, meaning the aides that were in my classroom, because I was now splitting my time with 3 grade levels and 17 kids in a special education self-contained. So, I moved then to a resource classroom which then opened up inclusion opportunities as well. I was not spending enough time teaching with direct teaching with my kids, so I asked to move. Once I moved it put me in a totally different situation and it was upon the retirement of that administrator that she said to me, 'You were absolutely right, because I've never

> been able to get anybody to do what you had gotten done in that classroom. I admit I was wrong. You were doing it right. You knew more about it than I did.'

Lawrence felt underappreciated, undervalued, and that his expertise was not expected, but he also admitted the challenges that administrators face. Lawrence described the role of school administrators as complex, with opportunities to be hands-on not always feasible. The rigors of the job as school principal and vice principal, including increasingly in-depth documentation logs and teacher observations did not leave a lot of time for administrators to be out in the hallways and in the classrooms. Lawrence detailed the difficulties that coincide with this "out of touch" reality seen in school administration. Lawrence said:

> How can people understand what's going on in the classroom, when they can't be in there to see it happen? What I feel in my heart is, if you're not there to see the play, you only know what the play's about. You hadn't really enjoyed the technical aspect of it, the technical aspect of it. I feel administrators should become welcome guests in every classroom.

During observations, Lawrence expressed the need for educators and administrators to share his outlook on observations as an opportunity for a genuine experience for all involved. Lawrence said:

> Teachers should feel like, 'Here's an opportunity for me to show my stuff' and don't look for it to be a dog and pony show. The administrator should look to see what you do on a regular basis, and that shows immediately with the interaction between teacher and student. Any administrator worth their salt is going to know when it's a dog and pony show and any administrator worth their salt is also going to know that this is what happens here. And I think administrators need to know what really happens.

Lawrence shared a story about a longtime principal, Mr. Wallace, by whom he had recently been hired by, during his first decade teaching at Mountain Brook. It was the first time Mr. Wallace had visited Lawrence's classroom, as they had just met that day. Mr. Wallace came in, sat down and observed Lawrence teach for about five minutes, and then walked around to see what the kids were doing for a few minutes, then he asked Lawrence to put the students to individual work so he could speak to him for a moment. As they spoke, Mr. Wallace shared that his intentions were not to build Lawrence up or knock him down, but rather he was there to see what Lawrence could do and to help him do what he does better. He also expressed that he hoped to learn some ideas and strategies that he could share with other teachers when he entered their classrooms. This conversation made Lawrence feel immediately at ease. Later in the lesson, Lawrence noticed that Mr. Wallace was very engrossed in what the students were doing, so he called on him to share his ideas. This led to an incredible class discussion on point of view involving the students, teacher, and principal. After the lesson, in their post-conference, Mr. Wallace thanked Lawrence for feeling comfortable enough to include him in the lesson. Lawrence underscored the reality is you cannot always do that with administrators, some don't want to be brought into it, some want to be on the outside, just looking in, and it is important to "read" the administrator before taking the leap. Lawrence had strong feelings about his own classroom culture. Lawrence said:

> When you walk into my classroom, you're a part of it. You're not just an outsider looking in anymore. I feel like if I show them that I want them to be a part of what I do, then they show me that they are and that they're supportive. I have had administrators that I'm going to say I butted heads with, because I didn't feel like they truly understood what I did and

> why I did what I was doing. And it was because they came from a different environment than the one I was teaching.

Lawrence spoke of the reason for the disconnection he viewed between himself as an educator and his administration. Lawrence continued:

> They had never been involved in special ed. They came from a higher level of learning than elementary school. I felt like I was being observed by somebody that yes, had the credentials to be administrator, but really didn't have the experience of what I was doing to really call the shots in my classroom. What they did was, they put demands or put requests that I felt were unrealistic to the population I was teaching. I let them know that, because I feel very confident in what I do, because there's a reason why I do it.

Shift to Administrative Surveillance and Lack of Trust

Lack of support from an administrator was a characteristic shared by multiple participants of my study, which they also felt left them with a feeling of being disrespected. Francesca recalled “walking on eggshells” for many years around her principal, Ms. Kretch, making the second decade of her career the most difficult. Although said principal ran a tight ship with some good strategies, she treated people “horribly.” She spoke of micromanaging and “nitpicking” and of Ms. Kretch degrading teachers by yelling at them in front of others and lacking empathy for teachers who were struggling with family issues or personal challenges. Having students with a multitude of varied needs, Francesca wished to be free to do what she did best-getting the job done. Her principal left her feeling badly and she longed to just be allowed to figure things out, as she said teachers can do. Francesca recalled working extremely hard, and ironically reported that she felt this was the time in her career when she grew the most professionally. As the most experienced teacher in her grade level, her principal allowed her to take the reins and take on

volunteer leadership roles organizing the spelling bee, school safety patrol, and a gradewide picnic and fundraiser. The invitations by her administrator to take on leadership roles demonstrated support from the administration. Francesca attributed these leadership opportunities to the fact that she did not mind the hard work involved, and everyone else was "too afraid".

Hard work, stepping out of the box, and taking on new roles, were exemplified by Lawrence, from Mountain Brook Elementary School. His example took place in the classroom with his students. After expressing concerns with his co-teacher that they may need to work on integrating special education students into daily classroom activities, they decided to change things up. Lawrence explained that he and his co-teacher switched roles in order to promote both the love of learning for my kids and give them an opportunity to do something that they thought was beyond their reach and also proving to them it was not. He felt that the feeling amongst the students was that Mr. Joseph taught all the kids that "can't do it." The goal was for students to find out that when the rigor is raised, they can rise to the occasion and find success. Well, it so happened that the director of special services came to observe at that time, and the entire situation, according to Lawrence, turned hostile, which Lawrence felt had more to do with the shaky relationship he and the director had, and not an evaluation of him as a teacher. Lawrence spoke of feeling attacked. His administrator expressed his disapproval of Lawrence and his co-teacher switching roles and began yelling at Lawrence in front of the students. Lawrence explained how he felt angry and bewildered. Not having a positive administrator can at times influence a teacher's perception of teaching. Lawrence said:

> Don't come into my classroom if you want to attack me. Attack me one-on-one. The classroom is off limits. Come in, and evaluate my teaching. No matter who you are, the

> kids matter. I understand the rules of special education, but I also understand that I've got some flexibility in how those rules are going to be implemented for the betterment of my children.

One of the most telling statements from a participant was from Francesca who said, "We're just told what to do and how to do it and when to do it. With a new administrator coming in, this administrator believes this, so now you have to follow this." However, Francesca explained that as a veteran teacher, she has learned how to manage this type of change. While expressing respect for her boss and his role, she defends her own philosophy as an educator and a professional. Francesca said:

> You are made to feel like, 'You're just the teacher.' I am an educator and a professional. I feel like the sense of professionalism isn't where it should be. I feel that it was higher years ago, and it's gotten to the point where it is non-existent. Teachers are not considered pillars of the community or school. I feel that we are not respected,

Francesca grappled with the emotions that went along with her thoughts. Francesca said:

> I think that has left me feeling very jaded, sad, disconnected, and not having fun anymore. A wise principal, Mr. Jones often said to me, 'You know, if you're not having fun, you know it's time to go.'…It's not fun because of all this political correctness, and changing of the guard, and changing of the philosophies.

These changes seem unique to education and Francesca questions why that is. Francesca said:

> Have you ever heard of a profession that changes like the wind? Who changes like this? Medicine? Does that change this way? No. There's one way to operate and this is how you operate on a patient. I know there are advancements, but these changes have left us

> weaker and disconnected. I feel we could be a stronger association of professionals. I think that sense of community has gone. We have been stripped of so much.

Administration Too Far Removed

One of the most critical factors influencing the participants' meaning of professionalism were issues relating to their administrators. Of great concern to the participants were administrators, specifically principals, who either never taught in a classroom setting, or had forgotten what it was like to do so. According to the participants in my study, one of the biggest concerns was his administrators falling out of touch with the realities of teaching students. The lack of understanding in administrators was very common with the participants only recalling one single administrator, a vice principal, who had not lost touch. Lawrence Joseph, from Mountain Brook Elementary School, described her as “one of the very few” teachers turned administrators who always remembered. Doris Rickson never forgot. She remembered the challenges of teaching, the realities of the changing responsibilities, and remembered what it was like to be the classroom teacher. This led to what Lawrence and the other participants agreed as Doris being one of the strongest, most supportive leaders in the history of the Park Ridge public school district.

All four of the participants in my study experienced administrative support and also lack of support at various times over the decades of their careers. They spoke of administrators coming and going and the changes this brought. One constant that all four spoke of was the presence and necessity of supportive colleagues. They suggested a consciousness of social relationships having a position of high value. Social capital, the teachers’ social relationships, were of great significance and vital to their experiences over the decades. In the next section, this

collaboration and building of relationships over time will be examined through the experiences relayed by the study participants.

Administration Support of Teacher Collaboration

There are many components to relationships amongst colleagues, and teachers do not need administrative approval to have relationships with their peers. However, the willingness of administrators to allow teachers time to collaborate and their support in doing this must be considered when judging the presence of collegial relationships. Sienna spoke of her experiences in districts where the concept of team teaching was big along with the omnipresent feeling of closeness and cohesiveness. Contrary to that scenario, the availability of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in schools should not be mistaken as support of teacher collaboration in every scenario. According to all 4 participants, PLCs are used ineffectively in the elementary schools in Park Knoll school district. Bringing the teachers together is often seen as a ruse to address the principal's agenda. The teachers do not set the agenda, contrary to the designed purpose of the PLCs, for these weekly meetings, which were adopted by Park Knoll approximately a decade ago. Sienna spoke of the endless possibilities for teacher collaboration with effective PLCs time focusing on the positives of teacher collaboration.

Sienna's career began as a kindergarten teacher in a Midwest public school. There were four teachers in her grade level, two working alongside her as her official mentors. Her school had a year-round teaching schedule which meant three teachers teaching at one time and one would be off, then another would come on a rotating basis. They would work for nine weeks and then have three weeks off and were always working together. When Sienna moved to work on the east coast, just three years into her career, she worked with a teacher who had also come from

teaching in the Midwest, who was trained in a similar fashion. Sienna spoke of this positive collegial experience. Sienna said:

> We had a lot of fun teaching, coming up with lessons, creating our centers, our literacy centers based on what was best for the students. It is great when you have someone you can collaborate with. I feel like your teammates are really important. And sometimes I feel like school systems now, we just put anyone they want together with no rhyme or reason. I feel like you need to look at the chemistry of those teachers to work together. I'm not saying you have to put the same teachers together for 25 years, I don't think that is necessarily the answer either, but you want to try to create a positive experience for teachers.

The teacher collaboration of PLCs had been around for many years in the Park Knoll School district, Lawrence expressed concern that they have been misused and underserved. Initially used as intended, for collegial interaction in addressing problems, working toward solutions and common approaches amongst grade level colleagues, teachers found them helpful and beneficial. As time went on, administrators began using the PLCs time for other things, as an opportunity for the administrators to check off their to-do lists which were driven by their own needs, not the needs of the teachers. Lawrence said:

> PLCs all of a sudden became like small group faculty meetings, and that is not the intent. The intent of PLCs was to give the elementary teachers the opportunity, once per week, to make what we did better within the group of people we are working with now. They were designed for us to be able to do collegial planning and problem solving.

Bridget echoed Lawrence's experience with PLCs in the Park Ridge school district and how teaching seems to have become competitive rather than collaborative. Bridget said:

> Weekly PLCs are not used properly. They consist of either meetings to complete our administrator's agenda or the teachers split up to grade papers. We aren't expected to meet as a grade level, and I honestly cannot even tell you what my colleagues are doing in their classrooms. There is a huge divide, like I have never seen before.

The significance of the participants' experiences and Bridget's quote cannot be overlooked. Veteran teachers' experiences of collegial networks across the decades of their careers have become scripted and fail to build the collegial relationships that teachers need. The breakdown and formality of teachers' collaborative time during the school day resulted in division amongst the participants and their colleagues.

The collegial networks of the veteran teacher participants changed dramatically over the decades. The early years were remembered as "golden years" by both Francesca and Bridget. The beginning decade of each of their careers were recalled by them as a different time. Before 9/11, before the real estate boom, before technology, and before cell phones. The economy was good and in Francesca's opinion, "It was still an innocent time." Francesca said:

> Going out on maternity leave, you were still granted your position when you came back and that was still your job and you were respected for it. It was a time when parents could come to holiday parties and there was no such thing as school security and locked doors. We could paint, color, and do projects. Teaching was fun. We could even cook in the classroom.

The nostalgia exhibited through this statement speaks to Francesca longing for the experiences and sense of community of her earlier decades as a teacher.

Sense of Community

The important part of being part of a tight knit community for a teacher's sense of professionalism is being a member of a professional community. Francesca went on to speak about the strength of the school community during those "golden years." Colleagues got along and new teachers came in with a great deal of respect for the veteran teachers, which was returned to them by guidance and support from those veteran teachers. Francesca stated, "I learned so much from them, I really did." Those veteran teachers are remembered as informal mentors who treated the newbies like daughters and sons and cradled them with personal and professional support, helping with the trials of classroom management, understanding and implementation of curriculum, and balancing personal and professional life. She continued, "Other teachers always had our backs." Quite contrary, according to Francesca, to the present day. Both people and the school culture have changed over the decades. Francesca said,

> We were a generation that listened to elders, whereas today's generation doesn't. They look at a veteran teacher as the battle ax at the end of the hallway. I'm only 49 now, but I am the old lady down the hall who has been teaching since the '90s. They don't want to learn from me. I have a wealth of experience and knowledge. It is just not a very safe community anymore. And teachers really don't want to listen. It is sad, but the 'tried and true' just isn't accepted or wanted anymore.

Bridget recalled the "golden years" as a time of great admiration amongst colleagues on her team. Teachers would say, "Oh, that's a great idea, let's try it!" or "I'm good at this, you're good at that, let's pull together." Recalling her first decade of teaching as simpler times when team teaching and the camaraderie amongst the staff flourished, and she often sought out advice from the older and experienced teachers. Bridget said, "Today, young teachers come in and don't want

advice from veteran teachers, or they take the advice but don't actually listen. They think they know it all and walk around acting like they are the best." This was not viewed as professionalism by Bridget and her veteran colleagues. Bridget saw a change as she continued on toward the third decade of her career and new, inexperienced teachers were joining the staff.

Collaborative Cultures

Throughout Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) book, Professional Capital, collaborative school culture and its impact on educators is deemed an essential priority. They wrote:

> The best kinds of collaborative cultures build the value and compound the interest in professional capital. Individualistic cultures, or superficial and wrong-headed forms of collaboration, undercut the possibilities of developing and circulating professional capital. (p.106)

Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) subsets of collaborative cultures: balkanization, contrived collegiality, professional learning communities, and clusters, networks, and federations exist simultaneously. They characterize contrived collegiality as formal, bureaucratic procedures to increase the attention given to joint teacher planning and other forms of working together. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) were created as a place where teachers inquired together into how to improve their practice in areas important to them, and then implemented what they learned to make it happen (Hord, 1997). They were developed inclusive of three elements: communities, learning communities, and professional learning communities. Communities are defined as a group of people having a particular characteristic in common. Learning communities are defined as the group of people working together who share academic goals and attitudes and meet to collaborate Professional learning communities are defined as colleagues within a particular field working collaboratively. Professional capital is and should be

about all 3 elements. All 4 participants in this study shared that their experiences of forced collaborative cultures through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) were especially problematic and viewed as promoting contrived collegiality and oftentimes competitiveness and ultimately isolation. My participants agreed that a strong professional community comforted them with a feeling of support integral to their success and happiness as teachers. They all experienced significant decline in the strength of their professional communities over the decades.

Bridget compared the collegial respect from her first decade of teaching to the present. She spoke of the respect and admiration she had for her experienced colleagues, and how much she learned from working with them as a team. Meeting as a team and planning as a team was something they chose to do. There was less push for testing and "kids could be kids". Bridget felt her team meshed and grew together, with each member knowing and respecting each other's strengths. The benefits to her students were immense. As the years went on, Bridget experienced the district becoming competitive and not embracing the camaraderie of grade level teams. Bridget said:

> We didn't have PLCs back then. It wasn't forced. I feel like now it is forced. Our PLCs were unofficial back then, but they were REAL. We weren't trying to have this one-upmanship show kind of thing. Our standards were high, and we truly worked together. The culture was wonderful, and we were so happy.

This statement by veteran teacher Bridget speaks volumes about the changes in the collaborative culture she experienced from her first decade to the present. The genuine collaboration she participated in and the happiness she recalls boldly highlights a change over the decades.

Teacher collaboration was labeled priority at the start of the participants' third decade of teaching. Time had been slated in schedules and lofty goals planned for this PLCs time for teachers. When executed, however, they left much to be desired. As previously mentioned, Francesca's experiences with official PLCs left her disappointed, and feeling while the intention was positive, the outcome was not. She was disappointed in PLCs that never seemed to be used for their proper intention. Sienna said, "We would meet with our colleagues, and then an administrator would join and begin dictating what we had to do during that time. We were being given time to do their work." This culture was clearly problematic. Comparing her first decades of teaching to the present, Francesca recalled a strong community where teachers collaborated and veteran teachers helped new teachers. "We had a great community, a school community. I learned so much from those veteran teachers. They were unofficial mentors." When speaking of her current situation, Francesca described it as an unhappy, unsafe community. "Those years, I call the Golden Age for me, don't exist anymore. I don't belong anymore."

As previously mentioned, Sienna called PLCs a "joke." She continued, "I cannot even say they bring teachers together, because it's an administrative agenda. This is not effective. I believe PLC time could be very, very effective, as long as teachers have more control over how the time is used." When looking back over her teaching career, Sienna recalled the opportunities for professional development and collegial support of her first 2 decades and the stark contrast to today's reality for her. "We are all herded like cattle. I do not feel it is individualized, and I don't feel like I have the opportunity to grow except for my own motivation to read my own professional books. I am completely on my own."

Lawrence echoed the other participants' sentiments in addressing his disappointment in PLCs and contrived collegiality and offered a solution to building a strong culture. Like

Hargreaves and Fullan (2010) discussed, Lawrence was aware this was tough terrain. Without the push for PLCs, there is a worry that individually autonomous teachers may not make the time for purposeful interaction. Community works when connections are there. Connections between administrators and staff, collegial connections, and connections with students. Lawrence explained, "There's a price to pay when you force someone to follow a contract. People would rather be asked than told. The administration feels the need to tell you and not listen. Many headaches could be saved with a different approach." After experiencing many failed initiatives over the decades of his career, Lawrence states his feelings simply, "It's all about mutual respect, understanding, and connection."

All 4 participants expressed that their school's culture was directly related to the school principal. Having an administrator who listened to the teachers was a key component to a positive school culture. Teachers need a voice. This exchange in our group interview seems to sum up the participant's experiences and feelings:

Francesca: "Having a voice means people listen."

Bridget: "And no, we don't have a voice anymore."

Sienna: "It is all dependent on the administration."

Lawrence: "It is human nature. People would rather be asked than told. The administration feels the need to tell you what you're going to do, rather than ask or discuss. Community works, and a different approach helps build positive culture. It's all about connection."

Collectively, the veteran teachers in my study saw a decline in the quality of their connections and the collaborative culture they experienced in the earlier decades of their careers.

The importance and necessity of being professional and being *a* professional at the same time was an integral part of the participants' experiences over the decades of their careers.

Teachers' changing sense of professionalism over time is often overlooked in research, and little attention has been given to the meanings of teachers' professional, collaborative experiences over time. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) expressed that the importance of genuine, not forced, collaboration amongst professionals. They said:

> The new expectation that professional cultures have to be ones of *collective* autonomy, transparency, and responsibility, that have to be deliberately arranged and structured around these principles, should not be a license for administrative bullying and abuse, or enforced contrivance either. Professional learning communities are not professional data communities or professional test score communities.

What this study makes clear is that it is easy to slide into contrived collegiality even with seemingly good intentions. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) discussed the need for organized, arranged and well-designed professional learning communities to ensure productivity and this study supports their claim. The outcome, however, is mixed as the teachers clearly understand the shift from caring, trusting, and supportive relationships to something more contrived. There are clearly forces and barriers that continue to impede the ongoing development of the success of our school communities such as they experienced power plays through contrived collegiality, divide-and-rule reward systems, and roadblocks in building teacher networks. Over time for these veteran teachers, the lack of community and changing the nature of relationships seemed to impact their knowledge acquisition and development. Oftentimes, these teachers decision-making capacities were given or taken away over time as a result of the changes in administration. There were notable differences in how they experienced teacher professionalism in their first career decade prior to the implementation of NCLB, and then the decade after the implementation of NCLB, their second career decade. As a result of these policy mandates and

changes since 2001, teacher's experiences and practice have largely been impacted. In an effort to adhere to policy mandates relating to data-driven teacher evaluations, school cultures post-NCLB have shifted teachers' sense of professionalism. As stated earlier, increasing encroachment on a federal level in our schools continues during the present time period, which has most recently seen NCLB replaced with the newest accountability act for our schools, *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), put into effect in December of 2015.

The sense of professionalism of the veteran teachers in this study changed over time, from the first decade into the second and third decades in part influenced by the oftentimes negative public views and constant policy changes. The one positive constant all the participants kept returning to in the interviews was their view of the necessity, importance, and sustenance that their professional collegial communities provided them over the decades of their careers. Struggle and isolation in relation to all parts of their career and experiences over the decades were repeated by each participant. Less community meant less professional capital for these teachers. The interaction of the three components of professional capital: (1) development of teacher expertise and knowledge; (2) their decision-making possibilities, and (3) the various kinds and forms of professional communities to which they belonged and the interrelation of these components over time resulted in the need for genuine collaboration infused with healthy competition along with the collective goal of a professional community and should be encouraged for all teachers.

I have come to understand these 4 veteran teachers' professional lives through the lens of professional capital. There is a clear connection in my data with changes over time and the theory of professional capital. The first decade of teaching, pre-NCLB, my participants experienced enthusiasm for their profession, opportunities for increasing teacher knowledge,

inclusion in decision making, especially inside their classrooms, and the formation and support of colleagues and collegial networks. They spoke of lots of relationships and developing knowledge over the first decade. Once they moved past NCLB, they began to speak of an uneven but notable difference between the beginning and ending of their careers. Post-NCLB, specifically throughout the second decade of their careers, the participants shared experiences of a decline in their feelings of professionalism, their decision-making capacities, but their collegial networks and relationships remained central to their feelings of happiness and well-being. Into the third decade, the veteran teachers in this study spoke of continued deterioration of their sense of professionalism and limited decision-making capacity, and while they felt as veteran teachers a sense of significant knowledge gain and expertise, they spoke of a feeling of a lack of respect from others. Interrelationships had changed over the decades, as they had fewer professional relationships, they also seemed to stagnate and felt a sense of isolation. This must have impacted their capacity or interest in developing new knowledge of teaching.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Research into veteran teachers' experiences as teachers and the meanings of these experiences across their professional lives assists us in understanding the sense they make of their professional lives and why they stay. The importance of developing work environments that can sustain educators' involvement and commitment to the profession is central to their world view. This study focused on understanding the professional lives of teachers over time and looked at the ways in which they developed their teaching expertise, the kind of communities they were part of, and the community and interactions that have fostered them and has uncovered the dynamics of veteran teachers' and their professional lives. Examining each of these threads contributes towards an understanding of how veteran teachers give meaning to their work over time. This study offered insights into not only how and what teachers learn and do, but how they experienced working together over time, across different decades and contexts.

Examining the professional lives of teachers through a lens of professional capital theory to understand veteran teachers' experiences across their careers, this study looked at veteran teachers over 3 decades of teaching and examined how these teachers developed professional capital and changed over their lifespans. In the context of teacher lives, professional capital is best defined as the systematic development, integration, and interaction of three kinds of capital: human, social, and decisional (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). These 3 dimensions connected with the study of the professional lives of teachers that offer partial views of the veteran teachers' professional lives. The human capital lens represented the knowledge and understandings that helped teachers develop and grow as professionals, the social capital focused on the desire and/or need for teachers to have a network and community, and the lens of decisional capital looking at the sense of agency in teacher decision making. These 3 forms of

capital, particularly social capital, helped understand what veteran teachers know, do, and love. In relation to Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) professional capital theory, relatively little has been known about the challenges and tensions facing so-called veteran teachers, or teachers who have had a substantial amount of experience in the classroom, and how these teachers managed to stay in the profession for more than two decades (Day et al. 2005; Day & Gu, 2009; Meister & Ahrens, 2011). As with any experience that a person would have who works for a prolonged period of their life in a single occupation, these veterans, as they gained experience and age, have been confronted with policy and social reforms, school leadership changes, curriculum and placement changes, changing attitudes and behaviors of young people, all of which affected their own professional agendas.

As discussed in Chapter 2, various studies (Cohen, 1990; Kremer & Hoffman, 1981) have shown a correlation between autonomy and longevity in one's field, concluding that employees' levels of enthusiasm for their work increases when granted sufficient freedom and independence to fulfill responsibilities. Building leaders who acknowledge teachers' capabilities and assets, while also providing autonomy and support, enhance teachers' enthusiasm and inspire them to grow as professionals (Meister & Ahrens, 2011). This study reinforces the connection as it was clear that the participants' professional experiences throughout their careers were remarkably positive when the teachers were given decision making capacity and, in their words, treated as "professionals." They were inspired and motivated when given leadership roles and their autonomy most often aligned with their enthusiasm for their job.

The individual responsibility of each teacher to make contiguous work decisions which directly impact their students' changing needs over the decades is not to be looked at lightly. Teachers work on the frontlines each day through ongoing and direct contact with the students.

Despite teacher's invested daily experiences, their role in the making of basic policy decisions is limited and their input into management functions is inadequate. This imbalance highlights the importance of school organization and its impact on school culture and teacher's sense of professional community (Bacharach & Conley 1989; Conley, 1991). The extent to which teachers are allowed to be involved in policy decision-making varies dramatically and may be connected to the organizational function of school culture.

As mentioned previously, Gardner (1991) warned of groups of individuals trying to maximize their own interests, and theorists contended that successful organization of a school community depends on a system that maintains a level of coherence while allowing diversity (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Lieberman, 1988). Voices of all members should be included in an ideal community (Westheimer, 1998). Studies of schools have shown that participation in a professional community is greater when stakes in organizational decisions are higher and when members can influence decisions that affect their work. The way in which teachers participate in events and how decisions are made are interrelated (Bolman & Deal, 1998). Metz (1986), wrote that goals for the structural organization of the professional school community would be for shared leadership, responsibility, and accountability amongst teachers and between teachers and their principals. Accomplishing these goals would result in teachers perceiving the school as a professional community.

The professional lives of veteran teachers deserve more research attention. There is a great deal of existing research focusing on teachers and professional communities, however, previous studies have focused mainly on teacher commitment, resilience, and sense of professionalism. Comparatively, little is known about the knowledge teachers develop, how

teachers participate in decision making, and how teachers interact and work with others over the span of their careers.

My participants are authors of their lives. Through the research interviews the meanings they give to their own lives as teachers were reflected. The focus of this study was on the 4 veteran teachers' lives as a way of knowing how they developed their professional capital over three decades of their teaching careers My focus was looking into people's lives as a way of knowing and learning about their experiences as they develop teaching expertise, participated in the decision-making opportunities, and experiences of the various relationships that were fostered in their professional communities.

My goal through this research, as a veteran teacher myself, was to be an advocate for veteran teachers. I hoped to bring forth their successes, passion, happiness, and struggles over three decades of their teaching careers. The participants' candidness exemplified their love for their profession, their deep devotion and concern for their students, who were always their first priority, and their frustration with the every-changing education policies.

Summary of Findings

Overarching themes discussed in chapter 4 are categorized into 5 main areas: professionalism, development of teacher expertise and knowledge over time, teacher opportunities and school culture over time, collegial relationships and collaborations over time and administration support of teacher collaboration. The first theme of professionalism encompassed teachers' experiences with professional capital, being professional, being *a* professional, and teachers' sense of professionalism.

Teacher Professionalism

The participants in my study shared that over the decades of their career they had experienced an ebb and flow with professionalism and the lack of autonomy allowed as public-school classroom teachers. While Lawrence and Sienna agreed that being professional was defined as a teacher who spent endless hours in preparation for their school days, Sienna added that being a professional meant such things as servicing students to the best of their ability, researching, preparing lessons, and educating and reinventing herself to service students. She shared that professionalism meant supporting colleagues and also changing roles every 5 years or so to avoid experiencing possible teacher burnout. Sienna categorized teacher professionals into 3 categories: people pleasers, those willing to try new things, and those who rejected new ideas. Lawrence felt that preparation, goal setting, and being self-assured were key to professionalism. He also added that building relationships with both students, colleagues, and administrators played a crucial role in being a professional. A third participant, Bridget, defined her experience with professionalism over the decades of her career in one word, respect. The fourth participant, Francesca, spoke of the absolute need for presence of collegial support in order to be a successful professional over the decades of her career. All the participants mentioned the significance of working together, and they each mentioned ideas of teacher preparation, collegial support, and building relationships, and a variety of specific qualities were also included by some such as respect, reinventing oneself, and trying one's best. The teachers' experiences of professionalism changed over time, shifting the meaning for them. As summarized in chapter 4, these shifts were shaped over the decades by 3 main factors: their professional development experiences, larger societal changes, and relationships with colleagues and administrators.

Teacher Expertise

The second theme focused on the development of teacher expertise and knowledge over time discussed teachers' experiences of professional responsibilities and curriculum, students' needs, and expectations placed on teachers. The participants spoke of the earlier years of their careers being filled with opportunities to gain expertise through professional development. They also spoke of the policy changes which hindered the growth they desired and needed over the decades and the great challenges they faced in an effort to develop expertise over the course of their careers. Francesca spoke about the policy changes such as implementation which often ignored teacher's expertise and knowledge, thereby implicitly disregarding their prior knowledge and understanding. She felt that sufficient time was never allotted over the decades to fine tune and settle in with methods used. Educational philosophies and curricula were seen as a swinging pendulum by the veteran teachers in this study, with constant ineffective outcomes, but Sienna did not experience the changes in philosophy as dramatically as Francesca had. Lawrence explained that he felt the foundation of education had remained strong throughout the decades of his career and expressed less concern and more positive views on what he called a necessary "evolution" of the educational system. Bridget shared her development of expertise experiences over her career as strong early on, because of her support from veteran teachers at the time. Bridget shared hope for herself to fill that role for novice teachers in the future.

Significant changes in new teacher work ethic were noted at the time toward the end of their second decade of teaching by all 4 participants. Attributed to societal changes in values, the participants spoke of inexperienced teachers and administrators who were seemingly overconfident. These experiences led to the third and most challenging decade of their careers.

Aging and rapid technology improvements proved to be pressure which made some participants feel undervalued, uncomfortable, and sometimes unsuccessful.

Teachers' Opportunities and School Culture Over Time

Teachers' opportunities and school culture over time was the third theme found in this study, and included the ideas of veteran teachers' feeling respected, experiences over time with school and union leadership, and administration-driven cultures. Bridget experienced a sharp decline in decision-making possibilities in her third decade of teaching when her strong work ethic was disrespected by her administration. She experienced a lack of support and respect that left her feeling undermined and defeated. In sharp contrast to Bridget, Lawrence's ongoing involvement in various leadership roles over the decades of his career allowed him to be involved in much of the decision-making throughout the second and third decades of his career. During those same decades, Francesca experienced a "do what you are told" type of culture, driven by administrators and becoming increasingly more difficult to navigate. Sienna credited a solid role in decision-making from her early years in the profession to surrounding herself with like-minded colleagues with similar philosophies from the beginning.

Collegial Relationships and Collaborations Over Time/Administrations' Support of Teacher Collaboration

The final 2 themes involved the teachers, their colleagues, their administrators and the relationships formed over time. Teachers' collegial networks and teachers' relationships, focused on decades of administrative support, lack thereof, and teachers' collaborative communities and collaborative cultures.

A major theme that seemed to cut across much of the participants' insights about their experiences is being most unhappy over the decades because of the increasing lack of autonomy

afforded to them as classroom teachers. Building and sustaining constructive, caring, and supportive relationships among professionals in their building were paramount with these 4 veteran teachers. Unfortunately, all 4 teachers lamented the loss of trusting professional relationships and some seemed isolated from other professionals in their building. Relationships was the most predominant theme in my conversations with these veteran classroom teachers. All 4 shared personal and professional experiences and what it seemed to come down to in the end was the various ways they were treated by their colleagues and administrators over the decades. Francesca's notable and complex experiences involved personal losses and complicated professional experiences, supporting Sienna's thoughts that "supportive administration produces better teaching." Lawrence detailed tough conversations he had with administrators which led to mutual trust and respect. Bridget spoke of her experience with that same administrative trust and respect which she touted as her motivation to do her best every day. To the contrary, all of the participants felt that teaching out of fear, rather than passion, had crept into their professional lives of their third decade.

Talking about collegial relationships over time was a theme that reflected the heart amongst my participants. Team teaching, collaboration with colleagues, and experiences working with colleagues and administrators over the first decade of their careers were labeled "golden years" by two participants. While collegial networks of the veteran teacher participants had changed dramatically over the decade of their careers, it was clear that the sense of community and collaborative cultures was something that the Park Knoll school district saw value in and tried to bring back through PLCs in the last decade.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) discussed the need for organized, arranged and well-designed professional learning communities to ensure productivity and this study supports this

claim. It is easy to slide into contrived collegiality even with seemingly good intentions. There are clearly forces and barriers that continue to stand in the way of the success of our school communities such as power plays of contrived collegiality, divide-and-rule reward systems, and roadblocks in building teacher networks. Over time for these veteran teachers, the lack of community and changing nature of relationships impacted their knowledge acquisition and development. Oftentimes, these teachers decision-making possibilities were given or taken away over time as a result of the changes in administration. The sense of professionalism of the veteran teachers in this study changed over time as outside influences such as public views and changes in policies impacted their profession. The one positive constant all the participants kept returning to in the interviews was their view of the necessity, importance, and sustenance that their professional collegial communities provided them over the decades of their careers. That being said, genuine collaboration infused with healthy competition along with the collective goal of a professional community should be encouraged for all teachers.

Implications for Future Research and Policy

The general picture which emerged from this research was the veteran teachers changing experiences and particularly interesting patterns over time showed that the further along the teachers got in their career the less they felt that they were treated as professionals. As in previous studies, the results of this analysis of veteran teachers confirmed that strong collegial bonds brought the teachers the most strength and support over all 3 decades. A possible interpretation of this finding is that these collegial relationships, along with the teachers' passion and devotion to their students, kept them grounded in their teaching careers over time. Overall, this study provides support for the validity and importance of supportive administrative leadership, as the participants' experiences often mirrored the positivity or negativity of the

direct leadership. There is still some doubt as to whether veteran teachers in Park Knoll school district are seen in a negative light as some of the participants believe they are. It does seem clear, however, that the expertise and knowledge of these veteran teachers is not being tapped into and used at its full potential. To that end, I will be starting a veteran teacher research group in Park Knoll district with the goal of continuing this study and improving the connection amongst all teachers and administrators and further the understanding of the value of veteran teachers throughout the district.

My findings suggest a need for greater teacher input towards policy decision-making. Policy makers should meet the challenge of including those teachers of students directly affected by policy changes and their input should be taken into account. This study clearly suggested the imbalance of top-down changes that according to the participants often did more harm than good for all involved. Continuing to explore and improve education for students should be a top priority for all schools, the challenge lies in addressing the issues of policy makers being out of touch with the realities of the classroom. Policy makers must consider avoiding the top-down approach to change and put more effort toward helping all teachers cope with change.

Reimagining the Professional Lives of Veteran Teachers

Overall, this study supports the idea of reimagining veteran teachers' professional lives. Taken altogether, the date presented through this study leaves some questions unanswered. Do we value veteran teachers' work? How do we bring the joy back to their work? We would encourage schools to examine whether teachers need to be in classrooms this many years. After decades of experience, would these teachers serve best as coaches to novice teachers. Are there ways to shift these teachers to positions which utilize their expertise to revitalize their job. Veteran teachers might be linked to other positions not necessarily linked to having their own

classes of students. Opportunities could be provided to veteran teachers to show appreciation for them to help them feel valued and feel a sense of belonging. Schools do not need to be so locked in to previous ways of doing things. Veteran teachers, who know so much through their decades of invaluable experiences must not be written off when they are worth so much.

Personally, my biggest takeaway from this study of 4 veteran teachers is the dedication they have shown to their profession throughout their tumultuous decades of change and challenge, professionally and personally. The resilience of these 4 veteran educators speaks to their passion and devotion to their students, who were always at the forefront of their efforts and a priority each day. I was moved by the amount of strength they found through their colleagues and each other and the bonds that seemed to keep them from sinking during many of their darkest times. I believe that a common wish they had and continue to have a voice in the conversation that is education. It is my wish that veteran teachers and all teachers be listened to. Let their voices be heard.

Conclusion

Future research will have to look at ways in which teachers experience professionalism and focused on enhancing the professional capital of teachers. Teachers must be involved in decision making processes throughout their careers and should be provided professional development along the way when changes in curriculum, technology, and expectations occur. It is important that time to collaborate be structured in a teacher's day, as the collegial relationships are integral to teachers and have an impact on teacher success. A significant finding of this study, was the need for administrators to be in touch with teachers. How is this done?
This reinforces the ideas that prior teaching experience is vital to their understanding of the teachers, students, and workings of a classroom. I echo this sentiment expressed by all 4

participants of this study. The fact that all 4 teachers had similar professional experiences suggests that the district also has a responsibility to help forge professional relationships among teachers and their school leaders.

As stated at the start of this dissertation, one of the most important challenges in the field of education is developing strong, competent teachers and creating work environments that sustain educators' involvement and commitment (Alvy, 2005; Billingsley, 2004; Day et al., 2005). Given such concerns, we must continue to dedicate time and research to this purpose. We must treat teachers as a long-term investment for the duration of their careers. The value of veteran teachers must not be overshadowed and marginalized.

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