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No Child Left Behind and the Quest for Educational Equity: The Role of Teachers' Collective Sense of Efficacy

ANDREA EVANS
Northern Illinois University, Dekalb, Illinois, USA

The current policy context established by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) *calls for schools and teachers to develop and execute plans of action they believe will effectively address achievement gaps. This article uses conceptual and research literature to explore the construct of teachers' collective sense of efficacy and its potential influence on schools' efforts to respond to the equity mandate of NCLB. Specifically, I explore the relationship between teachers' collective sense of efficacy, accountability policy, and student achievement. I also examine the school leader's role in mediating policy, teachers' sense of efficacy, and school contexts in ways that can positively address educational inequities. Finally, I conclude with several implications for school leadership, policy, and future research.*

INTRODUCTION

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 positions educational equity at the center of national education policy. Beyond simply knowing that achievement gaps exist, schools and school leaders face increased pressure and a narrow window of time to address inequitable outcomes. This policy calls for schools to develop and execute plans of action they believe will effectively address achievement gaps. However, in order for schools to develop and execute these plans, teachers must actually believe that the equity mandate espouses reasonable, desirable, and doable goals. Further, this mandate requires them to formulate some judgment of faculty capacity and

Address correspondence to Dr. Andrea Evans, Northern Illinois University, Department of Leadership, Educational Psychology and Foundations, Dekalb, IL 60115, USA. E-mail: aeevans@niu.edu

the contextual conditions needed to realize those goals (Bandura, 2001). Thus, the equity mandate requires teachers to believe in the efficacy of NCLB as mandated policy *and* to believe in the faculty's collective ability and capacity to improve educational outcomes for poor or, low-performing students and/or students of color.

Even if teachers believe NCLB represents doable and valuable goals, its espoused aims seem contrary to the social culture that exists as part of the policy context. Social ideologies about race, class, and educational achievement propagate the notion that white students will generally outperform black and Hispanic students, and that wealthier students will outperform poor students on achievement and performance indicators. Supported by an abundance of "data" disseminated through a variety of academic, social, and cultural channels, these widely accepted views manifest in our social and educational policy and practice in areas ranging from school funding and program and course offerings to teacher and student placement, which thwarts any meaningful effort to dismantle racial and class-based disparities in school performance. In light of these realities, a key question emerges: Do schools actually believe they can effectively respond to NCLB's equity mandate to close achievement gaps? Put differently, How efficacious are school faculty in responding to the equity mandate to address race- and class-based achievement gaps?

The construct of collective sense of efficacy may be significant to our understanding of schools' actual efforts to respond to accountability policy, and in this case, the equity mandate to close achievement and performance gaps. Teachers' collective sense of efficacy is an organizational property and group-level attribute that represents teachers' collective beliefs about their collective power to execute a course of action that will result in a positive impact on students (Bandura, 2001). It shapes group functioning and organizational agency through its influence on the decisions that teachers and administrators make, the effort they expend, and the persistence with which they pursue certain strategies and tasks for goal attainment. Faculty decisions, effort, and persistence all affect the teaching and learning environment, and the achievement of schools and students (Goddard, 2001a; Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2002).

Studies of accountability policy in high- and low-performing schools suggest that their academic status shapes teachers' and leaders' conceptions of the policy itself and conceptions of their schools' capacity to render a positive response to the policy (Abelman, Elmore, Even, Kenyon, & Marshall, 1999; Debray, Parson, & Woodworth, 2001; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Haertal & Herman, 2005). In addition, teachers and administrators judge their collective capacity to respond to accountability policy based on the school environment and students, and the associated expectations of themselves and students in a given school context. Inevitably, race, class, and the school's social environment affect the academic content and skills

teachers choose to teach and their beliefs about students' ability to learn, as well as beliefs about their own ability to improve student performance. So here is the proverbial "catch-22"—schools with low-performing, poor, and/or minority students may face policy demands for excellence and equity with teachers and/or leaders who doubt their own capacity to improve the performance of low-achieving students. Further, school personnel may lack confidence in the academic ability of students with whom they have had little success in the past. As a judgment of collective capacity and power, teachers' collective sense of efficacy exemplifies a critical feature of school culture that affects organizational functioning and outcomes, making it useful in exploring schools' approach to NCLB and to educational inequity and achievement gaps. It also highlights a potential avenue for school leaders to focus their efforts toward school reform and improvement.

This aim of this article is twofold. First, this article uses conceptual and research literature to define the construct of collective sense of efficacy and to explore its potential impact on schools' efforts to respond to the equity mandate of NCLB. Specifically, I examine teachers' collective sense of efficacy in relation to serving poor, low-performing, and minority students. Studies show that teachers in low-performing, high-poverty and/or high-minority schools tend to have low collective sense of efficacy, which serves as a powerful determinant of the operative culture that undermines teachers' agency and responsibility for student achievement (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, 2001b; Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Goddard & Sklra, 2006). Second, I explore the relationship between accountability policy and teachers' collective sense of efficacy. Studies suggest that accountability policy, and specifically the equity mandate, may shape or reinforce what teachers believe about themselves and their students (Abelman et al., 1999; Debray et al., 2001). At the same time, policy enactment and implementation depends upon a school's internal capacity, which includes a collective judgment about capacity, ability, and responsibility—all factors that influence teachers' collective sense of efficacy (Newman, King, & Rigdon, 1997; O'Day, 2002). I also discuss the role of educational leaders as mediators of policy and policy contexts and the ways in which they may influence teachers' collective sense of efficacy. Finally, I conclude with several implications, specifically for school leadership, policy, and future research.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE SENSE OF EFFICACY: AN IMPORTANT ORGANIZATIONAL FEATURE

Teachers' collective sense of efficacy is a group-level attribute that represents the collective beliefs of the faculty as a whole. It is a judgment of whether the school has the capacity and capability to organize and execute a course of action to effectively meet goals and have a positive impact on

students (Bandura, 2001; Goddard, 2001b). A parallel construct to individual sense of efficacy, collective sense of efficacy operates in a similar manner as an important determinant of collective agency, which propels teachers as a group to move forward towards goal attainment. In what follows, I describe several dimensions of collective sense of efficacy and the ways it functions in pursuit of school-level educational goals. Afterwards, I review some of the literature that examines the relationship between teachers' collective sense of efficacy and school achievement, and specifically in relation to poor and minority students.

SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE SENSE OF EFFICACY

The construct of efficacy emerged from social cognitive theory with Albert Bandura as a key theorist, particularly in relation to teachers and schools. Bandura's basic premise is that an individual's sense of efficacy includes beliefs about one's own capabilities, which then shape thoughts, emotional states, and actions in response to difficult or taxing situations (Bandura, 1986). He contends that this basic principle applies also to organizations and collectively to those who work in them. In fact, efficacy operates at both the individual and collective levels, which influence one another. However, it is important to note that collective sense of efficacy does not represent the sum total of the individual self-efficacy beliefs in an organization. "Reciprocal causality," a term used to describe the relationship between self and collective efficacy, suggests that teachers' thoughts about their individual capabilities reflect, to some degree, beliefs about the faculty's capabilities as a whole and that both shape the culture of the school (Bandura, 1986; Goddard, Hoy, &Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). In their study of the relationship between teacher and collective efficacy, Goddard and Goddard (2001) concluded that teachers' collective sense of efficacy predicted the significant variation in teachers' individual sense of efficacy between schools, which suggests that the specific social processes and collective beliefs within school organizations impacted teachers' individual sense of efficacy.

This notion of reciprocal causality coincides with Bandura's idea of the "intermediate level of interdependence" (1997, p. 481) needed for school-level goal attainment. In order for teachers to experience individual success within a school organization, they must work independently with a certain degree of self-efficacy, as well as in a group with a healthy collective sense of efficacy. This is important for several reasons. As schools begin to move more toward professional learning communities and other collaborative structures, teachers engage more in team planning, collaboration, and team teaching. One potential outcome of these types of structures may be that teachers share joint responsibility for academic and social norms

within a school system. Moreover, there exists a level of hierarchical and vertical dependence on others' ability to effectively prepare students both socially and educationally in prior grades and/or in concurrent subject matter (Bandura, 1997). Finally, through norms of practice, the organization exerts a level of influence over the work of individual teachers (Firestone & Louis, 1999; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Weiss, 1990). So while school organizational success may be viewed as the sum of the individual contributions of teachers (who are independently efficacious), it is the interdependence and collective sense of wellness within the organizational system that contributes to teachers' individual sense of efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Collective sense of efficacy shapes, at least in part, the perception of collective wellness among teachers within a school organization.

EFFICACY-SHAPING INFORMATION: HOW COLLECTIVE SENSE OF EFFICACY GETS DEVELOPED

Personal teaching efficacy beliefs (an individual's belief in their own capability to teach), as well as general teaching efficacy beliefs (an individual's belief in the power of teaching), influence and are influenced by teachers' collective sense of efficacy in a school organization. Moreover, both individuals and schools possess and receive information that shapes efficacy beliefs. For example, researchers suggest that causal attributions significantly contribute to collective sense of efficacy. This term refers to individuals' need to impose order and predictability over events by making causal statements about them (Bandura, 1997; Chwalisz, Altmaier, & Russell, 1992). According to Chwalisz, et al. (1992), the cognitive processing of events can be described in terms of primary and secondary appraisals. In the primary appraisal, individuals evaluate events based upon their general beliefs about the locus of control. Their beliefs about internal locus of control (events depends upon one's own behavior) or external locus of control (events depend upon factors such as luck, fate, or other people) affect their primary appraisal and the subsequent causal attributions assigned to events. The secondary appraisal involves individuals' evaluation of their own interaction with events and the environment-this shapes both personal and collective sense of efficacy. If persons or the group decide that the causes of events they face are beyond their control, such an appraisal affects their sense of efficacy, which in turn affects their response to these events.

While scholars generally agree that attributions matter to efficacy beliefs, they differ in the way they describe the relationship between them (Chwalisz et al., 1992; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004; Lee, Dedrick, & Smith, 1991). For example, Chwalisz et al. (1992) found a greater sense of efficacy to be associated with the perceived uncontrollability of events. In other words, though teachers

may believe that school success occurs primarily from sources beyond their control, they may still feel efficacious due to the perceived effort put forth rather than student success or failure. By contrast, Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2004) suggest that a greater sense of efficacy emerges with the perception that success emanates from internal or controllable causes. In this situation, teachers who believe that intelligence can be acquired or who deem school success as part of their responsibility may only have a greater sense of efficacy when they and their students experience success. In either case, teachers' collective sense of efficacy depends to some degree upon the faculty judgment of achievement or factors affecting achievement as being either in or out of their control. It seems clear that in order to enhance teachers' collective sense of efficacy *and* student success, teachers need to feel more control over factors, conditions, and decisions affecting schools and students, and on some level, attribute school success to schools and specifically to teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

In addition to causal attributions, scholars list four sources of information that shape collective efficacy beliefs. Bandura (1997) provides detailed descriptions of these sources of efficacy; I lean heavily on his definitions here and relate them to schools and school faculty. The first source of efficacy information, mastery experience, refers to the enactive experiences that people have that represent their successful or failed performance. Important here is that it is not the actual successful or failed performance that affects one's sense of efficacy. Rather, mastery experience shows whether or not individuals have the requisite skills to perform, but also indicates their perception of control in the use of those skills. In other words, mastery experience can only raise collective sense of efficacy if teachers judge themselves, from their successful acts, to have a certain amount of capability and ability and if success can be attributed to things they controlled. Mastery experience is seen as the most influential source of efficacy information because "[successful acts] provide evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed" (Bandura, 1997, p. 80). For this reason, past success tends to persuade people that they have what it takes to succeed, thus raising their sense of efficacy. Conversely, perceived failure tends to undermine sense of efficacy.

A second source, vicarious experience, refers to what schools learn from other schools or what teachers learn from other teachers. As Bandura suggests, "there are no absolute measures of adequacy" (1997, p. 86), and therefore, people must judge their performance in relation to the norm or to similar organizations. Thus, if teachers judge their counterparts in similar schools to be successful, this may raise their collective sense of efficacy as they deem themselves to be as capable and able to master the same actions. Conversely, if their counterparts in similar schools are unsuccessful, this vicarious experience may serve as some validation for their own school's lack of success. Further, the more school faculty judge themselves to be

similar to another school or faculty, the more persuasive the model's success or failure. Also important, Bandura (1997) suggests that vicarious experience can often override the direct experience of failure, as the modeling may convince people of their power and ability even in the face of repeated failures.

"Affective state" describes another source of efficacy-shaping information, which includes the way schools respond to or tolerate crises or pressure. Organizations have cultures (or are cultures) that provide meaning for events and dictate how the organization, and the individuals who make up the organization, cope with difficulties, stress, environmental conditions, and new or different events (Firestone & Louis, 1999; Weick, 1993). As such, organizations exhibit stress, distress, resilience, and other characteristics as they deal with problematic situations. Referring to self-efficacy, Bandura (1997) suggests that people who believe they can exercise control over potential events and situations do not conjure up calamities and frighten themselves. Conversely, people who perceive conditions as unmanageable view the environment as fraught with danger. He argues that such inefficacious thought constrains and impairs their level of functioning (Bandura, 1997). As people's sense of efficacy grows stronger, they become more courageous and confident in dealing with difficult circumstances, recasting them in ways that appear more manageable.

Finally, social or verbal persuasion pertains to the training, talks, workshops, faculty lounge conversations, leadership, and other types of information that teachers may receive about their collective abilities, potential, and performance. Verbal persuasion occurs when "significant others" express faith in one's abilities and capabilities (Bandura, 1997). Thus, the more believable the source, the more probable efficacy judgments are likely to change. Also, teachers receive both personal appraisal (via these talks, teacher evaluations, etc.) and social appraisal (as a group, via the media, test scores, rankings, etc.). However, Bandura (1997) suggests that most people believe they know themselves and their predicament better than others and this creates some resistance to social persuasion. Also, one can imagine both positive and negative outcomes for teachers who may or may not believe what others say about them or judge them to be.

Along with attributions and the four sources of efficacy information, a perception of collective sense of efficacy also involves an analysis of the task at hand. Included in this task analysis is some judgment of what the task requires, the factors that constitute "success" or could inhibit success, and the context, materials, and resources required for success. Thus, it is perfectly feasible that some individuals or groups can perceive themselves to be efficacious with certain tasks or with certain students and feel completely inefficacious with other tasks and other students. Further, this analysis includes an appraisal of teachers' collective knowledge, skills, training, and the potential to receive necessary training (Bandura, 1997; van den Berg,

2002). Moreover, Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2000) found that this task analysis did not occur independently from teachers' assessment of group capability. In the case of the NCLB equity mandate, the task requires teachers to institute strategies that will raise performance and test scores of poor, African American, and Hispanic students to the levels of their wealthier and/or white counterparts. In teachers' analysis of their collective capability, this task may seem quite formidable, effectively lowering personal and collective sense of efficacy.

THE LINK BETWEEN TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE SENSE OF EFFICACY AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

As an organizational characteristic, collective sense of efficacy helps support the conditions needed for the enactment of educational reforms and innovations. The idea is that in order to select, design, and implement reform strategies, there must be in place some collective belief about the worthiness of the goal (i.e., meeting Average Yearly Progress, raising achievement/performance of specific groups), as well as the general belief that the faculty as a whole can overcome any constraints that exist. The faculty must also believe that they can generate the actions or implement the strategies with the necessary vigor to achieve the goal. First, though, school faculty must attribute school success to schools generally and to teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions specifically. Thus, in order to address the challenges of educational inequity, school faculty must perceive themselves to be both responsible and competent enough to effectively teach poor students, students of color, and underperforming students in ways that will result in better school performance and higher achievement on standardized tests. However, studies show that characteristics of the student population affect the teachers' collective sense of efficacy needed to attain school level goals. In the next section, I describe the relationship between school-related factors, teachers' collective sense of efficacy, and student achievement. Afterwards, I examine the impact of race and class on teachers' collective sense of efficacy and what it means for schools serving poor and minority students.

Relatively few efficacy studies examine the one-way relationship between teachers' collective sense of efficacy and student achievement. In one such study, Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2000) used hierarchical linear modeling and found that with one unit increase in collective teacher efficacy score, there was an associated average gain in test scores in both math and reading for elementary school students. More often, efficacy studies use collective teacher efficacy (via collective efficacy scales) as both an independent and dependent variable. On one hand, this research examined various factors that directly influenced teachers' collective sense of efficacy.

At the same time, researchers note that these same factors "flow through" teachers' collective sense of efficacy to impact student or school achievement. For example, Goddard (2001b) examined the relationship between teachers' collective sense of efficacy and student and school characteristics, namely, reading achievement, proportion of African American students, and socioeconomic status (SES), within schools and across the urban schools sampled. Using test scores as an indicator, 3rd grade achievement (mastery experience) explained more variance in teachers' collective sense of efficacy, measured one year later, than race and SES combined. At the same time, Goddard found that teachers' collective sense of efficacy explained the between-school variance for 4th grade math and reading achievement for these same students.

Similarly, Goddard, LoGerfo, and Hoy (2004) explored the impact of several variables (school minority enrollment, SES, urbanicity, school size, prior 9th grade achievement) on teachers' collective sense of efficacy and the impact of teachers' collective sense of efficacy on 12th grade school achievement as indicated on the state exam. (Note that the 12th grade students completed the state assessment exam 1–2 months after faculty completed the collective efficacy scale.) The results indicated that 9th grade achievement (as indicated by the percentage of students who passed the state exam two years prior) and SES were both positive predictors of teachers' collective sense of efficacy. Further, teachers' collective sense of efficacy explained between one-half and one-third of the between-school variance in the proportion of students who passed their 12th grade exam. Hoy, Sweetland, and Smith (2002) measured the impact of SES and academic press on student achievement and on teachers' collective sense of efficacy, as well as the impact of collective sense of efficacy on school math achievement. Using a regression model, they found SES and academic press influenced teachers' collective sense of efficacy (r = 0.29 and 0.58 respectively). They also found teachers' collective sense of efficacy to have the "strongest independent influence" on school achievement (r = 0.65). Their explanation was that while SES (r = 0.37) and academic press (r = 0.44) independently impacted school achievement, it was the collective sense of efficacy that influenced teachers' effort, persistence, and the creation of higher goals and performance which resulted in the stronger impact on achievement.

In addition to minority proportion, SES, prior achievement, and school size, scholars have found a variety of other variables that affect teachers' collective and individual sense of efficacy. Bandura (1993) found that teachers' collective sense of efficacy varied across grade levels, ability groups, time of the year, and teaching longevity. Teachers held lower collective sense of efficacy in early grades (based on the belief that students were ill-prepared for school), higher collective sense of efficacy in the middle grades, but lower sense of efficacy in higher grades. He also found that teachers exhibited higher collective sense of efficacy early in the year. Goddard and Sklra

(2006) found that teachers of color had a stronger sense of efficacy than white teachers, though the difference was small. Further, they found that experienced teachers had stronger sense of efficacy than inexperienced teachers; this finding contradicts Bandura (1993) who found weaker collective sense of efficacy in teachers with longer careers. Interestingly, Bandura's study (1993) differed from others in that it did not find a positive relationship between socioeconomic status and teachers' collective sense of efficacy, yet his findings related to proportion of minority students were similar to others in that no relationship was found. Like Goddard and Skrla (2006), Payne (1994) found non–African American teachers to be more ambivalent about their own sense of efficacy in regards to students culturally different than themselves.

RACE, CLASS AND TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE SENSE OF EFFICACY

The construct of teachers' collective sense of efficacy embodies a critical component of the social system and organizational culture within which teachers assess their beliefs about students, about themselves, and about the necessary tasks in order to decide particular goals and a course of action towards those goals. Important to this discussion is the impact of student body composition (specifically race and class demographics) on teachers' collective sense of efficacy, as well as the impact of teachers' collective sense of efficacy on schools' efforts to respond to the equity mandate of NCLB. Generally, research supports the contention that socioeconomic status positively influences teachers' collective sense of efficacy. Hoy et al. (2002) explain that in high SES schools, teachers feel they can make a difference because students' home environments present minimal obstacles for them to overcome. Thus, teachers would set higher expectations and goals, be more persistent, and put more effort in assisting students in meeting those goals. The opposite is true in low SES schools, where teachers feel overwhelmed by the "difficulties" children bring to school and that they may not be able to overcome them. Here, teachers would be less inclined to set high expectations and goals, be less persistent, and possibly put less effort into assisting students in meeting goals.

However, the relationship between student body racial composition and teachers' collective sense of efficacy in these mostly quantitative studies is less clear. Several aforementioned studies (Goddard, 2001b; Goddard, LoGerfo, & Hoy, 2004; Goddard & Sklra, 2006) found student race or minority proportion to be generally insignificant, though Goddard (2001b) found that SES and minority concentration combined were significantly and negatively correlated with teachers' collective sense of efficacy. In effect, these studies generally suggest that student body racial composition did not independently

affect teachers' judgments about their abilities and capabilities to impact student achievement. The impact of race as a variable in these studies is explained by Goddard (2001b) and Bandura (1993), both of whom suggest the possibility, indeed likelihood, of multicollinearity between race and other variables, particularly prior achievement and SES. Bandura (1993) affirms that in his study, race as a characteristic of the student body likely influenced prior academic achievement (mastery experience) rather than teachers' collective sense of efficacy directly. Moreover, he argues that when schools fail to put forth efforts to enhance teachers' sense of efficacy in predominantly poor or low performing schools, SES and race of the student body are more likely to account for much of schools' poor performance via teachers' collective sense of efficacy.

Some studies examining race, sense of efficacy, and/or factors affecting sense of efficacy yielded other results. For example, Pang and Sablan (1998) found that racial attitudes did matter to individual teacher sense of efficacy. Considering the concept of reciprocal causality, one may infer that individual teachers' judgments likely affected the collective judgment of the faculty. In a qualitative study, Payne (1994) noted similar results with non–African American teachers whose belief systems about poor and minority students influenced their sense of efficacy. Also relevant are related studies on the relationship between teacher expectations (a judgment about students' future academic performance) and race, specifically the notion that teachers tend to have negative beliefs and lower expectations for students of color and poor students, with consequences for their academic achievement (Cornbleth & Korth, 1980; Farkas, 2003; Ferguson, 2003; Good, 1987; Russell, 2005).

Further, studies reveal a relationship between race and teachers' causal attributions. As mentioned earlier, causal attributions reflect perceived controllability of events. Studies hint at the degree to which teachers feel that they can affect (and thus, control) minority student achievement. Guskey (1987) found that teachers did not see themselves as a major influence when students performed poorly. In a comparison of teachers' perceptions in high-and low-diversity schools, Freeman, Brookhart, and Loadman (1999) found that only about 50percent of teachers in high-diversity schools believed that all students would benefit from certain higher-order instructional material and 16percent felt that none would benefit. Uhlenberg and Brown (2002) found that white teachers tended to point to factors outside of school as key to the achievement gap, while black teachers tended to focus more on factors within schools. Both Tettegah (1996) and Ferguson (2003) notice that teachers rate black students lower than other groups on factors such as cognitive abilities, attitudes, motivation, and effort.

There appears to be ample support for the contention that race plays a role in teachers' beliefs about their own abilities, controllability, and impact on students. More important, these findings reflect some troubling notions

of teachers' judgments about their ability to positively impact students of color and low-income students. As Bandura affirms, ". . . beliefs regarding controllability are generally associated with active efforts to exercise personal control. People who are convinced that there is little that can be done to change things have little incentive to exert much effort" (1993, p. 806). Moreover, Bandura (2001) argues that some mechanisms reduce the sense of personal agency for harmful conduct through diffusion and displacement of responsibility. In other words, if teachers feel that student achievement lies beyond their control, they may feel less responsible for student outcomes (Abelman et al., 1999; Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004). These beliefs about controllability, responsibility, and agency adversely affect teachers' collective sense of efficacy, which may result in the selection of strategies and a degree of effort and persistence that reflect teachers' collective sense of powerlessness with low-income or low-performing students and/or students of color.

THE PROBLEM OF TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE SENSE OF EFFICACY IN POOR AND MINORITY SERVING SCHOOLS

Teachers' thinking about their educational practice reflect the confluence of the interactions between teachers and the students, the subjects teachers teach, and the conditions under which they teach (van den Berg, 2002). Moreover, a good deal of evidence points to the fact that teachers and school leaders respond differently to students of color and poor students, as well as to different social compositions of schools (Duke, 1995; Evans, 2007; Mickelson, 2003; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). In fact, taken-for-granted assumptions about race, class, and school performance, while extremely problematic, are not altogether unanticipated. Racial beliefs leading to the "face validity" (Parker, 2001, p. 317) of the inferior black intellect have been part of the national identity for centuries (House, 1999). Similarly, many believe that poor people are poor, both economically and academically, because they have not, worked hard "enough," or do not or will not do so. These and other forms of deficit thinking (see Valencia, 1997) substantiate the contention that school failure can be attributed primarily to the qualities of minority and/or poor culture and communities. Such attributions contextualize schools' and teachers' responsibility and agency, and minimize the untenable realities of the sociohistorical, political, and economic circumstances that marginalize the schooling and learning of African American, Hispanic, and poor children.

While controllability, attributions, and responsibility judgments shape teachers' assessment of their abilities, goals, and courses of action, mastery experience seems to have the most significant impact on teachers' collective sense of efficacy. Mastery experience emanates from the prior success that

individuals or schools have had in attaining certain goals. In other words, teachers who have experienced "success" in a certain school or with certain types of students positively judge their abilities and their chances to meet current educational goals. Conversely, teachers may lack this mastery experience if their schools have not experienced success with their poor students and/or students of color. The issue of mastery experience may help explain the findings of Pang and Sablan (1998). This study shows inconsistency between teachers' personal and general senses of teaching efficacy in regards to African American students. While the majority of teachers (83%) felt that teachers (generally) can be a powerful influence on African American students, these teachers possessed weak personal sense of efficacy regarding African American students (perhaps due their experience with African American students). In other words, one can imagine that these teachers may have all the right notions about race and schooling, yet feel inefficacious regarding what to do about it in the classroom. Pang also found that preservice teachers felt more positive about their ability to reach African American students than in-service teachers. Thus, new teachers with little or no experience with African American students exhibited more optimism. Both findings illustrate the power of mastery experience to individual sense of efficacy and likely to collective sense of efficacy, and suggest a likely negative impact on the education of African American students.

Ferguson's (2003) analysis of the black-white test-score gap also illustrates the significance of mastery experience. He begins with the basic premise that teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and expectations interact with students' behaviors and habits to perpetuate the test-score gap. He makes the case that past and present performance indicators, as well as teachers' experiences with students, shape current expectations, perceptions, and beliefs about black students. In other words, the fact that we actually "witness" white students outperform black and Hispanic students on accountability tests and other measures of academic performance inform teachers' biased, but expected, expectations for these students, which then operate to "[sustain] past trends" (Ferguson, 2003, p. 469) in future performance of schools, teachers, and students. Put differently, performance indicators, those evidenced on a national level and those from recent school test scores, serve as the proxy for mastery experience for school personnel. This mastery experience or "evidence" tends to reflect schools' inability or failure to close gaps and validates what teachers "know" about achievement gaps between blacks and whites or between poor and wealthier students. This sort of information shapes not only what teachers believe about students' abilities to learn and their own abilities to teach, but also normalizes teacher and school organizational performance in ways that are consistent with those beliefs.

Based on this view, it should come as no surprise that teachers in schools with high-poverty or high-minority populations, and/or large populations of

low performing students, generally tend to have lower collective sense of efficacy than their counterparts in other schools (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, 2001b; Goddard & Goddard, 2001). Goddard and Sklra (2006) note that when collective sense of efficacy is low, cultures of blame and resentment can emerge in response to disappointing school performance. In addition, low collective sense of efficacy prevents the faculty from attaining the requisite skills that may improve their performance and school performance. Further, schools that judge themselves as powerless to get low-income or students of color to achieve, ". . .are likely to convey a group sense of academic futility that can pervade the entire life of the school" (Bandura, 1997, p. 248). In these schools, teachers often perceive the many challenging conditions and obstacles students face as difficult or even impossible to surmount and offer them as the critical causes of school failure or underachievement. It follows that these schools' organizational milieu may reflect a sense of resignation that little can be done to improve student performance. Moreover, school faculty may be less committed to teaching, less motivated to perform, and less likely to collaborate with others. Bandura (1993) contends that people actually avoid activities and situations that they believe exceed their capabilities or ones in which they believe they will fail, leading to less effort to engage new strategies or innovations. Finally, given these circumstances, it is not an uncommon occurrence that school faculty may feel less responsible for the academic outcomes of their students.

On the other hand, schools that collectively judge themselves to be capable of promoting academic success are likely to "imbue their schools with a positive atmosphere" (Bandura, 1997, p. 248). School organizations that exhibit a high sense of efficacy adopt strategies and courses of action designed to change hazardous environments into more benign ones (Bandura, 1997). These characterizations reveal that teachers' collective sense of efficacy shapes the ways in which school organizations reflect, learn vicariously, and use symbols to analyze, organize, and control their behaviors and affective states in the exercise of organizational agency and that they do so in ways that substantiate their judgment of capable power or collective powerlessness (Goddard, 2001b). Inevitably, teachers' collective sense of efficacy influences a school's approach and response to the NCLB mandate to close race and class-based achievement gaps.

ACCOUNTABILITY POLICY AND TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE SENSE OF EFFICACY

Without question, the debate looms as to whether an accountability policy can stimulate the creation of new school systems and organizations, and especially ones that can effectively mediate or buffer some of the external

conditions that affect and perpetuate achievement gaps. For some scholars, educators, and civil rights organizations, the promise of NCLB and its equity mandate emanates from the much-needed focus on educational inequity and achievement gaps and the subsequent implementation of new methods to address the inequities. This attention on equity may result in some intermediate advantages such as improved curriculum and academic support for struggling students, which of course could be beneficial, even if the "ends" are not met by 2014. The reality, though, is that beyond the rhetoric and political correctness of closing achievement gaps lies the challenge of convincing those who work directly with poor, African American, and Hispanic children that they collectively have what it takes to reverse academic trends. Whether accountability policy can have this kind of impact on schools and teachers' collective sense of efficacy depends upon the organization's internal norms, expectations, accountability systems, and students, all of which may lead schools to function in some predictable ways in response to NCLB. In what follows, I examine the impact that accountability policy and the policy context may have on teachers' collective sense of efficacy. I also explore the relationship between teachers' collective sense of efficacy and the way schools implement and enact policy and respond to policy outcomes (i.e., sanctions). First, though, I begin with a brief discussion of some intended effects of accountability policy on schools, school personnel, and other stakeholders.

Despite disparate opinions about its means and its ends, NCLB mirrors other accountability policy in terms of its desired two-tier effect on schools. First, accountability policy was meant to impact the management, administration, and assessment of education systems. In the 104th *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* (NSSE), titled *Uses and Misuses of Data for Educational Accountability and Improvement*, Haertel and Herman (2005) provide an historic overview of accountability testing and the various ideas for what the "founders" believed testing could possibly accomplish for schools and students. The founders held that such policies led to improved and standardized curriculum, explicit standards, improved teaching, and better overall management of educational systems. In the same volume, Darling-Hammond and Rustique-Forrester (2005) suggest that accountability policies may generally lead to a deepening of instruction, more and better teacher involvement in school and curriculum-related tasks, more focused professional development, and more dialogue with colleagues—all of which presumably lead to better classroom instruction and more student learning. Others see the same possibilities with NCLB, as schools, leaders, and teachers use this policy to drive reform for better teaching and learning (Fuller & Johnson, 2001; Korchoreck, 2001; Rorrer & Skrla, 2005).

Second, accountability policy was meant to impact school social systems and psychological states of stakeholders both inside and outside of schools. Among other things, performance feedback and a variety of incentives,

rewards, and sanctions, including public display of test results, are expected to serve as the impetus for teachers to maintain high expectations and to strive to meet accountability standards and the needs of all students (Darling-Hammond & Rustique-Forrester, 2005; Haertel & Herman, 2005; Hamilton, 2003). Similarly, Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, and Nolly outline what they consider to be "positives" of the specific equity mandate of NCLB: "a common set of expectations not based on deficit assumptions; strong public attention on achievement gaps; publicly providing accountability data; and focusing district and school leaders on their responsibility for equitably educating all students and holding them accountable for achieving equity and excellence" (2004, p. 137). Presumably, the feedback on assessment should stimulate and motivate teachers, school leaders, parents, and students to work collectively to achieve NCLB goals for all subgroups of students (Haertel & Herman, 2005; Linn, 2005).

Teachers' collective sense of efficacy represents a normative organizational feature that exemplifies the collective beliefs and social processes of a school, which is subject to influence by a variety of factors, including an external accountability policy context. So it is reasonable to imply that teachers' collective sense of efficacy would be shaped by a policy context that focuses on school-level performance and the public display of test results. While some scholars and their research point to the potential "upside," a substantial body of literature shows a potential "downside" of these types of accountability policies and their bearing on schools and school personnel. The threat of sanctions—from negative labels (i.e., academic watch/warning lists, failing schools, improving schools) to actual reconstitution or closings—can trigger any number of negative emotional states within schools. Rice and Malen (2003) identify the "human costs" of education reform, including tasks costs (i.e., time and effort), social costs (i.e., teacher turnover, lost of trust and collegiality) and psychological costs (i.e., loss of professional efficacy). Similarly, Craig (2004) noted the potential negative impact of these policies on the professional identities of teachers by a system that questions their professionalism.

In addition, sanctions may result in school closure, loss of funding, validation of the funding formulas, and/or negative labels. Darling-Hammond and Rustique-Forrester (2005) note that the requirements of NCLB may disproportionately affect poorer, urban, or high-minority schools' ability to retain teachers and may even discourage individuals from pursuing teaching careers. The implication is that already disadvantaged schools face more teacher openings, leading to more novice teachers in front of the classrooms of vulnerable students. Moreover, NCLB requires all schools to do more with the same or less funding. Here is where fiscal inequities between schools loom large as poorer schools with less discretionary funds than wealthier ones shift money from other needed programs to testing. The paradox is that despite funding disparities, schools are expected to attain the same outcomes (Berne, 1994).

As a result of these potential consequences, school personnel may resort to tactics to avoid such negative states and identities, such as cheating on tests, pushing out certain students, and teaching to the test. Urdan and Paris identify what some call "test score pollution" (1994, p. 139) which results from the various "questionable" methods used by teachers and administrators to raise test scores. Also of critical importance is the notion that teachers shift their instructional focus from subjects not tested to those that are tested. Finally, according to Urdan and Paris (1994), teachers' experience with and exposure to these tests becomes a source of efficacy. In other words, past successes or "failures" with high-stakes tests influence what teachers believe about the tests, about their own capabilities as teachers and as a school, and about the capabilities of their students.

A central premise of external accountability policy is that rewards and sanctions serve as an impetus for high expectations and better teacher performance, which lead to improved student performance and achievement. Also mentioned earlier, schools respond differently to these policies based on prior experience and may resort to a variety of tactics to avoid negative sanctions. However, once schools face sanctions, the impact on teachers' collective sense of efficacy is less clear. To explore the potential impact, I refer to those factors (i.e., causal attributions, mastery experience, etc.) that shape and influence collective efficacy beliefs. First, an external sanction's impact on teachers' collective sense of efficacy would be related to their perception of causal attributions. In other words, whether or not the faculty feel responsible for student outcomes on an achievement exam would impact how they perceive their collective power and capability. Further, if the sanction represents a decline in the expected outcomes, the impact on their collective sense of efficacy would be different than if the sanction was expected and/or accepted. Third, the performance of similar schools would serve as vicarious experience—if similar schools also received a sanction, this could validate beliefs and expectations about certain kids and schools and may not negatively impact teachers' collective sense of efficacy. Finally, the manner in which these matters have been dealt with in the past or how the school leader mediates the sanction, may influence how teachers perceive their performance and ability.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE SENSE OF EFFICACY AND SCHOOL RESPONSE TO POLICY MANDATES

While this evidence illustrates the potential impact of accountability policy on teachers' collective sense of efficacy, the relationship between the two is, in fact, reciprocal; teachers' collective sense of efficacy mediates the school's response to external accountability policy and the policy context. Studies suggest that policy enactment and implementation depends to some

degree on the teachers' collective sense of efficacy. Debray, Parsons, and Woodworth found that a school's response to external accountability mechanisms depended upon its alignment with their internal accountability mechanism (if one existed). They found that low performing schools "did not have the internal structures needed to translate the mandate into coherent actions" that would lead to improvement (2001, p. 170). Generally, these schools lacked a sense of shared expectations for teachers and students, and teachers lacked individual responsibility for student achievement (both described as part of the school's internal structure), which undermined efforts at internal and external accountability. Similarly, Newman, King, and Rigdon (1997) contend that simply putting an accountability system in place where the organizational capacity to implement may be weak will not yield the expected or desired results. Judgments of the faculty's capacity and expectations for themselves and students, as well as individual and collective responsibility, all relate to and impact teachers' collective sense of efficacy, and subsequently, the school's ability and capability to carry out external policy demands.

Further, Abelman et al. (1999) found that schools constructed their own conceptions of accountability, which were informed a great deal by the social backgrounds of their students. Schools made independent decisions about the academic content disadvantaged students should learn and to whom teachers should be accountable. Further, these authors suggest that an external accountability policy may be of little consequence in a normative environment where teachers interpret their students' academic needs as low level; teachers would not feel collectively responsible for high student achievement and student outcomes and would be inefficacious regarding how to improve outcomes. Similarly, O'Day (2002) found that collective responsibility for student learning mattered to school response to external mandates, which varied based on school SES and prior achievement levels.

Moreover, Diamond and Spillane found that school status as either high performing or low performing led to differential responses to accountability policy. As previously mentioned, in higher performing schools, teachers typically have higher collective sense of efficacy compared to their counterparts in lower performing schools. In their study, low performing schools, specifically those classified as being "on probation," focused more on the sanction and steered their efforts towards "getting off probation," which lead to "superficial responses that were cosmetic with regard to classroom instruction" (2004, p. 1158). School leaders used the possible sanction as a threat to encourage teachers to adapt current practice. In high-performing schools, leaders used praise as the incentive for teachers. These researchers concluded that accountability policies may actually promote educational inequality because high-performing schools can respond by focusing on instructional improvement, while low-performing schools must respond to the external threat. Not surprisingly, in all the aforementioned studies, we

see demographic factors (i.e., SES, prior achievement, students' social backgrounds) as key determinants of school internal structure and capacity to address and respond productively to external policy mandates.

External accountability policy such as NCLB, and specifically, the embedded equity mandate, may shape and/or reinforce what teachers believe about themselves and their students and may induce school personnel to perceive, act, and behave in a variety of ways consistent with those beliefs. Ideally, one would hope that any evidence of student or school underperformance would compel school personnel to refocus and recommit to instructional improvement (Goddard & Sklra, 2006). However, Abelman et al. contend, "The world that administrators and teachers see is bounded by their particular settings, their own conceptions of who they are, who they serve, what they expect of students, and what they think of as good teaching and good learning" (1999, p. 1). This statement and the evidence implicate teachers' collective sense of efficacy, specifically related to the school's and students' backgrounds, as a key factor in whether schools can effectively navigate accountability policy toward improved student achievement and the closing of achievement gaps. If this is, in fact, the case, then Abelman et al. offer this discouraging reflection: "Put bluntly, many educators simply do not believe they have the capability to influence student learning in ways that external accountability systems suggest they do (p. 43)."

SCHOOL LEADERS AND TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE SENSE OF EFFICACY

This gloomy outlook offered by Abelman et al. reveals the special circumstances facing school leaders and the implications for unique leadership needed in high-minority, high-poverty, and/or low-performing school settings, particularly in the current policy context. Essentially, leaders in challenging school contexts must convey to teachers a sense of certainty in and salience of their capacity and effort to improve student performance despite the "evidence" of past performance and commonly-held beliefs about race, class and achievement. Further, as key "policy targets" (Honig, 2006, p. 15) of NCLB and key mediators of the policy context, school leaders must act with the intention of shaping schools' shared understandings and shaping implementation of policy mandates. After a brief discussion of school leaders' role in mediating policy contexts, I will discuss the ways in which they can shape and influence teachers' collective sense of efficacy toward a productive response to the equity mandate of NCLB.

A myriad of studies document the variety of roles building-level school leaders play in mediating policy contexts (Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Fuller & Johnson, 2001; Honig & Hatch, 2004; Korchoreck, 2001; Malen, 2006; Rorrer & Sklra, 2005; Spillane, Reiser, & Gomez, 2006). Generally, this literature suggests

that school leaders interpret external policy and help others understand and make sense of expectations related to policy. This requires them to reduce ambiguity and find ways to match external policy demands to internal or local policy initiatives and desired outcomes (Honig, 2006). Important here is that school leaders' own orientations, including the social, demographic, and cultural contexts of the school environment, shape the ways in which they perceive the policy mandate but also the meanings and understanding they select to convey to the broader local environment (Rosenholtz, 1985; Spillane, Rieser, & Gomez, 2006). In addition to interpretation, school leaders lead efforts to implement policy, in whole or in part, and use their own power and authority to allocate human, material, and financial resources towards certain initiatives and structures and away from other less desirable ones (Honig, 2006).

School leaders' roles in policy interpretation and implementation hinge upon the effective selection, dissemination, and use of information. Leaders determine what information gets used or omitted, whether the information is accurate, who gets the information, and how the information is to be used (Malen, 2006; Spillane, Rieser, & Gomez, 2006). Further, leaders help determine the individual and collective actions that should be taken based on specific information. For example, while NLCB requires that schools disaggregate data by race, class, gender, and other areas of difference, school leaders make decisions about how (or whether) to utilize this information. Further, they interpret results, make suggestions about attributions, and recommend strategies to address them. In this way, school leaders mediate the effects of sanctions that could stigmatize schools and teachers, which could lead to more external oversight or reconstitution and affect faculty motivation and effort (Malen, 2006).

External policy mandates situate school leaders at the front of policy contexts in ways that allow them to shape meanings and actions for schools and for teachers. It follows that much of what school leaders say and do becomes part of the teachers' cognitive processing and psychological state; they use school leaders to gauge their own effectiveness, which shapes individual and collective sense of efficacy. The literature also suggests that school leaders can take deliberate and purposeful actions to intervene and positively influence teachers' collective sense of efficacy. This discussion of equity mandates and teachers' collective sense of efficacy points to some implications for the unique leadership needed in high-minority, high-poverty, and low-performing schools.

Some scholars argue that leaders can promote positive ways to think about accountability demands and educational equity (Fuller & Johnson, 2001; Korchoreck, 2001; Rorrer & Sklra, 2005). Specifically, leaders act as "policy mediators" (Rorrer & Sklra, 2005) who convey the significance of accountability and achievement of all students and groups of students. Furthermore, Sklra, Scheurich, Garcia, and Nolly (2004) suggest that schools use data as a diagnostic tool to guide future educational planning. In this way, data on school performance may not represent failure, but instead serve as an indicator of what is happening and what may need to happen to ensure educational equity.

In addition, school leaders can and do influence teachers' work environment. Feelings of control can be particularly important in challenging school environments. Lee et al. (1991) suggests that teachers need "reasonable autonomy" and a level of control so that they may exercise instructionally relevant decisions. School leaders must empower teachers to exercise their collective agency by acting as advocates of their instructional efforts (Bandura, 1997; Goddard, 2001b). Newmann, Rutter, and Smith (1989) found that certain organizational features such as orderliness, encouragement, innovation, and administrator responsiveness enhanced faculty's collective sense of efficacy. Because schools with poor students or with more students of color are perceived to be disorderly, Watson et al. (2001) and Newmann et al. (1989) espouse the importance of perceived "smooth functioning" of the school as key to building collective sense of efficacy. Further, studies show that school leaders can enhance collective sense of efficacy by creating short-term, measurable goals and providing useful performance feedback on those goals (Goddard, 2001; Goddard, LoGerfo, & Hoy, 2004). Finally, school leaders must create opportunities for teachers to experience more success with low-income students and students of color in order to reshape and build teachers' collective sense of efficacy.

Finally, by their actions and nonactions, words spoken and not spoken, school leaders influence school culture, which includes school beliefs and values, the establishment of school vision, and building a sense of community (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Firestone & Louis, 1999). School leaders help others make sense of their environment by taking organizational and institutional cues, identifying patterns, filtering information, and guiding actions and behaviors (Evans, 2007). Central to sensemaking in the current policy context is the way in which the school leader talks about external policy mandates, expectations, NCLB, race, class, and student achievement (Evans, 2007; Hill, 2006). In fact, as Pollack (2001) suggests, it is the social construction of ability as it relates to race, class, and language that contributes to racialized patterns in achievement (Pollack, 2001). Thus, as "talk as the work" (Gronn, 1983), one can infer that if school leaders fail to frame or make sense of achievement gaps in ways that acknowledge collective "communal responsibility," (Pollack, 2001, p. 10), they would also fail to the enhance the collective sense of efficacy needed for teachers to take collective responsibility and agency towards dismantling these gaps.

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The central aim of this article is to explore the construct of teachers' collective sense of efficacy and its relationship to race, class, achievement, and the equity mandate of NCLB. The way in which a group of teachers collectively

function in response to this mandate depends upon a number of factors, but none more important than what the teachers believes about the policy itself, their students, and themselves as educators, as these beliefs dictate their actions, decisions, and ultimately group goal attainment. Since a faculty's collective sense of efficacy is both context specific and task specific, the confluence of race, class, and historic achievement gaps within the context of NCLB calls into question whether school faculty feel collectively efficacious in teaching and achieving academic success with poor, low-performing, and/or minority students.

Recall the questions put forth earlier in this article: Do schools actually believe they can effectively respond to NCLB's equity mandate to close achievement gaps? Put differently, How efficacious are school faculty in responding to the equity mandate to address race- and class-based achievement gaps? The answer to the latter question appears to be a resounding "not very." This article supports the notion that that within certain school organizations, teachers may feel less competent and less responsible, and therefore, less efficacious to address the needs of students of color and of low-performing and/or poor students. Further, there is a reciprocal effect between teachers' judgments and student behaviors that proves to be self-reinforcing and normative for students and teachers (Ferguson, 2003). Research also shows that mastery experience significantly impacts teachers' collective sense of efficacy somewhat more than other factors, which can be cyclical in that success breeds greater sense of efficacy and more success, while failure breeds less efficacious feelings, which then undermine a school's efforts toward improvement and perpetuate longstanding achievement disparities.

The scholarly literature reflects the growing attention to the construct of collective sense of efficacy in relation to schools. This research, mostly quantitative in nature, explores the many factors relevant to teachers' collective sense of efficacy and school and student achievement. In future research, scholars might explore other methods to study collective sense of efficacy and particularly its relationship to race. While collective efficacy studies tend to show a positive relationship between socioeconomic status and teachers' collective sense of efficacy, the impact of race as a factor is somewhat mixed or shows no independent effect on collective sense of efficacy. As earlier discussed, it is likely that SES or mastery experience in the form of prior student achievement masks the independent impact of race. One negative implication from these quantitative studies may be the conclusion that race does not matter to teachers' collective sense of efficacy. This circumstance calls for additional study, particularly the use of qualitative studies of collective sense of efficacy. Qualitative studies may better account for the influence of race as a factor, as well as for the specificity of its influence on teachers' collective beliefs and behaviors. In addition, we may learn more about the racialized discourse that takes place in schools

and how it might contribute to teachers' collective sense of efficacy. Specifically, qualitative studies would yield more in-depth discussions about teachers' judgments related to race, which may be masked or underestimated in quantitative research studies.

Other implications for future research include additional examination of how collective sense of efficacy manifests in schools, specifically how teachers' collective psychosocial state relates to specific collective and/or individual actions and behaviors. For example, a recent study by Schechter (2008) shows a positive relationship between teachers' collective sense of efficacy and the organizational learning mechanisms that exist within a school, which describes the degree to which knowledge and information related to teaching and learning gets distributed and used. Other studies that explore relationships between aspects of organizational functioning and teachers' collective sense of efficacy would bring an additional awareness and significance to this important organizational feature.

Studies show how leaders mediate policy and policy contexts, which may ultimately influence teachers' collective sense of efficacy (Fuller & Johnson, 2001; O'Day, 2002; Korchoreck, 2001; Rorrer & Sklra, 2005; Sklra, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004; Sipple, Killeen, & Monk, 2004). Also, studies suggest that low-performing schools may lack the type of internal accountability system necessary to support the demands of external policy. Moreover, O'Day contends that the notion of professionalism, which includes collective responsibility, appears to be weaker in schools serving students of color and low-income students, making necessary the external accountability to replace what schools lack internally (O'Day, 2002). Missing in this research is a specific focus on how leaders can build internal accountability systems within low-performing schools, ones establishing normative structures that influence teacher behavior and beliefs. Since external policies like NCLB can only assess, reward, or sanction school organizations, these internal accountability systems might include policies that drive individual teacher assessment and incentives that improve teacher performance (O'Day, 2002).

Pollack offers educators several implications for talk about racialized (and other) achievement patterns; I use these same implications specifically for school leaders. Amid what she terms the "American habit" (Pollack, 2001, p. 10) to expect racialized and class-based achievement patterns, school leaders must explicitly maintain that such patterns are unnatural, get beyond simply talking about who is responsible for achievement gaps, and "forge an urgent language of communal responsibility, for only such a language will unify rather than divide various players in the common task of making such patterns go away (Pollack, 2001, p. 10). First, though, leaders must clarify their own personal and professional ideologies that acknowledge the various manifestations of racism and classism in schools. Only then can school leaders engender new organizational and collective

ideologies that affirm teachers' power and capability to affect the academic achievement of low performing students (Evans, 2007). However, more research on principal sense of efficacy would help explore whether principals believe they have what it takes to engage teachers in the types of behaviors, beliefs, and "talk" needed to enhance teachers' collective sense of efficacy, particularly in racially and socially diverse school environments.

The relationship between teachers' collective sense of efficacy and student achievement appears to be vitally important and should warrant a great deal of attention. It is an a priori condition for the effective enactment of educational reform efforts. The fact that collective sense of efficacy is an alterable organizational condition makes it even more significant and worthy of investigation. To enhance teachers' sense of efficacy means to enhance their belief in their educability of all children, even those in challenging circumstances, as well as the belief that teachers collectively can help children overcome and achieve at high levels. While this claim may reflect the rhetoric around closing achievement gaps, it should also reflect the collective sense of efficacy in some of America's most challenging schools. Teachers' collective sense of efficacy as a feature of schools encourages attention to the cognitive and affective states of school personnel on the way to and as a determinant of their professional growth and learning related to school reform and change. The efficacy of curriculum, content, and reform strategies are only as effective as the individuals who deliver or implement them. As such, much more attention needs to be paid to the psychological states of teachers and leaders, as what they do most likely is derived from what they think about what they do and who they serve. The absence of this attention renders policies like NCLB ineffective at meeting the goal of equitable educational outcomes.

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