Teacher and Policy Alignment
A Phenomenological Study Highlighting Title I High School Teachers' Professional Development Experiences

LaNysha T. Adams
University of New Mexico

In education, professional development (PD) is the continuing education of teachers and administrators. Many studies have described PD as a conventional, top-down type of training that teachers experience in schools (Colbert, Brown, Choi, & Thomas, 2008; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Little, 1992; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Commonly known as the "institutional model," this type of PD is isolated from classroom practice and occurs as mandatory workshops, courses, seminars, and brief trainings by experts (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Desimone, Smith, Baker, & Ueno, 2005; Guskey, 2003; Hargreaves, 2011; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Phillips, Desimone, & Smith, 2011). Researchers (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Oakes & Lipton, 2003; Tarc, 2012; Van Veen, Zwart, & Meirink, 2011) argue that institutionalized one-day models of PD are often not applicable to teachers' needs, do not have any follow-up, and are expensive.

Researchers (Buysse, Winton, & Rous, 2009; Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 2003) have pointed to a lack of clarity and consensus about the meaning of PD, and much of the research focuses on building a common conceptual framework for researchers to understand and better measure the

LaNysha T. Adams is a doctoral candidate in the program in language, literacy, and sociocultural studies in the College of Education at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Her e-mail address is lanysha@gmail.com

construct. Such research (Buysse et al., 2009; Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 2003) has provided insight into the fragmented nature of PD; however, it has not provided a deeper understanding of how teachers perceive and describe their PD experiences and what teachers deem as best for themselves and their students. Thus, the purpose of this study is to describe and explain three Title I high school teachers' experiences of PD, while capturing their perceptions of its meaning.

Background:
### NCLB, Title I, and New Mexico's Three-Tiered Licensure System

In addition to requiring all states to adopt a standards and testing regime to ensure that no child, regardless of native language or income level, is "left behind," the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act greatly underscores the need for "highly qualified" teachers and "high quality" PD (NCLB, 2002). NCLB is a major legislative reform of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), originally established in 1965 to improve educational equity for students from low-income families by providing federal funds to states through the Title I program. Through the federal program, Title I schools are defined as schools that have student body populations for which at least 40% of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (Jennings, 2001). Title I is the oldest and largest federally funded program in the United States, and its purpose is to narrow the achievement gap that exists between middle- and low-income children by providing extra resources to help improve instruction in high-poverty schools (Jennings, 2001). Unlike previous versions of federal policy, NCLB mandates that all states that receive federal funds (i.e., Title I schools) must adopt academic standards to guide their curricula and implement a testing and accountability system that is aligned with those standards (McGuinn, 2006).

NCLB (2002) also requires all public schools to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) so that no child is "left behind" in the progression toward 100% state proficiency by the 2014 deadline. Because they receive federal dollars, if Title I schools fail to make AYP, these schools must take a number of corrective actions with potential consequences that include the loss of funding, intensive PD for teachers, the replacement of school staff, the adoption of new curricula, and/or reopening as a charter school (McGuinn, 2006). Unless given a flexibility waiver by the Obama Administration, if Congress passes no reauthorization of the ESEA, Title I schools throughout the United States could be subject to federal sanctions if they fail to meet the 100% proficiency goal in reading and math for all students by 2014.

In 2003, the largest school reform law in New Mexico since 1986, House Bill (HB) 212, the *Public Schools Reform Act*, was enacted to promote a career ladder for teachers and school administrators, to increase teacher salaries, and to adhere to the requirements of NCLB. HB 212 blended New Mexico's three-tiered licensure system and NCLB's (2002) "high quality" PD and "highly qualified" teacher requirements into a systematic approach to "elevate the teaching profession and help New Mexico expand the supply and improve the quality of New Mexico's teachers" (NEA-New Mexico Professional Issues Committee, n.d., p. 2). HB 212 requires all Level I teachers to advance in the system within five years and provides the option for teachers to remain at Level II for the remainder of their career. To advance, teachers submit a professional development dossier, modeled after the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification portfolio, in which they must provide evidence of performance in three dimensions: instruction, student learning, and professional learning (Darling-Hammond, 2012). Figure 1 presents an overview of key elements in New Mexico's three-tiered licensure system.

Another key component of HB 212 is the NCLB (2002) mandate of the Highly Objective Uniform Statewide Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE), which requires teachers, in conjunction with their principals, to create annual professional development plans (PDP) differentiated by licensure level. Additionally, school districts are required to have "aligned

Figure 1
Key Elements of New Mexico's Three-Tiered Licensure System
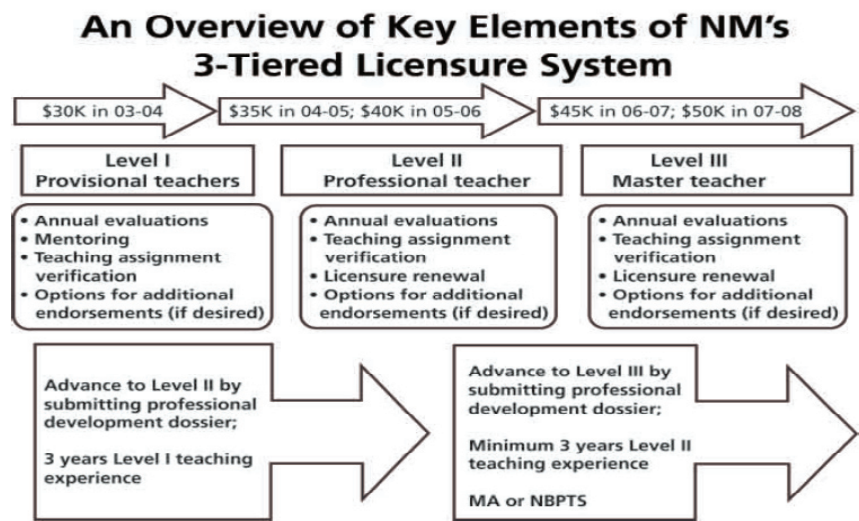
professional development," where PD, as specified in teachers' PDPs, is aligned to the instructional or organizational needs of the school and to the district's strategic plan to meet AYP (New Mexico Administrative Code [NMAC] 6.29.1). This strategic plan to meet AYP is called the Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS).

On February 15, 2012, New Mexico became the 11th state to receive a flexibility waiver from the 2014 targets set by NCLB. With the waiver, Title I schools in New Mexico are no longer subject to certain accountability rules, such as meeting AYP. As a result of the waiver, public schools in New Mexico switched from a focus on AYP to a system that assigns letter grades to rate the performance of public schools, one that is based heavily on standardized test scores and value-added models of growth in student performance (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2012). Beginning School Year (SY) 2013-2014, teachers' PDPs must be aligned with the school's or the district's EPSS, which will be a strategic plan to raise their school's letter grade instead of meeting AYP. Changes in federal and state requirements for increasing teacher quality greatly affect teachers' perceptions, understandings, and experiences of PD.

Research Design and Methods

Because the purpose of this study is to explore the meaning, structure, and essence of the PD experiences of three Title I high school teachers, a phenomenological methodology is appropriate. Phenomenological research, explained by van Manen (1990) as the study of lived experience, the explication of phenomena as they present themselves to consciousness, and as the study of essences, informs the design of this study. More specifically, the author chose interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) because it is concerned with people's "lived experiences" and goes beyond the two dominant approaches of hermeneutic (associated with van Manen, 1990) and transcendental (associated with Moustaka, 1994) phenomenology to be interpretive. IPA, similar to phenomenology in general, is a qualitative research approach that focuses on how life is experienced from the participants' perspectives and how these processes of interpretation are shared and socially constructed (Creswell, 2007; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Phenomenological researchers engaged in interpretations of lived experiences are involved in a process that Smith et al. describe as a "double hermeneutic" (p. 35), which requires researchers to engage in a combination of phenomenological and hermeneutic insights because they are trying to make sense of their participants, who are trying to make sense of their lived experiences. For this study,

the central guiding research question is: What is the meaning of PD for secondary teachers, as they have experienced it?

Approval to collect data was obtained from the University of New Mexico's Institutional Review Board. All data have been rendered confidential through the use of pseudonyms and the disguise of other signifiers. Three high school teachers were purposively selected from the same Title I high school in need of improvement in a large urban school district in the Southwest during SY 2011-2012. Under NCLB (2002), schools that do not make AYP for two consecutive years are identified for "school improvement," and they must draft a school improvement plan and devote at least 10% of federal funds provided under the Title I program to PD. This study was completed before the ESEA flexibility waiver requirements were implemented in New Mexico.

In addition to being representative of Title I schools in a large urban school district in the Southwest, this school was selected because a relationship already had been established through the Academic Literacy for All (ALA) project, a federally funded PD project. The ALA project is designed to help core content area teachers facilitate the language and literacy development of their students, with a focus on the needs of English language learners (Mahn, Bruce, & Adams, 2010).

Criterion sampling was employed to ensure that participants had considerable experience with PD (Creswell, 2007). Participants were female high school teachers at three different licensure levels, in three different professional learning communities (PLCs), and actively involved in the ALA Project. Ms. A, a Level I teacher, has three years of teaching experience and teaches English full-time. Ms. B, a Level II teacher, has eight years of teaching experience and teaches bilingual language arts classes full-time. Ms. C, a Level III teacher, has 17 years of teaching experience and teaches English and English as a Second Language (ESL) part-time.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected from two sets of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with three teachers (n=3), one focus group with two teachers (n=2), and the district's EPSS for SY 2011-2012. The district's EPSS was retrieved online from the school district's website. The EPSS, as a strategic plan to promote student success and school improvement to meet AYP throughout the district, provided a way for the author to validate the participants' structural descriptions of their PD experiences. The purpose of collecting data from multiple sources was to obtain a fuller understanding of the PD experienced by teachers and to triangulate the data to contrast the sources of information to one another (Creswell, 2007).

Both sets of one-on-one interviews (n=3) were informed by Seidman's (2006) three-series interview format. The first interview focused on the participants' "focused life history" (p. 17) as a teacher. In the second interview, the author asked the participants to explain the details of their current PD experiences and to reflect on the meaning of those experiences. In the focus group (n=2), the discussion followed a sequenced "question route" (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 42). All three teachers agreed to participate in the focus group; however, Ms. C was not able.

All interviews with the teachers (n=3) and the focus group (n=2) were digitally recorded, transcribed, and organized through NVivo 7, a qualitative software package. An inductive process of open, axial, and selective coding was used to analyze transcripts first by hand, with colored pencils, and then electronically. Additionally, Smith et al.'s (2009) explanation of a "double hermeneutic" (p. 35) was imperative for data analysis. The author applied the notion of a double hermeneutic to analyze the data as she tried to make sense of the participants' explanations of PD, who were making sense of their PD experiences. In representing the structure of the teachers' PD experiences, the author used van Manen's (1990) approach to thematic analysis because, when phenomenologists "analyze a phenomenon, [they] are trying to determine what the themes are, the experiential structures that make up the experience" (p. 79). The author's interpretations were reviewed for accuracy by asking participants to confirm her interpretations and to provide clarification where necessary. All participants endorsed the themes represented in Figure 2.

Findings

The thematic results reported below provide a descriptive account of PD as defined by Title I high school teachers in two in-depth, semi-structured interviews (n=3) and one focus group (n=2), categorized around four broad thematic topics: (a) difficulties in defining PD; (b) being a teacher in the education profession; (d) good teaching and effective PD; and (d) being professionally developed. While the participants' descriptions of PD were based on their individual perceptions, their descriptions of PD were triangulated with the information analyzed in the district's EPSS. Triangulating the data helped the author understand how the participants' experiences of PD related to the EPSS, which fulfills an annual requirement for school districts to have teachers' PD aligned with their strategic plan to meet NCLB (2002) AYP and HOUSSE requirements.

Theme 1: Difficulties in Defining PD

All participants were asked, "What is PD?" Each teacher clarified

and asked, "What is it or what should it be?" The use of the subjunctive "should" indicated that their actual experiences of PD were contrary to the fact of their commonly understood definition of PD. The participants' descriptions of PD varied based on perceived ideals and actualities. When participants talked about what PD should be, they discussed it in terms of process: "a time that is given to teachers to look at best practices, things that are best meant for students" (Ms. B, Interview 2, lines 675-677) and "mostly an opportunity for teachers and, well, educators, I guess, in general, to grow, um, professionally" (Ms. A, Interview 2, lines 2-3). Ms. A elaborated on what PD should be:

PD should be time to practice this and then some sort of follow-up

Figure 2
Teachers' Descriptions of Professional Development
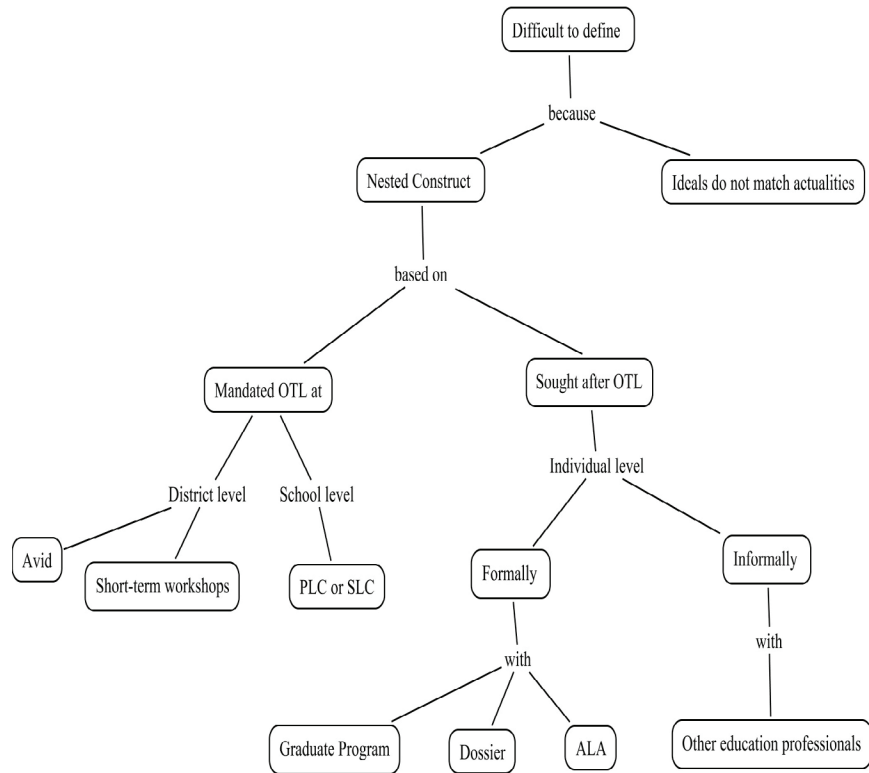
Note. ALA=Academic Literacy for All project; AVID=Advancement Via Individual Determination program training; Dossier=Professional Development Dossier; PLC/SLC=Professional Learning Community/Small Learning Community; OTL=Opportunities to Learn.

conversation as to how or why that worked or didn't work. Um, but I think it's about really this idea that we're a community of teachers who are sharing ideas. And so I would say that, if I was explaining this to someone outside of teaching, that it really has to do with sort of valuing each other's professional knowledge of teaching, you know. And, um, making good use of that. (Interview 2, lines 90-96)

Ms. B's description relates to Ms. A's description of what PD should be:

If I'm in a positive group, and we're discussing and we're looking at things, those are rare opportunities, but when it happens it's magical. You know, when there's, there's a respect there. That you're just like, this is why I'm doing what I'm doing. (Focus group, lines 974-977)

Reporting her actual PD experiences, Ms. C stated, "Somebody decides this is what you need, and you're told this is what you need and it doesn't necessarily line up at all with what you have, or what you want or what you think you need" (Interview 2, lines 291-293). For Ms. A, PD was:

Mostly . . . well, what consists of being presented with some strategy or idea. And then typically, once we leave that session, whether we take it to our classrooms and actually try it or practice, it is never followed up on. There's no real sense of accountability. (Interview 2, lines 7-15)

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program training, Advanced Placement (AP) training, and one-day workshops were described as PD at the district level. Ms. C explained that these district-mandated types of PD were: "stupid, where they would send, like, four clusters over to [a high school], and we'd be in the auditorium. . . . I would take a crossword and just do the crossword. Tune out" (Interview 2, lines 379-387).

At the school level, the participants described PD as being organized according to PLCs that target the different grade levels and student success for careers and college. The district's EPSS did not specify how the PLCs at each school must be structured, but it did require groups of teachers to work together to examine their practice in PLCs or small learning communities (SLCs). At this high school in the district, an elected teacher facilitates the collaboration and leads the PLC. Each of the participants' PLCs met three times a week. The PLCs "are at different periods of the day, so there's no opportunity for collaboration across [them]" (Ms. A, Focus Group, lines 112-113). Part-time teachers "don't get a lot" and "don't have to go to the meetings" (Ms. C, Interview 2, lines 337-388). In the focus group, Ms. B and Ms. A discussed the differences in their PLCs. Ms. B described her PLC as engaging and well worth her time:

> [The PLC leader] says, "Okay, guys, you need to sign up for this!" So today, um, one of the teachers, it was a really phenomenal thing, talked about critical reading through AVID and how he's using it in his special education class. He's very excited. He showed the student work. So it was a really good PD. . . . We had a geometry teacher, a bilingual geometry teacher whose first language is Spanish actually come up and say, um, through the Promethean board of how the Promethean board, um, enhances his instructional capabilities. And so he went through all of his assignments, and everybody was pretty much enthralled. (Focus group, lines 44-55)

In the focus group, Ms. A, in contrast, described her PLC as disengaging:

> It's similar in that we sign up for days to lead PD but it's not very effective. . . . Teachers don't want to be there, there's no buy-in in my [PLC]. They really resent having to come. Like, literally, the second that it's done or there's made mention of stopping the meeting and going back to class, like, teachers are out the door. (Focus group, lines 83-89)

At the individual level, all participants described two types of opportunities to learn (OTL): formal and informal. In seeking an OTL how to best meet the needs of their students, Ms. C, Ms. B, and Ms. A found the ALA Project. They described the ALA project as an opportunity to learn in a more formal setting and as part of their individual quest to develop professionally and improve student learning. In the focus group, Ms. A and Ms. B explained how the ALA project helped them complete the PD dossier, which was described as another formal OTL and advance in the three-tiered licensure system (Figure 2).

Informal opportunities to learn were described as "being around teachers who know. And know how to [teach]" (Ms. A, Focus group, lines 677-678). Building from the knowledge of more experienced teachers, Ms. A described learning from a colleague:

> I just went in and watched her in her class and then, um, she and I had a one-on-one conversation about it. So that kinda stuff is most helpful for me, things I can look at and are of immediate use. (Interview 2, lines 60-62)

Ms. C explained that, after 17 years of teaching, "What I've learned is, I have to [seek opportunities to learn]. It's my job. If I want to learn and know, just like anything else, I guess, I gotta go find it" (Interview 2, lines 555-560).

Theme 2: Being a Teacher in the Education Profession

Developing professionally as a better teacher was expressed as a process of being a teacher. Ms. C explained that, in teaching:

Professionalism means that I do not diss my fellow teachers, whether they're there or not. It means I support them, even if I disagree with what they're doing. I mean, even if I disagree with the party line, but try to at least hold onto the party line. I mean, part of that is being . . . professional. (Interview 1, lines 1099-1110)

Ms. A said that being a professional meant:

Trying to be innovative and stay on top of all of new research, new teaching techniques and strategies . . . that's what it means to be professional. Where you're treating it like it's a profession . . . being part of a community." (Interview 1, lines 1708-1710)

The concept of being a teacher as a constant state of becoming or constantly growing to be better in a relational way with students was an essential aspect of this theme. On an individual basis, the participants expressed a lifelong commitment to learning and to becoming better teachers. To be a good teacher meant seeing learning "more like a partnership between the student" (Ms. A, Interview 1, lines 1718-1719). For Ms. A, "part of becoming a better teacher is curiosity. Like, asking yourself questions and just reflecting and being curious about, like, is this really what's going to be best for them? What will really be meaningful?" (Focus group, lines 805-809). For Ms. B, being "able to connect to the kids" was the key to being an effective teacher because "if you cannot build a relationship to your students, then there's no way they're going to learn in your classroom. This is not possible" (Interview 1, line 348-352). Ms. C explained, "You can know everything. You can have the best strategies in the world. [But] if you can't build a relationship with the kids, then it won't be as effective" (Interview 1, lines 1037-1039).

For the participants in this study, a quest for pedagogical knowledge, along with a commitment to a lifelong career in education, were two common descriptions of what it meant to be a teacher in the education profession. Ms. A and Ms. B expressed their commitment to obtaining the highest status of teaching in New Mexico, Level III: Master Teacher before moving on to some other position in the education profession. Ms. A mentioned a full career of teaching as her being:

Sort of a leader in education, in terms of not like research or pedagogy or any of that stuff, but I don't know . . . not administrative . . . like, really involved in a professional organization, you know. Help to give teachers really good ideas, you know, and sort of experiment with stuff. That's where I would like to be. (Interview 1, lines 1683-1693)

Ms. B talked about obtaining a doctorate and becoming a teacher trainer. She explained, "I still don't feel great. I think I'm a good teacher in the process of being great. I was an adequate teacher. I know I have im-

proved, but there's still so much more that I need to do" (Interview 1, lines 659-661). Ms. C "can retire in seven years" (Interview 1, line 1503) and explained that, even if she did retire, teaching would always be part of her work, no matter what she did.

Theme 3: Good Teaching and Effective PD

For these participants, effective PD leads to good teaching results. Good teaching overlapped with the participants' notions of good student learning. Ms. C explained that a good day of teaching had:

> A minimal number of interruptions. Ahh, kids talking. And negotiating their understanding about what they're doing with each other. Not asking for repetitions. Not asking what page we're on. Maybe even arguing amongst themselves about what something means. Or about an idea that's been brought up. (Interview 1, lines 1056-1061)

Ms. B emphasized good learning as students' making connections, thinking independently, and collaborating with one another:

> When they make the connections. When they're on task. You know, a good day of teaching is when I haven't had to be, you know, I haven't had to be a babysitter. I really have been able to stand back and teach the first, maybe, ten or fifteen minutes and then let them go. Give them an activity and then just let them go. And then, you know, walk around. Monitor. Watch. Give some input sometimes, but really stand back from it. . . . That, for me, is just, you know, just to watch them learn from each other and take it to a whole 'nother level is just incredible. (Interview 1, 418-426)

In the second interview, Ms. A asserted that effective PD must be linked to student engagement and student learning, and it "should relate to topics of the classroom or towards student populations" (lines 86-86). For the participants in this study, effective PD resulted in teacher learning, which had subsequent effects on good teaching and student learning. For these participants, learning was continuous and meant "having a new, changed understanding. Or an awareness of something you didn't have before" (Ms. C, Interview 2, lines 199-200).

Effective PD seemed to partially satisfy a never-ending, internal process to be good or better at teaching. Ms. B explained: "I think, for me, the key to success of being a good teacher is to look at my failures" (Focus Group, lines 816-817). Becoming a better teacher requires checking in with students for feedback:

> Like, every semester, at the end of every unit, I'll ask the kids to write me, like, a short reflection on the unit, what was really good, what was crappy, like, what do I need to do to specifically change to make things

> better. . . . This semester I had came back from break and I had changed, like, half of the stuff they'd been doing, our routines, 'cause they didn't think that they were effective. (Ms. A, Focus Group, lines 784-792)

For Ms. C, effective PD "would have to be something that you feel like you can use. Something that you want, you need . . . and that is interactive" (Interview 2, lines 449-551).

At the school level, according to the participants, the PLCs needed to be goal oriented to advance pedagogical knowledge to be effective. Ms. A, who described her PLC as "really ineffective" (Focus group, line 145) this year, discussed how they worked as a team last year to complete an interdisciplinary project across content areas and grade levels: "It was awesome, and we gained so much from that because we were sharing our practices, sharing our teaching, sharing student work, some of us, and it was really effective. This year, I don't know what happened" (Focus Group, lines 224-226).

Theme 4: Being Professionally "Developed"

Being professionally developed meant mandated PD, for which the participants were required to attend and listen to outside experts. In describing mandated PD at the district and school levels, Ms. C stated:

> They have the idea that, if you're a prophet from another land, then you're valuable. But if you're from another land, then you don't know the land you're in. If you don't know the land you're in, then why should [we] listen to you? (Interview 2, lines 460-461)

In workshops or training sessions where teachers were presented at and/or to: "Usually, there's not a lot of research that's presented to us, like, in terms of why this works, or how this works, or in what communities this works" (Ms. A, Interview 2, lines 10-11). Ms. C explained that, in workshops on teaching, very little of it had pedagogical application: "That's what we got. All this information" (Interview 2, line 325).

In addition to guiding district-wide progress toward meeting AYP, the district's EPSS is a yearlong strategic plan that also specifies teachers' PD activities related to improvement in seven goal areas: (a) reading, (b) math, (c) highly qualified staff, (d) English language learners, (e) safe learning environments, (f) graduation, and (g) parent engagement partnership. In the EPSS, the AVID was listed as a program to be used to achieve the goal to increase graduation rates based on its focus on early college planning. The EPSS described AVID as providing "students with tutoring" and "study skills that apply across content areas and goal-directed planning support." Details from the district's EPSS matched the participants' descriptions of mandated OTL at the district and school levels (Figure 2).

Of particular note in the district's EPSS were the goals for all students to be proficient in reading and math on the New Mexico Standards Based Assessment (NMSBA) to meet AYP, which required teachers to participate in PLCs and training sessions for all specialized instructional materials used to achieve reading and math proficiency goals. In the interviews, the participants talked about READ 180 and Edge, two examples of specialized instructional materials that the district specified in the EPSS to increase reading proficiency on the NMSBA. Read 180 requires implementation training and PD on how to use the teacher dashboard, instructional materials, and student performance data. Ms. A explained:

> I taught a Read 180 class, and we had PD all year, all year, and it was, uggh, my gosh. It was at least one day a month. It was ridiculous how many days I was out of school for that. And the parts that I did not like about that, specifically, was the amount of time that was wasted during the day. (Ms. A, Interview 2, lines 66-73)

Edge is a core reading and language arts program designed for students who read below grade level and prepares students for success in reading on the NMSBA. Ms. C described having to stop using an effective teaching method that "the kids loved" to "teach this Edge textbook," which disengaged her students (Interview 2, lines 594-596).

Being professionally developed seemed informed by an external process to be made good or better at teaching, culminating in trainings, products, or short-term events. Ms. C was sent to an AP English training, even though she teaches "regular English" and had no plans to teach an AP English course. In the second interview, Ms. C explained:

> I guess that's PD. Yeah, I didn't like it (line 403) because it was very AP. It was very elite. [The other teachers] knew their literature in and out, and I didn't. I didn't know it all because I've never taught regular English, much less AP. (lines 420-423)

Ms. C did not have any choice in whether to attend the AP English training and explained that, over the course of her 17-year career, "this is how it is . . . that's what [PD] has been" (Interview 2, lines 480-481).

Discussion

This study suggests that PD, as defined by three Title I high school teachers' experiences, is a nested construct, differing in meaning, depending on top-down mandates, and formal and informal opportunities to learn at the school, district, and individual teacher levels. Being a teacher in the education profession, for these three Title I high school

teachers, was a constant state of becoming or constantly growing to be better in a relational way with students. The participants expressed a deep commitment to learning, for themselves as well as for their students. Effective PD was directly linked with increases in student learning based on the participants' descriptions. The participants discussed being professionally developed by an external process whose goal was to make them good or better at teaching, for which they were required to attend and listen to outside experts, or "prophet[s] from another land" (Ms. C, Interview 2, line 460). How do these findings relate to existing scholarly work?

Theme 1: Difficulties in Defining PD

As noted, several scholars (Darling-Hammond, 1994, 2012; Desimone, 2009; Desimone et al., 2005; Garet et al., 200; Guskey, 2003; Hargreaves, 2011; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Oakes & Lipton, 2003; Phillips et al., 2011; Tarc, 2012; Van Veen et al., 2011) have expressed the shortcomings of the service-delivery, "institutional model" of PD. While the participants in this study described difficulties in defining PD because it is a nested construct, when asked, "What is PD?" they all clarified with the question, "What is it or what should it be?" The use of the subjunctive "should" indicates that PD, for these teachers, varied based on perceived ideals and actualities. Darling-Hammond et al. (2009), in an examination of PD experiences of teachers from the nationally administered Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), found that nine out of ten K-12 teachers participated in PD that consists primarily of short-term conferences or workshops, definitely not what PD "should" be, as described by the participants in this study.

In the PD literature, the research is categorized mainly by subtopics related to varying PD models. Villegas-Reimers (2003), in her review of literature on PD, argued that there are two main models of PD: (a) organizational partnership models, such as university-school partnerships; and (b) small group or individual models, such as workshops, seminars, portfolios, or cooperative development with other teachers. The participants' descriptions of their PD experiences align with the literature on these two dominant types of PD. The teachers' descriptions of the ALA project as a university-school partnership exemplifies Villegas-Reimer's first model, and the teachers' descriptions of training for AVID, AP, and Read 180, along with the PLCs, are examples of the second dominant model of PD as described by Villegas-Reimer. Hargreaves (2011) asserts that models of teacher PD are descriptive, based on empirical findings, and/or prescriptive, "which states how PD ought to be" (p. 88).

Theme 2: Being a Teacher in the Education Profession

For the participants in this study, being a teacher meant developing as a professional, constantly growing in a relational way to their students, seeking pedagogical knowledge, and having a lifelong commitment to learning. A teacher must be recognized as being a teacher because identities are constructed in relation to others, and a given teacher's performance is defined in relation to his or her students in a specific school community (Coldron & Smith, 1999; De Ruyter & Conroy, 2002). Ms. A described being a teacher as a professional in the education profession, where she and her colleagues were deeply committed to "being part of a community"" (Interview 1, lines 1708-1710). Moreover, this commitment was described as an essential aspect of her identity as a teacher. Cooper and Olson (1996) have described how a teacher's identity is continuous throughout the span of his or her career. Franzak (2002) argues that:

> We live in a world of negotiated identity, one where we continually construct and revision our visions of self. Those of us who create "teacher" as part of our identity must negotiate the particular implications of our professional identity in relation to students, peers, the general public, our intimates, and ourselves. (p. 258)

Ms. A, Ms. B, and Ms. C's descriptions of their commitment to teaching, their professional duties, and learning are related to Franzak's (2002) description of a teacher identity, where their teacher identity development is inextricably linked to the meaning of how PD is supposed to be.

Theme 3: Good Teaching and Effective PD

Good teaching and effective PD are related in that, for the participants in this study, effective PD led to good teaching results, which they expressed as increases in student learning. The central focus of research post-NCLB shows that, to be authentic, effective, and high quality, PD, as a "prescriptive model" (Hargreaves, 2011, p. 88), should be continuous, in-depth, based on teacher needs assessment and school demographics, and tied to actual teacher practice that improves student learning (Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., 2001; Guskey, 2000; Van Veen et al., 2011). Hawley and Valli (1999), in their review of literature on effective PD, named nine principles for the design of effective PD. For the participants in this study, effective PD seemed to partially satisfy a never-ending internal process to become a good or better teacher. Being a good or better teacher in the education profession for these participants meant being committed to developing deeper understandings of ways to connect with their students to enhance learning. Study participants'

descriptions of effective PD related to seven of Hawley and Valli's nine principles.

In their analysis of PD, Van Veen et al. (2011) concluded that effective PD "should be related to classroom practice, more specifically to subject content, pedagogical content knowledge, and student learning processes of a specific subject" (p. 17). In this study, the participants explained that a focus on their learning also was an essential aspect of effective PD. The participants' descriptions of learning as part of effective PD relates to Fullan's (1993) explanation of teacher professionalism as a process where teachers are individual and collective learners. Fullan identified two kinds of learning for teachers: inner learning and outer learning. On an individual level, Ms. A., Ms. B., and Ms. C pursued formal and informal opportunities to learn. In their quest for pedagogical knowledge, the participants in this study engaged in what Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) called "interactive professionalism" (p. 4), a type of outer learning whereby collaboration is expressed as a fundamental component of the professional learning process. In this study, interactive professionalism is best exemplified by the participants' descriptions of their quest for individually driven opportunities to learn, both formally in graduate school, while completing the dossier to advance in licensure levels, or in the ALA project, and informally with other education professionals (see Figure 2).

Theme 4: Being Professionally Developed

Being professionally developed was described as an external process to be made good or better at teaching, which often culminated in training and short-term events at the school and district levels. When Ms. A, Ms. B, and Ms. C described being made "better" externally by "prophet[s] from another land" (Ms. C, Interview 2, line 460), it became clear that being professionally developed is not effective PD according to peer-reviewed research and is not "high quality" PD as defined in federal law and New Mexico's policy guidelines. In NCLB (2002), "high quality" PD is defined as activities that are not "one-day or short-term workshops or conferences" (20 U.S.C. §7801). According to the New Mexico Framework for Professional Development (2004), PD is the "systemic process by which educators increase knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet professional and organizational goals that build capacity within the individual, organization, and education system for the purpose of ensuring success for all students" (p. 1). Additional state policies require school districts to have "aligned PD," whereby teachers PD must be differentiated by their licensure levels, written in a PDP, and aligned with the instructional

needs of the school and the district's EPSS (NMAC 6.29.1). Again, these teachers' experiences of being professionally developed did not match: (a) their descriptions of what PD "should" be; (b) their experiences and commonly understood notions of what PD is; or (c) guidelines in federal law and state policies.

Limitations of the Study

While the findings reported in this study contribute to the body of knowledge on the phenomenon of Title I high school teachers' experience of PD, the results cannot be generalized to a wider population of Title I high school teachers. Additionally, it is questionable whether these three teachers' experiences of PD are typical of all of the teachers in this Title I high school. Further, there is a limit to interpreting what these experiences actually mean, as the interpretation relies upon the participants' ability to remember and verbally express their PD experiences. None of the descriptions provided in this study can capture the "whole" phenomenon of these three teachers' PD experiences; therefore, the adequacy of any of the descriptions above need to be judged in light of the understanding gained through a double hermeneutic, meaning-making process (Smith et al., 2009; van Manen, 1990).

Implications for Future Research

The findings from this study raise several broad issues for future research. One concerns the extent to which teachers' actual experiences of PD do not align with federal law and state policy guidelines of what PD "should" be. Current research has shown that the majority of teachers' PD experiences are still short-term, one-day workshops, which goes against the prescriptive model of what PD is supposed to be (Choy, Chen, & Bugarin, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2012; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Hargreaves, 2011; NCLB, 2002; "New Mexico Framework for Professional Development," 2004; Tarc, 2012; Van Veen et al., 2011). Another issue for future research pertains to the difference between being professionally developed and developing professionally as a teacher in the education profession. Because "teachers are always in the process of 'becoming'" (Nieto, 2003, p. 125), teachers in the education profession are committed to their own learning and to helping the learning of their students, which greatly contrasts with the notion of being professionally developed.

Findings from this study also have implications for further evaluation of educational policy implementation gaps in Title I schools, along with changes to Title I requirements in states that are granted flexibility

waivers from the AYP requirements and consequences for not meeting these requirements under NCLB. This study explicates three Title I high school teachers' structural descriptions of PD and their perceptions of the meaning of PD. Reflected in the participants' descriptions and perceptions of PD is an implementation gap. The author defines this as the gap that results when teachers' PD program experiences are not in compliance with federal law and state policy for high-quality PD. Yet, in this study, teachers' articulated hopes for what PD "should" be do align with federal law and state policies. It is possible that this gap prevents Title I schools from making the improvements that they have been federally funded to implement. Exploring this implementation gap may provide insights on how to close the gap between how PD "should" be and what teachers describe as their actual experiences of PD.

Conclusion

Since 1965, federal funding to states through the Title I program has provided billions of dollars to focus on "educationally deprived" and "disadvantaged students" and "to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education" (NCLB, 2002). Approximately half of all public schools in the United States receive Title I funds annually (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). In the school district where this study took place, over two-thirds of the schools receive federal funds through the Title I program. Even though states that are granted an ESEA flexibility waiver have some flexibility to redirect funds previously restricted for certain uses, schools in these states that receive Title I funds are still required to concentrate on high-poverty and low-performing schools. For example, under NCLB, Title I schools that do not meet AYP are required to reserve 20% of their Title I funds to pay for Supplemental Educational Services (SES) and at least 10% for district and "school improvement" PD. Now that New Mexico has been granted a flexibility waiver, Title I schools do not need to reserve a certain percentage of their funds for SES and PD. As stated by the participants in this study, more money could be used for much-needed teacher-led PD.

This study found that being professionally developed by an external process to be made "better" through workshops and short-term training events was the nature of three Title I high school teachers' district-mandated PD experiences in a large urban school district in the Southwest. The ESEA flexibility waiver, as the next focus of policy implementation for many states nationwide, significantly changes state-level requirements for PD as well as school districts' and local schools' efforts to

improve student achievement. One of the main school turnaround principles specified in New Mexico's flexibility waiver is for schools, especially Title I schools, to ensure that "teachers are effective and able to improve instruction" ("New Mexico ESEA Flexibility Request," 2011). It is unclear as to which primary conceptualization of PD, as described by participants in this study, developing as a teacher in the education profession or being professionally developed, will inform the New Mexico Public Education Department's and school districts' notions to "improve instruction." In discussions about making teachers "better" or more effective, it is important to consider that teachers, as professionals, are committed to learning and have the capacity to define what is necessary for their own improvement. Further investigation of teachers' actual PD experiences, disaggregated at multiple levels, is needed to empirically document PD and to account for how teachers understand and hold themselves accountable for their own professional learning process to become "better."

References

Buysse, V., Winton, P. J., & Rous, B. (2009). Reaching consensus on a definition of professional development for the early childhood field. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 28*(4), 235-243.

Choy, S. P., Chen, X., & Bugarin, R. (2006). *Teacher professional development in 1999-2000: What teachers, principals, and district staff report* (NCES Report No. 2006305). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Colbert, J. A., Brown, R. S., Choi, S., & Thomas, S. (2008). An investigation of the impacts of teacher-driven professional development on pedagogy and student learning. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 35*(2), 135-154.

Coldron, J., & Smith, R. (1999). Active location in teachers' construction of their professional identities. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 31*(6), 711-726.

Cooper, K., & Olson, M. (1996). The multiple I's of teacher identity. In M. Kompf, D. Dworet, & R. Boak (Eds.), *Changing research and practice: Teachers' professionalism, identities and knowledge* (pp. 78-89). London, UK: Falmer Press.

Creswell. J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1994). *Professional development schools: Schools for developing a profession*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2012). *Creating a comprehensive system for evaluating and supporting effective teaching*. Stanford, CA. Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education. Retrieved from http://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/creating-comprehensive-system-evaluating-and-supporting-effective-teaching.pdf

Darling-Hammond, L., Wei, R. C., Andree, A., Richardson, N., & Orphanos, S. (2009). State of the profession: Study measures status of professional de-

velopment. *Journal of Staff Development, 30*(2), 42-50.

De Ruyter, D. J., & Conroy, J. (2002). The formation of identity: The importance of ideals. *Oxford Review of Education, 28*(4), 509-522.

Desimone, L. M. (2009). Improving impact studies of teacher professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures. *Educational Researcher, 38*(3), 181-199.

Desimone, L., Smith, T., Baker, D., & Ueno, K. (2005). The distribution of teaching quality in mathematics: assessing barriers to the reform of United States mathematics instruction from an international perspective. *American Educational Research Journal, 42*(3), 501-535.

Franzak, J. (2002). Developing a teacher identity: The impact of critical friends practice on the student teacher. *English Education, 34*(4), 258-280.

Fullan, M. G. (1993). Why teachers must become change agents. *The Professional Teacher, 50*(6), 12-17. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar93/vol50/num06/Why-Teachers-Must-Become-Change-Agents.aspx

Fullan, M. G., & Hargreaves, A. (1996). *What's worth fighting for in your school?* New York: Teachers College Press.

Garet, M. S., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., Birman, B. F., & Yoon, K. S. (2001). what makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. *American Educational Research Journal, 38*(4), 915-945.

Guskey, T. R. (2000). *Evaluating professional development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Guskey, T. R. (2003). Analyzing lists of the characteristics of effective professional development to promote visionary leadership. *NASSP Bulletin, 87*(637), 4-20.

Hargreaves, D. H. (2011). A common-sense model of the professional development of teachers. In J. Elliott (Ed.), *Reconstructing teacher education: teacher development* (pp. 86-92). New York: Routledge.

Hawley, W. D., & Valli, L. (1999). The essentials of effective professional development: A new consensus. In L. Darling-Hammond & G. Sykes (Eds.), *Teaching as the learning profession: Handbook for policy and practice* (pp. 127-150). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Jennings, J. F. (2001). Title I: Its Legislative History and Its Promise. In G. D. Borman, S. C. Stringfield, & R. E. Slavin (Eds.), *Title I: Compensatory education at the crossroads* (pp. 1-26). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Krueger, R .A., & Casey, M. A. (2000). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Little, J. W. (1992). Teacher development and educational policy. In M. Fullan & A. Hargreaves (Eds.), *Teacher development and educational change* (pp. 170-193). London, UK: Falmer Press.

Mahn, H., Bruce, M., & Adams, L. (2010). Academic literacy for all. *New Mexico English Journal, 3*, 3-14.

McLaughlin, M. W., & Talbert, J. E. (2006). *Building school-based teacher learning communities: Professional strategies to improve student achievement*. New York: Teachers College Press.

McGuinn, P. J. (2006). *No Child Left Behind and the transformation of federal education policy, 1965-2005*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.

Moustaka, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

NEA-New Mexico Professional Issues Committee. (n.d.). *Highlights and details on education reform, teacher licensure, and teacher evaluation in New Mexico*. Retrieved from http://www.nea-nm.org

New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC). (n.d.). *Primary and secondary standards for excellence general provisions*. Retrieved from http://www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/nmac/_title06/title06.htm

New Mexico ESEA Flexibility Request. (2011). Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/policy/eseaflex/approved-requests/nm.pdf

New Mexico Framework for Professional Development. (2004). Retrieved from http://teachnm.org/uploads/docs/professional_development_framework.pdf

Nieto, S. (2003). *What keeps teachers going?* New York: Teachers College Press.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115, Stat. 1425 (2002).

Oakes, J., & Lipton, M. (2003). *Teaching to change the world*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Perryman, V. (2005, March 20). Three-tier licensure now makes sense. *Hobbes News*. Retrieved http://www.hobbsnews.com/progress/progress/c2.pdf

Phillips, K. J. R., Desimone, L., & Smith, T. M. (2011). Teacher participation in content-focused professional development & the role of state policy. *Teachers College Record, 113*(11), 2586-2621.

Seidman, I. E. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: a guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, research, practice*. London, UK: Sage.

Tarc, P. (2012). Full-time teachers' learning: engagements and challenges. In R. Clark, D. W. Livingstone, & H. Smaller (Eds.), *Teacher learning and power in the knowledge society* (pp. 87-108). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense.

The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. (2012). Department of Education approves New Mexico's request for flexibility from No Child Left Behind [Press release]. Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/department-education-approves-new-mexicos-request-flexibility-no-child-left-behi

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD). (2013). *Public elementary / secondary school universe survey, 2010-2011*. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/pesschools10/tables/table_02.asp

van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Van Veen, K., Zwart, R., & Meirink, J. (2011). What makes teacher professional development effective? A literature review. In M. Kooy & K. Van Veen (Eds.), *Teacher learning that matters: International perspectives* (pp. 3-21). London, UK: Routledge.

Villegas-Reimers, E. (2003). *Teacher professional development: an international review of the literature*. Paris, France: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning.