

## SPECIAL ISSUE

### New Public Management and the New Professionalism in Education: Compliance, Appropriation and Resistance

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## Redesigning the Identities of Teachers and Leaders: A Framework for Studying New Professionalism and Educator Resistance

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**Abstract:** Market-based reforms of public education do more than shape policy and curriculum; they also influence educators' understanding of themselves as professionals, driving at the very core of what it means to be a teacher or leader. This article explores the effects of neoliberal policies and New Public Management practices on teachers and principals and the ways they result in a "new professionalism." The authors provide a framework for studying how these new policies and practices might be resisted, as well as a description of characteristics of the new professional and what professionalism might look like if it were grounded in community and

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advocacy.

**Keywords:** politics of education; educational policy; neoliberalism; New Public Management; resistance; professional identity

### **Rediseñando las Identidades de Docentes y Directores: Un Marco para el Estudio del Nuevo Profesionalismo y La Resistencia de los Educadores**

**Resumen:** Las reformas neoliberales en la educación pública hacen más que influir en las políticas públicas y en el currículo; también influyen en cómo los educadores se entienden a sí mismos como profesionales, llegando a la esencia de lo que significa ser docente o líder. Este artículo indaga sobre los efectos de las políticas neoliberales y las prácticas del Nuevo Management Público sobre docentes y directores y cómo resultan en la creación de un “nuevo profesionalismo.” Los autores sugieren un marco teórico para estudiar cómo estas nuevas políticas y prácticas pueden ser resistidas, junto a una descripción de las características del “nuevo profesional” y a una visión de un profesionalismo arraigado en la comunidad y en el activismo.

**Palabras-clave:** política; política educativas; neoliberalismo; Nuevo Management Público; resistencia; identidad profesional

### **Redesenhando as Identidades dos Professores e Diretores: Uma Proposta para o Estudo do Novo Profissionalismo e Resistência dos Educadores**

**Resumo:** Reformas neoliberais na educação pública servem para influenciar políticas públicas e dos currículos; também elas influenciam a forma como os educadores se entendem a si mesmos como profissionais, atingindo a essência do que significa ser um professor ou um líder. Este artigo investiga os efeitos das políticas e práticas da Nova Gestão Pública neoliberal sobre professores e diretores e como resultado a criação de um "novo profissionalismo." Os autores sugerem um referencial teórico para estudar como estas novas políticas e práticas pode ser resistiu, juntamente com uma descrição das características do "novo profissional" e uma visão de uma comunidade enraizada profissionalismo e ativismo.

**Palavras-chave:** política; política educativas; neoliberalismo; Nova Gestão Pública; resistência; identidade profissional

## **Redesigning the Identities of Teachers and Leaders**

Current reforms of public education do more than shape policy and curriculum; they also influence educators’ understanding of themselves as professionals, driving at the very core of what it means to be a teacher (Ball, 2003; Popkewitz, 1998; Schultz & Ravitch, 2013) or a leader (Cohen, 2014; Hall, Gunter & Bragg, 2012; Niesche, 2013; Poole, 2008). As educational systems globally are absorbed into a market, profit, and efficiency logic, the professional identities of teachers and leaders are being redesigned (Brantlinger & Smith, 2013; Gillies, 2011).

Urban school districts in the United States have become sites of experimentation with an array of market and managerialist reforms (Arellano-Gault, 2010; Court, 2004; Fitzgerald & Savage, 2013; Ward, 2011). These reforms are characterized by 1) an audit or performance culture and work intensification resulting from an increase in the compliance requirements of high-stakes measurement, testing, data-driven management, and teacher evaluation systems (Strathern, 2000; Ball, 2001); 2) a narrow, scripted, “what works” conception of teaching that diminishes professional judgment (Biesta, 2007); 3) the commodification and commercialization of teaching through a new education industry (Burch, 2009); 4) new forms of governance, regulation and self-regulation, including mayoral control, elimination of democratically elected school boards, and the introduction

of competitive markets and school choice systems (Ball & Junemann, 2012; Rose, 1993; Scott, 2011); and 5) a proletarianization of teaching in which conception becomes divorced from execution (Ellis, McNicholl, Blake, & McNally, 2014; Lawn & Ozga, 1987). In fact, many of these reforms are exclusively targeting low-income communities of color (Scott, 2011). Some argue that these shifts are also marginalizing multicultural, aesthetic, and civic education (Westheimer 2015) and making it harder to recruit and retain teachers of color (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012).

These reforms are associated not only with new forms of governance and public management (Anderson & Montoro Donchick, 2014; Rose, 1993; Ward, 2011), but also what sociologists of the professions are calling a “new professionalism” within the public sector (Evetts, 2009; 2011). Evetts (2011) conceptualizes the shift in professionalism as one from “notions of partnership, collegiality, discretion and trust to increasing levels of managerialism, bureaucracy, standardization, assessment and performance review” (p. 407). This new professionalism is largely the result of a transfer of private sector logics into the public sector and the replacement of an ethos of public service with the discipline of the market and outcomes-based external accountability (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011; Evetts, 2009; Exworthy & Halford, 1999).

In this article, we will explore how the ethos and identity of teachers and administrators are being reengineered by policies and new forms of governance that lead to a “deprofessionalized” professionalism. Given the significant shifts in what it means to be an education professional, we offer a conceptual analysis of the major themes of a growing resistance literature and propose a new framework for studying educator resistance, appropriation, and advocacy within this new context.

## Public Sector Professionals and New Public Management

The shift toward managerialism that is reshaping professionalism in the public sector is the subject of New Public Management (NPM), sometimes referred to as new managerialism or neo-Taylorism (Au, 2011; Trujillo, 2014). Of course, public organizations have always been *managed*, but in the last four decades there has been a shift from a rule-governed, administrative, bureaucratic management to an outcomes-based, entrepreneurial, corporate model of management<sup>2</sup>. The following are the most common ideas and practices transferred from the corporate sector (Bottery, 1996; Hood, 1991; Ward, 2011):

- the introduction of markets and quasi-markets to create competition among public organizations and private entities
- an emphasis on explicit standards and measures of performance
- greater emphasis on outcomes and their measurement using quantitative data
- greater use of standardization and “scaling up” of practices
- contracting out public services to vendors in the private sector and the increased use of consulting companies
- a trend toward temporary and short-term workers and against unionization
- administrative decentralization and bounded autonomy
- greater discipline and parsimony in resource use
- closing low-performing public organizations or departments and creating “start ups” that are often outside of local democratic control (e.g., charter schools).

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<sup>2</sup> The previous bureaucratic form of organizing and managing schools was also borrowed from industrial business leaders who propagated organizing efficient schools around the factory model. However, as professional organizations, they contained – in theory, at least – a strong professional and public ethos.

To the extent that these new forms of governance and management such as NPM permeate into organizations and individuals, they become a form of what Foucault calls *governmentality* (Foucault, 1991). Governmentality “governs” through the deployment of new forms of power and the construction of new subjectivities. For instance, through the transference of market-based choice policies into the public sector, the parent, student, or teacher is encouraged to think, not as a citizen, but rather as a consumer, making choices among an array of products. In this way, an ethos of democratic political decision-making and the skills that are acquired in the political arena atrophy. Boggs (2001) argued that a depoliticized public has five broad features in common:

An unmistakable retreat from the political realm; a decline in the trappings of citizenship and with it the values of democratic participation; a narrowing of public discourses and the erosion of independent centers of thinking; a lessened capacity to achieve social change by means of statecraft or social governance; and the eventual absence of a societal understanding of what is uniquely common and public, what constitutes a possible general interest amidst the fierce interplay of competing private and local claims. (p. 22)

In the following section, we describe how such depoliticization of the public and shifts toward NPM have changed the roles and identities of teachers and administrators.

### The Emergence of the New Professional

Scholars of new professionalism argue that while there are some continuities from the “old” professionalism, a shift has occurred as professionals are increasingly managed and controlled, a tendency that Evetts (2011) refers to as *organizational professionalism* or professionalism “from above” (p. 407). She contrasts this with occupational professionalism or professionalism “from within” and, as noted above, documents a shift from professional to managerialist values. This shift suggests a decrease in professional autonomy and in control over one’s profession through the exercise of professional judgment and through professional associations, and an increase in control by managers in work organizations. This control is characterized by rational-legal control, standardized work procedures and practices, and external forms of regulation and accountability measures – or what some have called governing or steering from a distance (Kickert, 1995; Rose, 1993).

Although a discourse of autonomy and devolution of power is sometimes used to promote current education reforms, such autonomy is exceedingly constrained and often part of a strategy of tightening up “loosely coupled systems” (Honig & Rainey, 2012; Meyer & Rowan, 2006). The reforms instill greater autonomy and an entrepreneurial ethos in budgeting, contracting, and hiring, while the core elements of instruction and curriculum are steered from the top. Managerial moves to provide greater autonomy for middle managers are often part of a trend toward work intensification. For instance, school principals in New York City, where autonomy and markets were central to Bloomberg’s reform, reported being more beleaguered than empowered (Shipps, 2012).

This shift from occupational to organizational professionalism may seem more dramatic for members of some professions, such as physicians, who are increasingly leaving private practice for large hospitals and health organizations. Teachers, on the other hand, have always worked largely within public or private bureaucracies, but the loosely coupled nature of educational systems buffered teachers from more direct forms of control, depending chiefly on internal forms of accountability (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2005; Weick, 1976). Some have argued that principals appear to have benefited by receiving greater autonomy over such things as budgets and hiring, and appear to be re-professionalizing (Jarl, Fredrikson, & Persson, 2011). But they are encouraged to professionalize around the principles of NPM and to do so independent of teachers, which reinforces a management-worker split. Furthermore, alternative pathways to the principalship – and

teaching as well – have weakened attempts at professionalization through the usual channels of certification and professional associations.

## Characteristics of the New Professional in Education

From policing to teaching to practicing medicine, the shift to NPM elaborated above has reconstituted most occupations and professions. In education, a new generation of teachers and administrators are being socialized into a very different workplace with a different conception of teaching and leading. For instance, while teachers increasingly teach to the test, leaders are expected to lead to the test. Since control is now exercised through market discipline and high stakes tests that increasingly drive what happens in classrooms, principals are being given more and more “autonomy,” oftentimes, though, to exercise leadership over less and less.

The popular term for building school capacity is “distributed leadership,” but, while workplaces are being redesigned to intensify *work* and distribute it horizontally, *power* is being distributed *upward* by centralizing policy over curriculum and instruction through high-stakes testing and mayoral control. These developments are shifting the locus of control from a previous focus on professional judgment to control through policies that increase organizational professionalism from above and reduce occupational professionalism from within (Evetts, 2011). The new teacher and administrator are put in a position in which they must look to market and test-based forms of accountability for direction rather than their professional training, associations, or unions. The ability of new digital technologies to integrate management information systems and standardize the labor process promises to intensify this tendency (Selwyn, 2011).

Ironically, this shift toward external forms of accountability has both narrowed professional discretion while also expanding and intensifying role expectations. Summarizing research in changing teacher roles in the U.S., Valli & Buese (2007) discuss a widening scope of teacher responsibilities, including heightened expectations of collaboration outside the classroom, strict adherence to new curricular and instructional requirements, and the collection and analysis of assessment data. While these additional role expectations have sometimes expanded educators’ professionalism (Stillman, 2011), they have more often tended to reduce it to work within an audit culture that requires being accountable to standards and criteria that they had no part in developing (Apple, 2004; Strathern, 2000). Even where professional learning communities are in place, the data teachers are encouraged to analyze and the tasks they rehearse are typically not their own. In most cases, conception and execution have been successfully separated (Apple & Jungck, 1992; Ellis, McNicholl, Blake, & McNally, 2014; Lawn & Ozga, 1987).

The shift to greater external accountability has not only exposed educators to new forms of control through an audit culture and curbs on their professional judgment, but also to a marketized environment that forces them to compete both internally with each other and externally with other organizations. Thus, professionals, adept at co-existing with bureaucratic forms of control, find themselves in new territory. Freidson (2001) viewed professionalism as a mechanism for organizing some aspects of social life based on expertise and social trust. In this sense, professionalism both competed with and provided some protection from both market and bureaucratic forms of organization. As professionalism is eroded as a countervailing force to both bureaucracy and markets, social trust and public capacity-building are eroded as well.

The new pressure to compete has created the new entrepreneurial professional, requiring teachers and principals to become more competitive within marketized environments in the public sector. For instance, the role expectations of today’s principals and superintendents have become more entrepreneurial as they are increasingly asked to interface, not with a district or state

bureaucracy, but rather with a series of vendors and consultants selling them everything from professional development services to data warehousing and management (Burch, 2009). As noted above, this consumer model of leadership has caused many principals – especially inexperienced ones – to feel more beleaguered than empowered as they rely on vendors to access information and professional development. (Shipps, 2012).

The entrepreneurial expectation of the new professional has other consequences that work against building system capacity. In the private sector, entrepreneurs want to recruit the best employees so they can outperform their competitors. This makes sense when the goal is to make a profit. But what if – as is the case in the public schools – the goal is not to make a profit, but rather to foster student growth through the building of professional and system capacity by helping all teachers improve? An entrepreneurial principal may recruit the best teachers in the district, but in doing so, is merely moving resources around and depriving equally deserving students in other – typically low income – schools of quality teachers. This “new professional” may thrive by raising test scores and being promoted within the system, but has not increased the capacity of the system.

The tendencies we describe here are moving forward more rapidly in some school districts than in others. Cities like New Orleans, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., and New York City under mayor Bloomberg have led the way. There are signs of resistance, such as the Chicago teacher strike of 2013 and the reversal of many of Mayor Bloomberg’s reforms by Mayor DiBlasio in New York. And there are possibilities for reciprocal learning when, for instance, alternative pathways to teacher preparation are forced to be in dialogue with traditional pathways (See Mungal, this issue).

Resisting these tendencies by defending the “old” professional is not an effective strategy. Teaching and school administration as professions have been under attack for a long time and some of the criticisms have merit (Friedrich, 2014; Levine, 2006). Traditional bureaucracies and the older model of professionalism were notorious for resisting change and failing to meet the needs of many children in urban districts (Meier, 1995; Payne, 2008; Rogers, 2006). Furthermore, claims to professionalism by school personnel have often marginalized the voices of low-income parents and communities (Driscoll, 1998). The task ahead is not to reassert “traditional” professionalism wholesale, but rather to better understand how to resist the most egregious assaults on professionals, while acknowledging the weaknesses of traditional models of professional training and professional accountability. Such resistance would insist on a professional ethos with the public good at its center.

## **Re-theorizing Resistance in Light of New Public Management**

These powerful new market- and audit-based forms of public management have influenced the emergence of the new professional. Therefore, resistance for teachers and leaders will not look the same as it did under previous public bureaucracies. It will require a re-theorizing of resistance by professionals, and to what extent forms of appropriation, cooptation, and accommodation might represent forms of resistance that are more productive or generative of new practices (Koyama, 2014). This means being clear about not only what and whom is being resisted, but also toward what end.

We begin with one of the most challenging aspects of market-based – what we will call *neoliberal* – reforms and NPM: their tendency to seep into our ways of thinking and doing things in such a way that we may not recognize how we are being normalized into a new “common sense.” In other words, neoliberalism is “out there” in the sense that it is promoted by new policy entrepreneurs that are changing laws and economic policy, but it is also “in here” in the sense that it changes our relationship to ourselves and others: how we think about ourselves and others, what we believe, what we value and what we don’t value (Peck, 2010). Ward (2011) argues that managerialism

is not simply a set of practices: it is “the widely-held belief that all organizations can only work properly if decision-making is centralized in some manner in the hands of professionally trained and ‘objective’ managers” (pp. 205-206). In order to appreciate the difficulties of resisting NPM and its widely-held beliefs, Foucault’s (1991, 1995) concepts of *governmentality*, *disciplinary power*, and *normalization* are crucial.

Foucault (1991) investigates neoliberalism through a concept he calls *governmentality*. Within this notion of governing, which Foucault traces back to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, economics is treated as a body of objective truths that a government must come to understand through scientific study. Through this accumulation of economic knowledge, the chief purpose of government becomes the accumulation of wealth through the discipline of the population. The neoliberal model of governing, then, does not maintain its power primarily through law or oppression of citizens under the law. We are not simply passive objects of neoliberalism, victims of its power; rather, in a more complex dynamic of power relationships, the practices of neoliberalism constitute us, subjectify us, and we unwittingly become its instruments. In essence, a new type of subject or citizen comes into being.

Foucault (1995) had already begun to develop this notion of power, which he called *disciplinary power*, in his extended analysis of penal systems and other social institutions such as schools, factories, and hospitals. Disciplinary power achieves its ends through the circulation of discourses that, over time, become taken-for-granted as norms or truths. It is *productive* in the sense that it creates new subjectivities – that is, new kinds of individuals – who readily accept certain discourses as true and recirculate it themselves. Replete with technologies of surveillance, our postmodern societies ensure that individuals will live up to the expectations of certain norms because they are aware that, at any given time, someone may be observing and judging them. Hence, disciplined individuals police and govern themselves, treating social norms as objective facts of nature.

Examples of norms within the discipline of school leadership and policy might include the following ideas: that quantitative measurements of student performance are inherently superior to other ways of determining the quality of educators; that market-based competition among schools is needed in order to effect positive systemic changes; that the primary function of schools is to produce human capital for the economy; that “good” schools are the ones that rank highly in the local newspapers; that an important competency of school principals is the ability to find the best products on the market for instruction and assessment; and that positivistic social science research, such as experimental and statistically generalizable studies, is the only legitimate source of knowledge about educational practices. A Foucauldian critique would recognize these norms as culturally constructed, not as natural or common-sense truths.

The everyday work of educators in the context of neoliberalism only reinforces NPM. Increasingly, teachers and principals must be concerned with the rankings of their schools in local magazines and in state or district performance frameworks, garnering funds through grants and planning strategically for future years when the grant funds dry up, and demonstrating performance outcomes through elaborate program evaluations. Such program evaluations are used to justify innovative practices that districts or state agencies have permitted them to implement within their ostensibly autonomous roles.

And yet some leaders may even perceive this autonomy as a welcome change from earlier bureaucratic forms of management that placed them merely on the receiving end of mandates. The autonomy and appearance of choice may feel like professionalization. Foucault (2008) would likely argue that in this model of school reform, the principal may have been granted more autonomy, but this autonomy itself has ironically placed the principal in the position of governing him/herself according to the tenets of NPM. After all, opting out of NPM is not one of the choices offered by



the site-based leadership or self-governing program. Furthermore, control is now exercised at a distance through high-stakes testing, which extends directly into the classroom, bypassing the principal and superintendent, whose professional judgment can no longer be trusted.

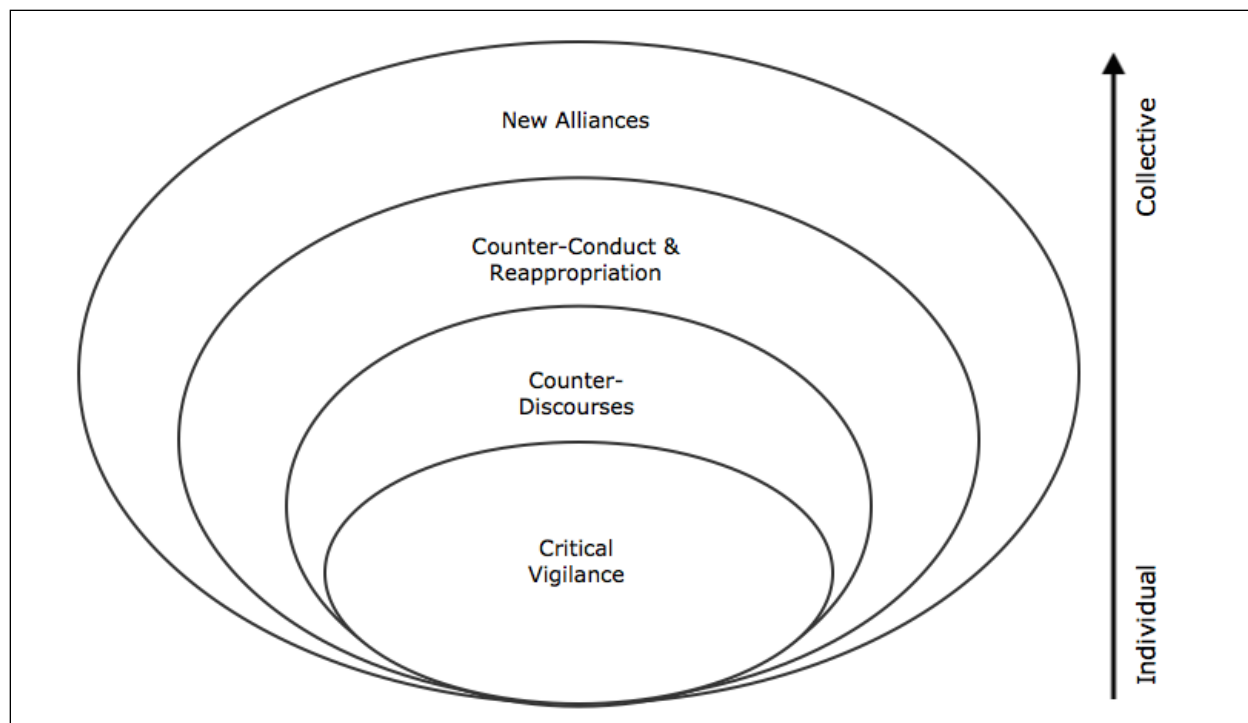
Given the pervasive nature of governmentality, disciplinary power, and normalization inherent in NPM and the emergence of the new professional, we are interested in exploring how educators might address the challenges of governmentality in order to reassert their professional judgment. In re-theorizing resistance, we find it helpful first to categorize possibilities for individual and collective action that have appeared in the extant literature on resistance. The following three strategies have complex interactions and overlaps among them; they rarely, if ever, exist in isolation.

1. **Critical Vigilance:** individuals' careful introspection and critical thinking about competing interests that may pose a threat to their professional identities (Ball, 2015; Ball & Olmedo, 2013)
2. **Counter-discourses:** development of new ways of speaking and writing about public education in an attempt to shift its narrative on a large scale (Fairclough, 1992; Haas, Fischman, & Brewer, 2014; Lakoff, 2008)
3. **Counter-conduct and reappropriation:** attempting to work subversively and productively within the constraints of the current policy and cultural context (Bushnell, 2003; Hayes-Conroy, 2010; Niesche, 2010).

Each of these approaches contributes an important vision of resistance, but they lack an overarching strategy. Specifically, we see a need – and a developing opportunity – to build **new alliances of educators, students, parents, and communities**. These alliances – what Fraser (1990) has called counter-publics – would need to find a common interest in order to harness their diverse concerns regarding matters such as the high stakes testing regime, school closings, mayoral control, and the privatization of public services.

Figure 1 illustrates how these alliances would incorporate and build upon other forms of resistance, from the micro-level of individuals' critical vigilance and forms of coping with NPM, to more collective kinds of action that include explicit attempts to build counter-discourses and deliberate acts of reappropriation. Teachers and administrators, in particular, are beginning to challenge – sometimes in small ways – the various manifestations of NPM discussed above. As teachers, principals, parents, and students form counter-publics, policymakers may begin to act in accordance with their constituents' advocacy.





*Figure 1.* A framework for forms of resistance, illustrating the way new alliances would incorporate a series of other forms, from the critical vigilance of individuals to increasingly collective actions such as reappropriation of NPM policies for more progressive ends.

Crucially, NPM is not monolithic, nor are professionals and communities. Some communities may support some aspects of NPM based on histories of oppression under the old regime. While public schooling for all and occupational professionalism are perhaps ideals, they have not served all equally. This is why we propose below, not merely a return to occupational professionalism, but rather a new kind of professionalism that may end up being a hybrid form with a strong connection to the communities that professionals serve.

### **Critical Vigilance**

As we noted above, one of the achievements of neoliberalism is that it treats economic truths as part of nature itself; hence they become depoliticized, closed to debate (Clarke, 2012; Fitzgerald & Savage, 2013). Education reform policies that establish quantitative performance outcomes and their resultant school rankings as the coordinates within which we define effective teachers and schools are solutions that respect economic competition, freedom of choice, and the invisible hand of the market. Bates (2008) notes that under Thatcher in the U.K., educators were often “characterized as subversive of the economy and driven by self-interest” (p. 197). An alternative vision of educators’ resistance under Thatcher might argue that their own professional “good sense” (Gitlin & Margonis, 1995) made some of them question the common-sense truth that the purpose of schools is to carry out the needs of the economy.

Because the very purpose of the public schools in the context of neoliberalism has been defined so clearly as the production of human capital, we propose that resistance must begin with educators’ own critical thinking about neoliberalism, especially in its everyday forms. This critical thinking renders explicit the methods through which neoliberalism has become embedded and normalized within our thinking. In this sense, resistance can inaugurate a process of recognizing the

way educators' professional identities – including the very meanings of teaching and leading – have become redesigned within NPM.

Foucault's work on governmentality begins to offer possibilities of productive resistance as he suggests that subjective identities are not hopelessly trapped within the surveillance of disciplinary power and its discourses. Leask (2012) comments on Foucault's frequently cited line, "Where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, 1990, p. 95), noting that as power multiplies throughout the social body at innumerable local points and is circulated through discursive practices, we have multiple and continuous opportunities for resistance. Fortunately, this type of resistance does not require that individuals adopt the identity of a "heroic... revolutionary, subject" (Leask, 2012, p. 65). Instead, individuals need to maintain a critical and reflective stance toward their day-to-day experiences, a stance that allows them to assert more agency in their identity construction. Thomas and Davies (2005) make a similar point in their case studies of public sector managers in the U.K. They illustrate that NPM is not a coherent, monolithic discourse; rather, it is "highly dynamic, with individuals appropriating different meanings in reflections on self in conjunction with NPM" (p. 700). In this view, resistance begins at the level of the critical, reflective individual who is willing to engage in day-to-day micro-political struggles, always interrogating the relationship between oneself and one's organization.

Ball and Olmedo (2013) refer to this critical stance as a "constant vigilance" (p. 94). Through an analysis of particular cases in which educators have resisted dominant discourses, they claim that at the moment when the teacher questions norms that seem binding,

the power relations in which the teacher is imbricated come to the fore. It is then that he or she can begin to take an active role in their own self-definition as a 'teaching subject', to think in terms of what they do not want to be, and do not want to *become*, or, in other words, begin to *care for themselves*. Such care also rests upon and is realized through practices, practices of critique, vigilance, reflexivity, and of writing. (p. 86)

Although discourse does circulate norms and the expectation that subjects live up to those norms, the discourse itself creates sites of resistance. While dominant discourses may delegitimize other perspectives, often prohibiting or attempting to censor them, this very prohibition brings marginalized voices into the light, making resistance possible. Discourse is always open to questioning and even re-signification.

Still, however, we must acknowledge the risks that individuals take when they begin to question NPM and organizational identity construction. Such behaviors are viewed as "irresponsible" and identify those who refuse to conform to the expectations of NPM (Gillies, 2011). As Ball and Olmedo (2013) recognize, "there are *costs* to be considered here" (p. 94), and these also include the stress and time it takes to maintain a critical perspective in the face of constant circulation of regimes of truth. Furthermore, individuals can only do so much on their own. While some individual educators may feel greater security within their schools and districts – perhaps due to their longer tenure, the respect they enjoy within the community, or the context of high performance on state tests (Thomson, 2008) – this kind of security among educators is an exception to the norm, and it is becoming even more rare as states repeal tenure laws or roll back the procedures of due process for termination of employment.

In addition to the dangers of speaking out on one's own, we should also consider whether the new professional has had sufficient opportunity to develop the tools of critique. A number of scholars have noted that teacher- and principal-education programs need to provide meaningful opportunities for pre-service educators to take risks and question neoliberal assumptions (Costigan, 2012; Poole, 2008; Samier, 2013). Providing opportunities to question NPM, however, may be increasingly unlikely as non-university programs – often located within school districts – funded by

venture philanthropists offer alternate routes into teaching and leadership positions. These programs frequently recruit candidates with little or no professional experience in education, candidates who may bring a business orientation into the classroom or administrator's office.

There may also be an opening and closing of windows of opportunity to recognize that a process of normalization is occurring. For instance, there is a growing concern about a hyper-Taylorist use of metrics to control workers. Employers can now monitor every aspect of a worker's life and use these metrics to make decisions about hiring and firing. They monitor internet use and emails and track employees' mouse navigation. Telematics, a combination of telecommunications and informatics, monitors the behaviors and locations of UPS truck drivers every second of their day (Kaplan, 2015). Teachers and other professionals are starting to experience these regimes of control.

This level of surveillance and control is disturbing to many, but at some point it likely will not be, especially as these forms of control appear as benevolent methods to make the new technologies more user-friendly – as the tracking of mouse navigation can help technology departments determine how to organize tools on a user's interface. At some point, the surveillance will simply be viewed as the way things are and the way they have to be. There may be two points at which constant vigilance can lead to resistance. One is at the liquid transition point before normalization solidifies. The other may be at the extreme end of normalization, when the accumulation of techniques of control have become so thorough that behaving “irresponsibly” becomes the only ethical alternative (Ball & Olmedo, 2013).

If as Foucault theorizes (1991), disciplined individuals are the vehicles of governmentality, then they are invested with power – not simply repressed by it. This investment makes resistance possible, and those individuals who are ready to question the very epistemological assumptions of NPM and examine their own subjectivities in relation to those assumptions (Ball, 2015) are indispensable to the project of resistance. Ryan (1998) discusses the need for school leaders to engage in a constant struggle against structures of domination, but emphasizes that leaders also need to create the conditions for communal action. The key for leaders, Ryan (1998) argues, is to provide a space for the marginalized to have a voice, thereby causing others to question their assumptions and actions, and to recognize that their assumptions are shaped by power. In the next section, we propose that the development of counter-discourses constitutes an important step from individual critique toward collective action.

### Counter-Discourses

Those who through constant vigilance are able to penetrate the disciplinary practices of NPM are engaging in a kind of policy literacy by deconstructing the discourses and practices of NPM. This is a remarkable feat since the daily practice and the reinforcement of most professional training tends to discourage such literacy when trapped *within* both practice and discourse. Gee, Hull and Lankshear (1996) state that

immersion in such practices – learning inside the procedures, rather than overtly about them – ensures that a learner takes on perspectives, adopts a world view, accepts a set of core values, and masters an identity without a great deal of critical and reflective awareness of these matters or indeed about the Discourse itself. (p. 13)

For example, Lipman (2009) points out that even when groups protest against neoliberal reforms such as school closings, they reinforce a discourse of high-stakes testing by using the tests scores' upward trajectory to defend keeping them open.

According to Luke (2003), “educational policies are bids to centrally regulate and govern flows of discourse, fiscal capital, and physical and human resources across the time and space

boundaries of educational systems” (p. 132). While the importance of fiscal, physical, and human resources is the bread and butter of policy analysis, until recently, less attention had been paid to the role of discourse. While control of discourse may not directly determine events on the ground, discourses provide the limits of what is thinkable and doable at a particular historical moment. Those who control discourses exercise a considerable amount of influence over social policies and the practices that flow from them.

Poole (2008) argues that teacher and leader preparation programs and professional development plans ought to engage their participants in the development of authentic professional identities, separate from the discourse of managerialism that is often privileged within the institutions where they must work. If school leaders are prepared to engage in discourse critique, they can become leaders of resistance at their sites.

For example, Ylimaki (2012) studied leaders who engaged teachers in close readings, or discourse analysis, of policy texts, helping them to formulate their own questions about the underlying assumptions of those texts. The participating principals and teachers noted that they developed “counternarratives” (p. 336) in response to policy texts that threatened their own work toward social justice. Some of the participants recognized for the first time that working toward equity for their students required them to be critical and thoughtful readers of policy texts – indeed, modeling the mindsets that they wanted their students to adopt. Studies like Ylimaki’s (2012) suggest that a bold leader can empower the resistance of others who have lacked the necessary tools to question dominant narratives (Thomson, Hall, & Jones, 2013).

Up to now we have treated discourse as the equivalent of broad normalizing narratives, or what Gee (2005) calls discourse with a capital D. But counter-discourses that produce new narratives can be aided by changes to everyday language. Changing Mrs. to Ms. or using hyphenated last names did not eliminate patriarchy, and most women have reverted back to Mrs. and taking their husband’s name, often for pragmatic reasons. Yet, these changes at the level of language represented a challenge at the cultural level to patriarchal structures, and it is at the level of culture and consciousness that change must begin (Freire, 1970).

Mautner (2010), for instance, describes the many ways that the language of business has colonized the public and personal spheres, influencing the discursive practices of the latter. In New York City, the Bloomberg administration intentionally privatized many aspects of the public school system (Scott & DiMartino, 2009) and imported business language and practices. He created a “market maker” that turned the district into a series of networks and “vendors” to provide choices among a diverse array of “products” to “entrepreneurial” teachers and principals.

Elected largely by New York’s low-income communities of color, the DiBlasio administration has entered with a new counter-discourse, eliminating as much of the business language as possible and replacing it with the language of education and community: “community schools,” “universal pre-K,” “a tale of two cities,” “inequality,” etc. At the same time, he is replacing most of the “boundary workers” with MBAs that the Bloomberg administration appointed at all levels of the system with experienced educators. He is also less likely to create markets, support charter schools, or contract out services to the same extent.

Resistance to discourses that tap into our deep frames (Lakoff, 2008) requires sophisticated theoretical tools and the subsequent development of counter-discourses that disrupt taken-for-granted ideas about what it means to be a good teacher or leader. Such counter-discourses are a necessary – albeit insufficient – condition for the kind of collective action necessary to reverse the worst excesses of NPM. In the following section, we discuss the way counter-discourses can lead to a reappropriation of NPM strategies toward progressive ends.

## Counter-Conduct and Reappropriation

Critical vigilance and the creation of counter discourses may set the stage for forms of *counter-conduct*, actions that either challenge or reappropriate neoliberal policies and practices toward progressive ends. There is a growing number of cases in which individual and collective efforts of teachers or principals have managed to challenge or reappropriate the policies of NPM toward more progressive, social-justice-oriented ends (Costigan, 2013; Hayes-Conroy, 2010; Niesche, 2010; Palmer & Rangel, 2011; Wood, 2011). Gleeson & Knights (2006) wonder if, paradoxically, the excesses of NPM might have the unintended consequence of restoring professional power.

In small acts of reappropriation, Wood (2011) describes how groups of teachers and a principal reappropriated a mandated collaboration model, a Professional Learning Community (PLC), to maintain their professional identities in the face of a policy context that valued technical solutions instead of teacher-led inquiry-based approaches and professional judgment. The teachers in this situation found a way to use their PLC for the dual purpose of improving test scores (as mandated by the state) and using inquiry-based data analysis to improve their instructional decision-making overall, beyond test preparation. The managerialist version of PLCs that the teachers reappropriated in their own way, touted the teachers' capacity for distributed leadership even as it had already defined the parameters of collaboration and the necessary outcomes. Such approaches render the teachers' inquiry into little more than a task of addressing a pre-defined problem (Herr & Anderson, 2008), but in this case, teachers and their principal used the official discourse of forming a PLC to engage in authentic inquiry.

Crucially, Wood (2011) notes that this work required a supportive principal who respected teachers as professionals, one who could withstand constant pressures from the district to implement PLCs in a scripted manner. Furthermore, the teachers and principal must be willing to engage in a constant "uphill battle" (Wood, 2011, p. 494) – a potentially unsustainable state of affairs – as evidenced by the district's ultimate delivery of a set of basal readers that the teachers would be required to use. Thus, the principal and teachers would be in the position of developing yet another set of creative reappropriation strategies. One might question how long educators can continue to reappropriate policies that increasingly contradict their professional identities.

Oftentimes, reappropriation may not be possible, and educators resort to performance. As Ball (2001) points out, a culture of accountability becomes a performance culture. The need to be constantly accountable increases our visibility and requires that we align our performances with external accountability criteria. Ball calls this ongoing requirement to perform for others, *fabrication*, and argues that a culture of performativity creates a need for fabricating performances.

Ball (2001) and Niesz (2010) have written about the dangers of this kind of fabrication, which include a counter-productive and time-consuming focus on managing images or impressions and can result in the psychic costs of living personally and professionally inauthentic lives. Increasingly the work of impression management is becoming an ineffective strategy even for placating state auditors, who are focusing more on student outcomes such as test scores than on inputs such as developing culturally responsive pedagogies, strong collaborative communities, or a relevant and motivating curriculum. The pervasiveness of grant-funded programs, especially in large urban districts, has introduced yet another level of auditing, as the funding often depends on demonstrated student growth on tests.

Furthermore, the time spent on creating strategies to appease policymakers can foreclose opportunities for educators to develop and maintain their critical identities. As we described above, the market culture of NPM constitutes a powerful system of governmentality; the new professionals it creates and who serve as its agents are easily drawn into its tacit and self-sustaining claim that it is apolitical and consequently outside the parameters of debate. We contend, therefore, that

reappropriation may be a productive form of resistance only in the short term, and that we need a more deliberate and collective strategy, one that digs deeper into our collective understanding of what it means to be an educator.

## **New Forms of Collective Action: Counter-publics Forming New Alliances**

Within the current policy context, a resistance strategy requires a collective effort with a long-term view. The growing market orientation of public organizations, the spread of NPM, and powerful new policy networks and the venture philanthropists who fund them are not only pervasive at this point, but constitute a form of governmentality; as such, their discourses and practices have become common-sensical both inside and outside the field of public education.

The increasing frustrations of a variety of stakeholders in public education have started to spawn *counter-publics*, which Fraser (1990) describes as “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs” (p. 67). These emerging alliances include educators, students, and community members who have begun to think more critically about the very purpose of public education: parents who have engaged in counter-conduct through protesting school closings, speaking out, blogging, or even using social media to organize groups of parents to keep their children home during state testing; students who are using social media to stage protests and walk-outs; union members working for social movement unionism; and policy-makers who have responded to their constituents’ concerns by attempting to roll back recent reforms.

While these multiple forms of collective resistance are promising, NPM seems rather effective at thwarting the power of connections between educators and communities by emphasizing line management; individuation through such practices as audits, meritocratic compensation systems and incentives for teachers and administrators to compete against each other for limited resources; entrepreneurialism; and the idea that managerialism is apolitical or non-partisan (Arellano-Gault, 2010; Court, 2004; Ward, 2011).

Furthermore, there is evidence that some collective efforts of resistance are leading to more draconian policies in the U.S., where some state departments of education or large urban districts have developed punitive measures in response to a growing movement among parents to keep their children at home during high-stakes state testing. The Ohio Department of Education, for example, has communicated to parents the dangers of opting out of the new tests on the Common Core, which would include lower school ratings and, in turn, the negative economic impacts of families and businesses deciding not to move into neighborhoods with struggling schools. Here, the state department effectively puts school leaders and parents at odds with each other, as leaders are incentivized to prevent parents from opting their children out of the testing. Furthermore, in an environment of school choice, in which parents operate as consumers searching for the most highly-rated schools, a principal must always be concerned about decreased enrollments and funding.

Over the course of the last 15 years in the U.S., austerity policies have caused states and their school districts to rely increasingly on private funders such as philanthropists and federal grant programs such as Race to the Top and the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF). Grants from these sources include burdensome requirements for participating states and districts, essentially coercing them into adopting reforms that were designed from a distance in return for basic levels of funding. The TIF program, for example, mandates that teacher compensation systems be based partly on quantifiable student growth measures such as test scores. Ironically, these kinds of requirements can create additional financial obligations, as districts often need to purchase new data management systems and software packages to collect and calculate student growth scores and attribute them to

teachers. As school districts throughout the U.S. see their budget deficits rise, they must seek these alternative sources of revenue, each of which has its own set of mandates and can render the advocacy efforts of educators and their locally-elected officials ineffectual.

Indeed, the reality of the current bipartisan reform climate and the deeper structures of NPM that we have described in this article make collective resistance difficult. Unless new counter-publics begin to shift the discourse of public education on a large scale through their resistance efforts, it will be difficult for academics, district practitioners, and locally-elected officials to influence the complex web of public, private, hybridized – and often global (Ball, 2012) – policymaking that characterizes NPM. Nevertheless, in identifying the many obstacles in the face of resistance, we do not mean to suggest that resistance is impossible or futile. On the contrary, each of the resistance strategies we have described above makes an important contribution to the overall project of educators' assuming more agency in their identity construction and in defining the purposes of public education. We contend that these strategies and the mounting evidence of their use, notwithstanding the challenges they face, give cause for optimism. However, we also argue that a longer-term project of resistance, one that is productive and does not merely advocate a return to traditional models of professionalism, will require new conceptions of what it means to be an education professional.

### **Toward Principled Resistance and Advocacy Professionalism**

In this article, we have placed the concept of resistance within a broad global shift toward neoliberal and NPM policies and practices that are redesigning what it means to be a professional. But the notion of resistant teachers is not new. Within the micropolitics of any organization, there have always been forms of resistance, sometimes against bureaucratic excess or external reforms that contradict professional judgment, sometimes by “street-level bureaucrats” coping with the overwhelming demands of top-down policies, and sometimes out of selfish personal motives (Blase & Anderson, 1995; Bullough, Gitlin, & Goldstein, 1984; Kanpol, 1988; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). Reformers have always seen teacher resistance as negative and have tried to figure out ways to overcome it. But given the pushback from the academic, practitioner and parent communities to NPM reforms, resistance is taking on a new meaning.

Four decades of research have shown that practitioners become policy-makers at the point of implementation. Teachers' tendency to resist, modify or reappropriate reforms has often been viewed by reformers as distorting the “fidelity” of implementation. From Weatherley and Lipsky's (1977) research on street-level bureaucrats to McLaughlin's (1987) studies of processes of mutual adaptation, to more recent studies that replace notions of policy implementation with the politics of “enactment” (Braun, Ball, Maguire, 2011; Werts & Brewer, 2015), researchers – though not necessarily reformers – now have a more sophisticated understanding of the role of practitioners in influencing policy from below.

We have ample studies of the micropolitics of public bureaucracies, but are only beginning to understand how teachers and principals are coping with the micro and macropolitics of NPM and the audit cultures such techniques create (Anderson & Saldivia, 2015; Au, 2011; Black, 2008; Lipman 2009; Nichols & Berliner, 2007). However, the challenge for both practitioners and scholars is to understand how practitioners move from coping, appropriation, and acts of micro-resistance to collective action within current constraints. What does it mean to be a professional today? Which new forms of accountability are appropriate or inappropriate and why? How should we rethink professionalism for the future?



The problem with nostalgically looking to the past is that the pre-NPM world of occupational professionalism in public education was too often incapable of effectively promoting practices that were culturally responsive, politically sophisticated, or ethically sound. With notable exceptions, too many education professionals from the 1950s until today have tolerated institutionalized individualism, curricula and a teaching force that failed to reflect diversity, and schools tracked by social class, segregated by race, and under-resourced in poor neighborhoods. In addition, teachers and principals were not immune from society's prejudices, and often had lower expectations for low-income children and children of color than they did for middle class children – an issue that continues to be a problem.

Many who have defended the use of high-stakes testing have done so out of a sense that school professionals could not be trusted to effectively educate and advocate for all children equally (Kinsler, 2010; Skrla & Scheurich, 2004). Others have argued that while using high-stakes tests and disaggregating scores by subgroup to hold professionals responsible for them has some appeal, the forms this external accountability takes have deprofessionalized teachers and leaders and narrowed what we think of as an educated person. This, they argue, has fallen most heavily on low-income urban students who are most likely to receive a scripted, test driven education, provided either by inexperienced or deprofessionalized teachers (Anderson, 2001).

A new professionalism that might counter NPM would have to be guided by what Achinstein & Ogawa (2006) call *principled resistance* wherein principles are rooted in widely shared conceptions of teaching and professionalism, which align with definitions of high-quality, reflective professionals who adjust their teaching to the needs of diverse students, foster high expectations, create learning communities among students, engage in self-critical dialogue about their practice with colleagues, possess specialized expertise, and employ repertoires of instructional strategies. (p. 53)

They point out that in an environment in which teachers are expected to implement scripted instructional programs with “fidelity,” dissent is viewed as “infidelity” and punished. They describe two teachers who engaged in principled resistance of a mandatory literacy program because it lowered expectations, limited engagement with higher order learning, and diminished their professional autonomy and judgment. More studies of principled resistance will appear as more researchers are studying the impact of NPM reforms on teachers and principals. Studies of the current implementation of the Common Core, which claims to focus on higher order learning accompanied by more sophisticated tests, may provide additional insights into the dynamic among principled resistance, mutual adaptation, and reappropriation of reforms by teachers and principals (Porter, Fusarelli, & Fusarelli, 2014).

Sachs (2000, 2001) has studied the effects of NPM in Australia and found that professionals are faced with two possible responses to what she calls the “audit society”: “to act as an entrepreneurial professional, placing one’s career goals at the center, or as an activist professional, promoting the welfare of children at both the individual and collective levels” (Sachs, 2000, p.77). Drawing on Giddens’s (1994) concepts of *active trust* and *generative politics*, she provides a strong argument for rethinking professionalism as moving beyond the individual and seeing it as a bottom up struggle against reforms that deprofessionalize.

Anderson’s (2009) elaboration of advocacy leadership also provides an activist approach to professionalism as a reaction to neoliberal reforms. In the 15 years since Sachs proposed activist professionalism, we have seen several promising collectivist developments in the U.S., the most noteworthy being the successful attempt by Chicago teachers to democratize their union (Uetricht, 2014). Teachers in Chicago transcended bread and butter issues to frame themselves as a social movement union, spending years building alliances with community organizations. While they

focused on specific reforms, they framed their opposition more broadly as resistance to managerial and neoliberal reforms that were deprofessionalizing teachers and closing public schools in low-income communities of color.

By building relationships with the communities they teach in, education professionals are less likely to be isolated in their struggles and more able to attack the complex network of policies and practices that make up NPM. This new advocacy or activist professional values the ethos of the profession, but embeds it in real communities of difference and an ability to deconstruct dominant discourses by connecting the ideological dots across various policies and practices.

Table 1  
*Characteristics of Three Models of Professionalism*

Dimension	Model		
	Professionalism (Occupational)	New Professionalism (Organizational)	Advocacy Professionalism (Community-based)
Professionals as workers	Unionized (limited to “bread and butter” issues)	Anti-union	Social movement unionism
Principals’ role	Managerial	Entrepreneurial	Advocate, professional development
Professional regulation	Regulated by the State	De-regulated	Wide participation in creating standards
Professional assessment	By principal	Primarily by student test scores	Peer-assistance and review (Goldstein, 2010)
Participation in governance	Little shared governance	“Distributed leadership” to build capacity	Shared governance with community participation
Professionals’ demographics	Largely white and middle class	Largely white and middle class	Should reflect communities in which they teach
Equity stance	Color-blind as ideal	Color-blind, Paternalistic view of poor communities	Advocate for diverse, equitable and culturally responsive schools

There is not space here to fully elaborate on how to reconstruct professionalism in a way that might represent a form of individual and collective resistance to NPM reforms, nor would we presume to do so. However, such a project is clearly well underway (Anderson, 2009; Hatcher & Jones, 2006; Sachs, 2000, 2001; Zeichner 2010; Zeichner & Pena-Sandoval, 2015) and grassroots movements of professional educators with links to low-income communities of color are growing. In Table 1 we attempt to lay out the terrain for thinking about the progression from occupational to organizational to advocacy professionalism. Like any table, it is overly simplistic; what will emerge

from struggles over NPM will likely result in some hybrid of occupational and organizational professionalism. We provide the table as an attempt to describe what we consider the kind of professionalism to which we would aspire. Given that teachers as professionals have a long history of being in conflict with their communities (Driscoll, 1998; Shutz, 2006), advocating for a more community-based notion of professionalism in education may seem unrealistic. But the grassroots struggles of teachers in Chicago to take over their union and ally themselves with their students' communities could be seen as a feasible prototype of what an advocacy professional might look like.

As new education professionals who are committed to advocacy both within and beyond the school attempt to bring about progressive change, they can expect to encounter resistance from those who see their privileges threatened (Hynds, 2010; Star, 2011; Theoharris, 2007). They will also encounter a micro-politics of self-interested resistance from some teachers who will not be willing or able to push beyond their professional comfort zone (Payne, 2008). After all, teaching has traditionally been characterized as a conservative and apolitical profession (Lortie, 1977). It will take some time for teachers and principals to act as advocates for children and their communities. But through growing principled acts of "irresponsibility," "infidelity," and collective counter-conduct, a growing number of teachers and principals are rejecting the tenets of NPM and the new professionalism that it has produced.

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