BEGINNING TEACHERS IN THE UNITED STATES AND KOREA: LEARNING TO TEACH IN THE ERA OF TEST-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY

Author: Jina Ro

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Lynch School of Education

Department of
Teacher Education, Special Education, Curriculum and Instruction

Program of
Curriculum and Instruction

BEGINNING TEACHERS IN THE UNITED STATES AND KOREA:
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Dissertation
by
JINA RO

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ABSTRACT
BEGINNING TEACHERS IN THE UNITED STATES AND KOREA:
LEARNING TO TEACH IN THE ERA OF TEST-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY
Author: Jina Ro

Advisor: Dr. Marilyn Cochran–Smith

The purpose of this study was to understand beginning teachers' experiences with learning to teach in an educational system that puts intense pressure on teachers to prepare students for standardized tests. The situation is common in many developed and developing countries whose educational systems are run by policies grounded in neoliberal and human capital ideologies. Using a phenomenological research design, I explored teachers' experiences in two very different educational systems, the United States and South Korea, and focused on the commonalities and differences of their experiences of learning to teach. I recruited four secondary-school teachers (two English and two mathematics) who had been teaching fewer than three years from each country. I conducted a series of three phenomenological interviews with each teacher in his or her native language, following the guidelines set out by Irving Seidman (2012).

My analysis suggested that, although there were many differences between US and Korean teachers' lived experiences in the context of test-based accountability, the groups were primarily similar. Both novice teachers in the United States and Korea faced significant conflicts between their prior beliefs about good teaching and the educational system that demanded them to teach to tests. All teachers in this study described experiencing various levels of frustration with having to teach to the tests, which was not their preferred approach to teaching. While struggling to meet the demands of their test-based accountability systems, the beginning teachers in this study established firm student-centered beliefs and strived to integrate practices that were consistent with their

beliefs. The findings suggest that support in the form of policies and teacher education is necessary to promote teachers' constant learning and growth in the challenging context of test-based accountability.

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무뚝뚝하고 표현도 잘 못하는 제 곁에 함께 해주고 따뜻한 응원을 보내준 모든 분들께 고마운 마음을 전하고 싶습니다. 저는 이제 이 논문을 시작으로 학자로서의 첫걸음을 내딛습니다. 아직은 부족한 점이 너무도 많은 새내기 학자이지만 조금씩 꾸준히 성장해나갈 수 있도록 더 노력하겠습니다. 앞으로 제가 나아갈 길에도 여러분들과 꼭 함께 하고 싶습니다.

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Chapter I: The Impact of Testing on the Life of Beginning Teachers

I will never forget my first day of teaching English in a rural middle school located in the southwest area of Korea. I was more nervous than excited as I waited for the students to enter my classroom. "I really want to be a good teacher for them," I kept reminding myself. Just like other beginning teachers, I had a strong will and the motivation to be a good teacher for my students, and I was certain that I could be. However, ten minutes after meeting and greeting my students, I felt my belief fading away. I did not know what I could do to help my lower-performing students who could barely read or recite the alphabet. Some of them were still confused about lowercase *b* and *d*, and many of them did not know how to read a simple English word like *car*.

Reflecting back on my experience, what I struggled with the most was not that my students were performing poorly in English—and also in other subjects—but that I needed to cover all the content in the English textbook and teach the mandatory intervention classes to prepare them for several tests they would take during their middle school years, namely, the midterm and final, the provincial achievement test, the national achievement test, and the high-school admission test. Regardless of my students' interests and performance, English was part of all those tests. Whether they understood the content or not, my duty as a teacher was to cover all the content in the textbook and drill them by using worksheets to make sure they chose the correct answer.

I knew from speaking with my colleagues that I was not alone in my experience. Nearly all beginning teachers struggle in some ways, regardless of the school, grade level, or subject area. This is a common tendency across countries. The difficulties and demands beginning teachers experience during their initial years of practice are a

common problem worldwide, and numerous studies have been done to understand new teachers' concerns and provide them the appropriate support (Le Maistre & Pare, 2010; Loh & Hu, 2014). In many cases, those studies have yielded several successful support programs that have been helpful for beginning teachers (e.g., Lambson, 2010; Olsher & Kantor, 2012; Snyder, 2012). Despite the body of research and some successful results to ease their struggle, however, there is no clear evidence that the struggles of beginning teachers have been reduced. Rather a significant number of studies has pointed out that beginning teachers' duties are becoming more challenging because of heightened accountability and control, which essentially makes teachers responsible for the performance of their students on tests (Gatti & Catalano, 2015; Loh & Hu, 2014). I realized that my experience as a beginning teacher resonated with the problems reported in the previous research, although the test-based accountability imposed on Korean teachers stems from pressure and high expectations from multiple entities, including parents and students in addition to the sources of pressure on teachers in the US, including federal, state, and school district regulations (Kim, 2012; Yoo, 2009) in addition to families and communities.

Deeply influenced by my experience as a beginning teacher in Korea and by the current international trend to press teachers to demonstrate their effectiveness through student performance, I set out in this study to explore what the impact of testing on beginning teachers' experiences as well as whether and how new teachers develop in the early years in the context of high-stakes accountability systems. In this study, I focus particularly on secondary mathematics and English teachers in the United States and Korea. Because these two countries have significantly different education systems despite

their emphases on testing, I discuss first how test preparation and testing have become an essential part of teaching in each country. Then I discuss the common issues found in both contexts and explain the importance of studying beginning teachers within these two very different systems that also share some important features.

Testing: The New Norm of US Public Education

In the United States, testing has been introduced and intensified by the federal government and its supporting policies for the last 15 years. Two major policy initiatives in the US, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the Race to the Top (RttT) program, have contributed to shaping the culture of high-stakes accountability based on testing in US schools. Another factor that has strengthened the significance of testing is the release of international test results and the constant low achievements of US students compared to students in other developed countries.

Figure 1

US Public Education as Test-Centered
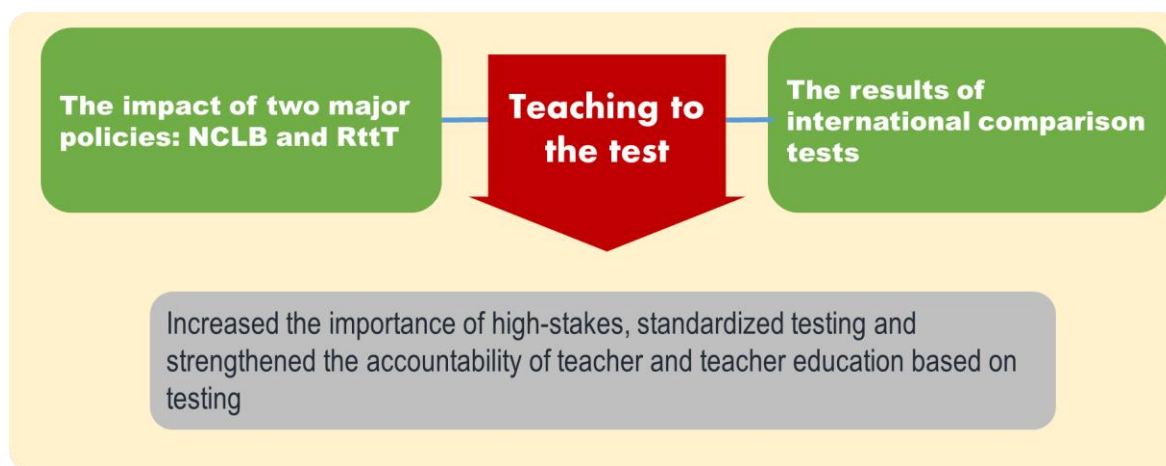
Despite recent changes in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that gives states more flexibility in how test and other data are collected and used and although there have been public concern and resistance from local school officials, the importance

of testing is not likely to diminish any time soon (Kumashiro, 2012). In this section, I discuss how three major factors—NCLB, RttT, and international comparisons—have contributed to the pervasive culture of test-based accountability in the United States.

No Child Left Behind: The Beginning of the Testing Era

Although it has a much longer history, testing became the norm in US public education when the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was established in 2002 (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Crocco & Costigan, 2006; Neumann, 2013; Winstead, 2011). According to this act, all public schools that received Title I funding were required to administer annual standardized tests and meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals. Schools that did not meet AYP goals for several consecutive years were required to do significant restructuring of the school, including closing the school or replacing teachers (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Rinke & Valli, 2010).

The primary purpose of NCLB was to improve the achievement of every student, especially students from poor urban districts and students of color. As a means to achieve this purpose, NCLB adopted high-stakes testing (Lewis & Young, 2013), which is based on the assumption that increased performance on tests means improved student achievement. Refuting the critics of the heavy emphasis on testing, President Bush (September 4, 2002) responded:

> As a matter of fact, it's to your advantage that we test. How do you know if you don't give people a chance to show us? How do you know? It's the systems that don't test [that] … that quit on kids.

As Bush remarked, testing was believed to produce valid evidence of student learning and was seen as the key to a better education system for all children. NCLB represented a

groundbreaking agenda as it mandated annual standardized testing and put significant emphasis on scientific, visible evidence, which is assumed to be represented by student performance on tests. Although NCLB aimed to close the achievement gap and enhance the academic success of marginalized students, over time it became clear that it did not succeed in its purpose, resulting in fierce resistance from many local schools (Tuck, 2013). Teachers were the most critical about this legislation, arguing that high-stakes testing distorted common notions of good teaching and simplify teaching to test preparation only (Berryhill, Linney, & Fromewick, 2009; Winstead, 2011).

In keeping with the focus of NCLB, teacher competency was assumed to be one of the most important factors in raising student achievement levels (Lewis & Young, 2013). In this regard, NCLB emphasized the necessity of highly qualified teachers, which meant teachers who were skillful at teaching content knowledge to students. Teacher quality was defined as teachers who had sufficient knowledge in their subject areas and the skills to teach it to all students at a high level. By outlining teacher quality as the teachers' ability to teach content knowledge, NCLB raised the federal government's interest in teacher education (Cochran–Smith & Lytle, 2007; Lewis & Young, 2013). According to NCLB, a highly qualified teacher was one who held a bachelor's degree and a state license in the subject area that he or she was teaching. Moreover, the teacher's demonstration of competence in teaching the subject area was considered to be most significant. In this respect, the preparation of teachers also came to mean putting emphasis on subject knowledge courses and reducing pedagogical training such as education coursework and student teaching (Bales, 2006; Lewis & Young, 2013). Still NCLB left major decisions about specific standards and policies regarding teacher

education to each state (Lewis & Young, 2013). Federal government intervention in teacher education was minimal at that time, compared to its growing impact after the Race to the Top (RttT) initiative.

Race to the Top: Teachers and Teacher Education Became a Major Concern of the Federal Government

Although NCLB has been criticized as a one-size-fits-all, top-down reform (Cochran–Smith & Lytle, 2007; Tuck, 2013), it was a signal that the federal government in the US was increasing its role and impact on public education (Bales, 2006). Building on NCLB, education reform under the Obama administration became a national matter, and the federal government took a larger role in the control of states and local districts. Moreover, it heightened the accountability of teachers and teacher preparation programs based on the assumption that teachers were the most significant variable in improving student performance (Lewis & Young, 2013). The Obama administration pursued this idea explicitly with the RttT program. Prior to announcing it, President Obama (March 10, 2009) asserted that incentives should be provided to good teachers who made significant contributions to student achievement. His proposals focused on rewarding good teachers with monetary benefits and removing "bad teachers" from schools after giving them some chances to improve. This indicated that the president was in favor of teacher performance pay or merit pay, a reward system for teachers who are successful in improving student achievement.

Following Obama's remarks about rewarding effective teachers, the federal government announced the Race to the Top (RttT) funding competition program in July 2009. The program's primary purpose was to promote and reward states that showed

significant results in innovation and reform in education. To be successful competitors

for RttT funds, states were required to show evidence of the following:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepared students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;

- Building data systems that measured student growth and success and informing teachers and principals about how they could improve instructions;

- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they were needed most;

- Turning around the lowest-achieving schools. (RttT Executive Summary, 2009, p. 2)

Just like NCLB, RttT assumed that the success of education reform was represented by

substantial gains in student outcomes, and for that reason, "recruiting, developing,

rewarding, and retaining effective teachers" (RttT Executive Summary, 2009, p. 2) was a

prerequisite. Applying for funding required states to evaluate and restructure their

policies and systems of teacher tenure and then publish the results online. States also

needed to confirm that they supported the use of student performance data for teacher

evaluation and teacher education program evaluation. Because of these requirements,

some states, such as Alaska, Georgia, and Texas, allowed student achievement data to be

used for evaluating and rewarding teachers (Lewis & Young, 2013).

NCLB proposed that a culture of high-stakes testing holds teachers accountable

for their students' performance. RttT expanded this notion further, explicitly asserting

that the effectiveness, quality, and competence of teachers was associated with student

performance. Both NCLB and RttT associated student performance with teacher

effectiveness. RttT then extended this concept further by associating teacher effectiveness with the quality of teacher preparation programs. This became evident when the federal government announced regulations for strengthening teacher preparation in November 2014 ("Improving Teacher Preparation: Building on Innovation"). With this announcement, the federal government proposed that it would intervene in teacher education because "Providing all children in America with the opportunity for a world-class education is critical for their success and the success of our nation, and every child deserves a great teacher" (US Department of Education, 2014, p. 1). Although these regulations stated that each state "would have primary responsibility and significant flexibility in designing their systems and evaluating program performance" (US Department of Education, 2014, p. 2), the federal government would:

▪ Build on innovative state systems and progress in the field to encourage all states to develop their own meaningful systems *to identify high- and low-performing teacher preparation programs* [emphasis added] across all kinds of programs, not just those based in colleges and universities.

▪ Ask states to move away from current input-focused reporting requirements, streamline the current data requirements, *incorporate more meaningful outcomes measures* [emphasis added] and improve the availability of relevant information on teacher preparation.

▪ *Reward only those programs determined to be effective or better* [emphasis added] by states with eligibility for TEACH (Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education) grants, which are available to students who are planning to become teachers in a high-need field and in a low-income school, to

ensure that these limited federal dollars support high-quality teacher education and preparation.

- *Offer transparency into the performance of teacher preparation programs* [emphasis added], creating a feedback loop among programs and prospective teachers, employers, and the public, and empower programs with information to facilitate continuous improvement. (US Department of Education, 2014, p. 2)

According to this plan, states were to be required to report their annual assessments of teacher preparation programs, including all types of university programs and alternative programs. One of the key indicators for assessing program quality—as proposed by the federal government—was "student learning outcomes," which was defined as the "Effectiveness of new teachers as demonstrated through measures of student growth, performance on state or local teacher evaluation measures that include data on student growth, or both, during their first three teaching years" (US Department of Education, 2014, p. 2). In this way, the Obama administration held teacher education accountable for producing quality teachers. Based on the assumption that a teacher is the most significant factor in student performance, the Obama administration made teachers and teacher education one of its major concern. It not only emphasized the need for high-quality teachers, as was the case with the NCLB act, but it also declared that the federal government will intervene in teacher education because this is the venue for producing high-quality teachers (Lewis & Young, 2013). However, the proposed federal regulations received many critiques and generated great concerns by highly constraining local control by states and putting too much emphasis on testing. Accordingly, revisions were made to the proposed regulations in December 2015. The revised regulations offer more

flexibility and control to states than the previous ones, particularly with reporting the results of state standardized tests, determining measures of student learning other than standardized test results, and identifying the quality of teacher preparation programs (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016).

The Impact of International Tests

NCLB, RttT, and new regulations for assessing teacher preparation signaled that the federal government intended to increase its role and impact on public education as well as teacher education. This was a notable change given that each state had been responsible for regulating their education systems, including teacher education (Bales, 2006). The increasing power and control of the federal government was stimulated in part by the release of international comparison tests, such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). Because the performance of US students lags behind the performance of many other countries, policymakers and the public have raised concerns that the nation could lose its ability to compete in the global economic market in the future. This sentiment has been reflected in US public policy regarding education since *A Nation at Risk* was widely disseminated in 1983, which followed along after concerns about the Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik in 1957 (Bales, 2006; Lagemann, 2002). In the early twenty-first century, the federal government declared again that it would intervene in public education, as well as teacher education, because the global competitiveness of the United States was at risk, according to student performance on several international tests. This assertion is clearly addressed by Arne Duncan (January 14, 2014), then US secretary of education:

In today's knowledge-based, global economy, jobs will go, more and more, to the best-educated workforce. That will either be here, or it will be in places like South Korea, Singapore, China, and India. Let's look at the facts. Your children aren't competing just with children in your district, or state—they are competing with children across the world.

In this speech, Duncan also asserted that high-performing countries such as Korea were "developing and rewarding great teachers" by "recruiting top college graduates into teaching, training them effectively for the job, and making sure vulnerable students have strong teachers." He identified the key to the success of high-performing countries as their willingness to recruit, train, and retain high-quality teachers who could raise student achievement so that their nations could maintain their competitiveness and power in the global economic market.

Whereas successful countries were portrayed as those that invested in training, retaining, and rewarding good teachers, the United States was characterized as not having put significant effort into doing the same. For this and other reasons, the Obama administration made teacher education one of its foremost agenda items through the RttT funding competition and their plans for improving teacher preparation, which stimulated reforms in many areas concerning teachers and teacher education, including induction, recruitment, and professional development for teachers (Berryhill et al., 2009); the development of stronger and more coherent standards for teacher education programs (Bales, 2006; Lewis & Young, 2013); and assessment of program quality based on teachers' performance (Cochran–Smith, Piazza, & Power, 2013). Improving student achievement became a nationwide goal after the creation of NCLB. Because the

recruitment of high-quality teachers was the primary condition for achieving this goal, the federal government gradually extended its role and power over teacher education (Cochran–Smith et al., 2013).

With growing emphasis on teacher quality, many teacher preparation programs, particularly university programs, faced challenges from all directions (Cochran–Smith et al., 2013). While some groups criticized traditional, university-based teacher education for not being efficient in developing quality teachers, some alternative teacher education programs prospered throughout the United States. Moreover, the two major accreditation agencies of teacher preparation programs—the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC)— merged into one (the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation [CAEP]) in 2013 in order to develop uniform standards that ensure the quality of teacher preparation programs across the United States.

The CAEP Board of Directors announced the CAEP Accreditation Standards in August 2013, which were aligned in many ways with teacher preparation regulations proposed by the federal government (US Department of Education, 2014). The five major CAEP standards required by the program are: "Standard 1: content and pedagogical knowledge," "Standard 2: clinical partnership and practice," "Standard 3: candidate quality, recruitment, and selectivity," "Standard 4: program impact," and "Standard 5: provider quality assurance and continuous improvement" (CAEP, 2013, p. 2). The fourth standard, regarding program impact, especially asserted that a preparation program should demonstrate that its completers made a positive impact on K–12 student learning and development. It specifically stated that:

The provider [a preparation program] documents, using multiple measures, that

program completers contribute to an expected level of student-learning growth.

Multiple measures shall include all available growth measures (including value-

added measures, student-growth percentiles, and student learning and

development objectives) required by the state for its teachers and available to

educator preparation providers, other state-supported P-12 impact measures, and

any other measures employed by the provider. (CAEP, 2013, p. 13)

A teacher's ability to contribute to student academic gains is explicitly emphasized in

recent standards for accrediting all types of teacher preparation programs. This idea is

reinforced and supported by the federal government's requirements that teacher

preparation programs demonstrate their ability to produce effective teachers who are able

to improve student performance.

The Relationship of Testing, Teachers, and Teacher Education in the United States

Since NCLB, teachers and local schools have been required to meet heightened

standards by showing evidence of improved student achievement. Test results are

considered to be the most useful data to assess and record student learning; thus, teachers

need to demonstrate their effectiveness through the performance of their students on tests.

In many ways, this has changed schooling to a more teacher-centered approach, de-

emphasizing students' hands-on activities and critical thinking while reinforcing teacher-

directed lessons and test preparation (Spring, 2010; Tuck, 2013).

The Obama administration's RttT program and its proposed regulations for

teacher preparation programs stretched accountability demands further with regard to

teacher education. In part because US student performance has been unsatisfactory on

international tests, the federal government has stressed the urgency of having high-quality teachers and has intervened in teacher education, which the states primarily controlled. This has put pressure on teacher preparation programs by heightening their accountability for producing effective teachers. Just as teachers are accountable for their students' performance, teacher preparation programs are accountable for the performance of the teachers who graduated from the program. Again, as evidenced in CAEP standards and federal reporting requirements, student achievement data are considered to be key indicators of teacher performance.

Since the early 2000s, the federal government has constructed teacher and teacher education accountability based primarily on test data. These data are to be used not only for evaluating, rewarding, and dismissing teachers and turning around or closing schools, but also for assessing the quality of preparation provided to teachers. Testing is, in this sense, clearly a high-stakes practice in the United States. Many teachers have raised concerns about its potential impact on their job security. Recently teachers in New Mexico, Tennessee, and Florida filed lawsuits against their state officials for using student test scores for teacher evaluations. This is likely to occur in other states as well (Brown, 2015) because many states are reforming their teacher evaluation systems and accreditation policies for teacher education programs in response to federal government requirements. Strong oppositions have been raised from teachers and education experts, such as Kevin Kumashiro (2015), who criticized the federal regulations, saying they are "neither a valid nor reliable way of assessing teacher quality" (p. 3). However, test-based evaluation for teachers and teacher preparation programs is supported by the federal government to drive improvement in teachers' and teacher education performance. The

federal government has played a significant role in making high-stakes testing the norm in US public schools in order to enhance the nation's competitiveness in the global economy (Spring, 2010).

Since the federal government's attempts to strengthen teacher and teacher education accountability faced many oppositions, the government recently declared that there has been too much emphasis on testing and that it will seek ways to reduce the amount of testing and make tests more meaningful and purposeful (Zernike, 2015, October 24). Such a change of view was reflected in the recently approved Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which is the new version of the NCLB act. In the ESSA progress report (2015), the federal government calls for "a [s]mart and [b]balanced approach to [t]esting" (p. 10). While continuing to support annual statewide assessment as a means to examine student progress, it will encourage the use of multiple measures and indicators of student performance and support each state in improving and reforming its current testing. Despite such recent changes, however, the impact of standardized testing remains strong in many US public schools, for it takes time for states to develop and implement new assessment systems. Moreover, the ESSA makes it clear that statewide standardized testing will persist, yet not be the single indicator for making any decision about student, teacher, and school performance (Executive Office of the President, 2015).

Test-Centered Schooling in Korea

In Korea, US President Barack Obama is famous not only for being the first African–American president, but also for his praise of the Korean education system. President Obama has publicly applauded Korea several times regarding its high-quality teachers and effective education system. He first mentioned the Korean education system

in a 2009 US Hispanic Chamber of Commerce speech, stating, "Our children spend over a month less in school than children in South Korea every year. That's no way to prepare them for a 21st-century economy." The Korean media reported his remarks in the headlines, enthusiastic that the US President applauded Korean education.

Unlike the excitement from the media, however, many Koreans were surprised and embarrassed by President Obama's remark because of the longtime public discontent with an education system that puts so much emphasis on testing and makes the lives of many students miserable. For example, Bum Lee (2009), a well-known education critic in Korea asserted that "President Obama might not know well about the fact that Korean students commit suicide because they are sick of attending so many 'hagwon' (cram schools), and high-school students are locked in schools until 10 p.m. [to prepare for college admission tests]" (para. 5). He then argued that President Obama's praise for Korean education should be understood in the context of American education where there is a significant achievement gap between wealthy and poor school districts (Lee, 2009). Lee informed Koreans of the fact that some US schools located in urban districts especially constantly fail to educate their students, many of whom are students of color or first generation immigrants who are likely to have limited English proficiency. These schools tend to have a higher percentage of dropout rates, fewer teachers with high quality credentials, and only a small number of students attending four-year colleges (Haycock, 2006). This kind of severe achievement gap has not yet been the case in Korea (Lee, 2009). President Obama and Secretary Duncan asserted that the success of Korean education was due to its high-quality teachers, parents' passion for their children to receive a good education, and a demanding curriculum and school culture. Many

Koreans, however, consider these aspects to be the source of problems in Korean education, such as excessive competition caused by the heavy emphasis on testing.

Korean schooling is often characterized by the term "test-centered schooling" (*ipsi kyoyook*), which means that all educational activities in schools are geared toward preparing students for college admission, which requires a good academic record (Choi et al., 2012). Whereas testing in the United States now has a strong impact on local schools, supported at the state and federal policy levels especially over the last 15 years, test-centered schooling in Korea has existed for decades and has been influenced by the historical, cultural, and social contexts of Korean society as illustrated in Figure 2 (Kang, 2009).

Figure 2

Korea as a Test-Centered Society
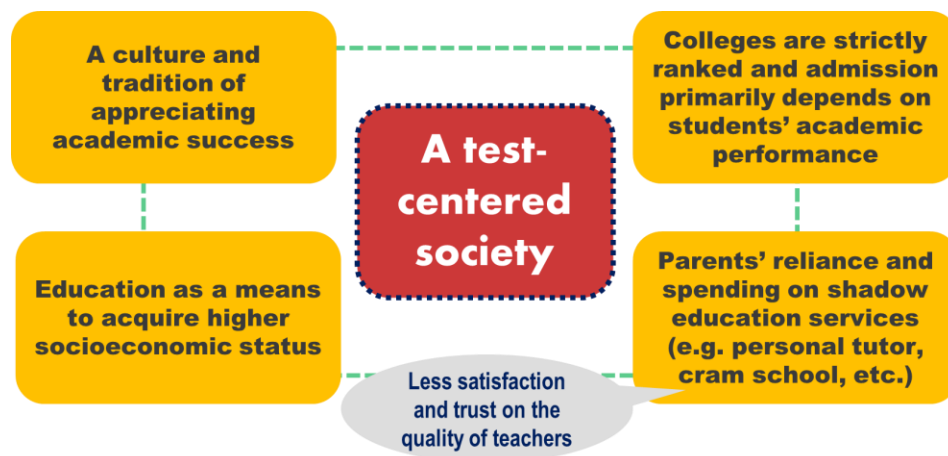
The section below discusses these contexts, focusing on three major topics: the tradition of appreciating academic success, parents' excessive reliance on private education services, and the failure of educational policies.

The Culture of Appreciating Academic Success

Korea's education system has revolved around appreciation and valuing of academic success since Confucianism became the social norm during the *Chosun Dynasty,* which reigned from 1392–1910 (Kang, 2009). During this period, there was a national test (*kwa geo*) to hire public officers. The test asked applicants about their knowledge of several classical texts in Confucianism. The test was implemented in three phases, and the final candidates took the last test in front of the king. Passing all three tests was very competitive and a great honor for the applicant himself[1] as well as his entire family. Passing the final test and being hired as a public officer also meant the applicant would acquire a higher social class, which gave wealth and honor to his entire family. This national test was an important tool for elevating one's socioeconomic status in the *Chosun Dynasty,* and the tradition continues to impact many Koreans' perceptions of education. Education in Korea today, as it was 500 years ago, is also considered a social tool to acquire a higher socioeconomic status (Kang, 2009; Oh, 1996; Seth, 2002).

In the current capitalist society, the most efficient way to attain higher socioeconomic status is by obtaining a well-paying and respected job (Kang, 2009; Kim, 2013). For instance, becoming a doctor, lawyer, public officer, or teacher is favored by many Koreans. Working in a large, well-known business or industry, such as Samsung, is also a popular strategy among many Koreans for advancement. Because these jobs are scarce and highly competitive, it is necessary for students to graduate from elite colleges and use their networks and resources to increase their chances of acquiring those jobs

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[1] Only men were allowed to take the exam to become public officers at that time.

(Kang, 2009). Moreover, possessing an academic degree from one of these colleges is one of the credentials many employers look for in an applicant because they assume that if the applicant was a good student in school, he or she is also likely to have competence in the position (Park, 2004).

Because graduating from an elite college offers significant advantages in Korean society, many parents want to send their children to one of these colleges (Kang, 2009; Kim, 2013; Park, 2004) even though admission is therefore highly competitive. College admission generally depends on two major factors: (a) students' performance in school, which primarily involves their grades and rankings in regular school tests (midterms and finals) and (b) *suneung,* the Korean scholastic aptitude test for higher education that takes place once a year in November for high-school seniors and graduates who wish to apply to higher education institutions (Kim & Kim, 2012). Whereas regular school exams include most of the subjects taught in school, *suneung* only assesses core subjects, which are Korean, English, mathematics, and the choice of either science or social studies. Each person's raw scores and standardized scores for each subject area are reported with a numerical grade (with 1 as the highest and 9 as the lowest) according to his or her percentile ranking in each subject. To apply to an elite college, getting higher scores as well as higher grades (first or second grade at least) in every subject of *suneung* is desirable (Kim & Kim, 2012). Most Korean colleges are ranked primarily by their average applicants' scores and grades in *suneung*; these data are gathered annually by major cram schools (*hagwon*) and the media and are provided to teachers, students, and parents (Kim & Kim, 2012). Many Koreans assess students' academic success based on the college they attend (Kang, 2009; Kim, 2013).

Academic success has been one of the most important values in Korean society. Students' good performance on school tests and *suneung* is essential to their entering an elite college; in addition, students who graduate from elite colleges are more likely to reach a higher socioeconomic status through their jobs. In this way, the current situation is not much different from hundreds of years ago when Korea was ruled by a king and Confucianism (Kang, 2009), but the competition has become much more severe today. Only men from the noble class were allowed to take the original national tests at that time. Today, however, every child from every Korean family competes for higher scores and grades to go to better, higher ranked colleges (Kang, 2009).

Shadow Education over Public Education

Academic success in Korea is a significant indicator of one's potential socioeconomic success (Kang, 2009; Kim, 2013). As President Obama and Secretary Duncan noted, many Korean parents are demanding and passionate about educating their children (Kim, 2013). The problem is that many parents define "good education" as preparing children for tests so that they get better scores and rankings for college admission (Kim & Kim, 2012). In these parents' view, a good school and a good teacher should be able to improve their children's academic achievement. However, within the restrictions of a public education system in which one teacher takes charge of an average of 33 students (Education Statistics, 2011), it is almost impossible for a teacher to improve every student's test scores. Furthermore, a student's ranking is an achievement that is relative to other students' rankings, thus there are always winners and losers for each test as well as for college admission. There are students who receive high scores and rank higher on tests and those who do not. Similarly, there are students who are admitted

to elite colleges and those who are not. Excessive competition is likely to occur in this kind of situation where winners and losers always exist. This is why many parents have begun to rely on private supplementary education services (Kim & Kim, 2012) often called "shadow education" (Spring, 2010), to ensure their children rank among the winners.

According to recent statistics, 87.4% of elementary students, 74.3% of middle school students, and 53.8% of high-school students in Korea have used shadow education services that involve private tutoring, attending *hagwon* after school, or both (Lee, 2008). *Hagwon* is a typical private institution that provides rigorous test preparation and consulting services for students seeking college admission (Kim & Kim, 2012). Many Korean students regularly attend *hagwon* after school to supplement their school coursework and prepare for tests. These private education services are considered essential for most Koreans to prepare for tests and college admission because the public education system has limitations on providing personalized and special care for each student in terms of test preparation (Kim & Kim, 2012; Lee, 2008).

Some argue that relying on private education services in addition to public education has made the lives of many Korean students miserable (Choi et al., 2012). According to a recent survey of middle and high-school students in Seoul, 83.1% of respondents said that they were highly stressed, and more than half (58.3%) of them said it was due to the pressure of having to study hard (Seoul Metropolitan Government Office, 2013). Se-Woong Goo (2014), a former lecturer in Korean studies at Yale, wrote in the *New York Times* that the Korean education system is hurting its students. He moved from Seoul to vancouver after his brother suffered from ill-defined chest pain and

allergies due to severe academic stress and a heavy study load. He found the situation was no better when he went back to Korea 13 years later to teach English at a *hagwon* located in Gangnam, a wealthy district in Seoul. Goo said, "The students were serious about studying, but their eyes appeared dead" (para. 3). He asserted that this situation was due to the Korean culture that rewards academic success and overzealous parents who send their children to many different *hagwons* after school. Goo said these two factors have shaped the current Korean education system, which is represented by excessive competition and testing, so that most students suffer rather than enjoy.

Because Korean society appreciates academic success, many Korean parents do not hesitate to provide the best support they can in terms of educating their children, and that is why shadow education services have flourished in Korea. These services were initially used to supplement school coursework, but now they have become essential to most Korean students for test preparation and college admission. It is another school where the students go after school and spend long hours studying.

Policies and Reform Have No Effect

Some people suggest that the current situation in Korea schools—heavy emphasis on testing, excessive competitions in schools, and reliance on shadow education—has been aggravated by the government's implementation of several poor policies (Kim, 2012). Korea has a national curriculum from preschool until high school, and education used to be under the control of the central government, especially the Ministry of Education (MOE). Since the early 2000s, the government has constantly attempted to loosen its control on the public education system by diversifying the routes for college admission and approving a number of *self-governing private high schools* and

international schools that have more autonomy over the school curriculum and their admission policies (Kim, 2012; Yoo, 2009). The primary purpose of these policies was to reduce the impact of testing and private education services by allowing various pathways to college admission, yet unexpected results occurred. Many Korean parents came to believe that sending their children to these new types of schools would be helpful for gaining college admission because these schools provided various extracurricular programs and advanced learning courses not available in most public schools. Because these schools required a competitive admission process, parents came to rely more on private education services to prepare their children for these types of schools (Kim, 2002).

Besides approving various types of schools that are differentiated from typical public schools, the government has been gradually handing over its power to local education offices and schools, allowing them more freedom to develop and implement school curricula and choose textbooks. However, under the intense culture of testing, such deregulation caused local schools to spend more time on test preparation (Kim, 2012). Furthermore, since 2008, the conservative government has brought back the annual national student achievement tests for middle school (9th grade) and high school (11th grade) students and released the achievement level of each school with the purpose of providing more accurate student achievement data for policymakers, researchers, and parents (Sung & Kang, 2012). This incurred severe criticism from many Koreans who feel that the government is aggravating the test-centered schooling that is already imbued in Korean schools (Kim, 2012; Yoo, 2009).

Some critics have also argued that educational policies since the early 2000s in Korea diversifying the types of secondary schools and college admission pathways have been tremendously influenced by the global tide of neoliberalism (Kim, 2012; Lee, 2008). Neoliberalism emphasizes education as a means for achieving a nation's economic competitiveness (Apple, 2006; Spring, 2010). When it is combined with a culture that has traditionally appreciated academic success, the public education system becomes similar to a market in which every school competes for better results in their student outcomes (Kim, 2012). In such a market-based public education system, meeting parents' and students' needs is the foremost purpose of schooling (Spring, 2010); thus, schools rely more on test preparation and less on other educational activities (Kim, 2012). Self-governing private high schools or other kinds of special schools use their autonomy over the school curriculum to spend more time on test preparation and college admission (Kim, 2012). Some schools even invite famous *hagwon* instructors to provide special lessons for their students. As a result, some claim that schools have become no different from *hagwon* (Kang, 2009; Kim, 2012). In fact, schools and *hagwon* exist and even compete with each other for the same purpose, namely to prepare students for tests and send them to better colleges.

Education policies implemented so far have not made major breakthroughs to reduce the excessive competition in schools and parents' heavy reliance on private education services. These education problems are all closely connected to one another, and they originated in the historical, social, and cultural backgrounds of current Korean society. This suggests that simple changes of policy are not likely to work well to alter the current situation. Although various policies have been implemented by the

government with good purposes and intentions, they have eventually worked in a way that has exacerbated existing problems.

The Relationship of Testing, Teachers, and Teacher Education in Korea

For many Koreans, the purpose of schooling is to go to college, and a good education or good teaching equal effective preparation for tests and college admission (Kang, 2009; Kim, 2013). Although most Koreans agree that excessive competition and a heavy emphasis on testing are significant problems, they still want their children to succeed in school and have a better life in the future (Kim, 2013). For this reason, many Korean parents continuously spend money on expensive private education services and simultaneously demand that their children's teachers provide more support for their children's academic success (Kim & Kim, 2012).

Many Korean parents and students complain that teachers are not effective enough in test preparation and do not provide as much emotional care for their students as private tutors and *hagwon* instructors do (Kim & Kim, 2012). According to recent studies about high-school students' perceptions of the effectiveness of teachers and *hagwon* instructors, students perceived *hagwon* instructors to be more effective than teachers, not only in their subject knowledge and preparedness for lessons but also in their understanding and caring for students (Kim & Kim, 2012). For example, in a study about Korean students' experiences with shadow education (Kim & Kim, 2012), a high-school student responded that while he did not have many chances to have one-on-one conversations with his school teacher, his *hagwon* instructor was more than willing to talk to him and spent longer hours with him discussing his academic concerns. He felt that his *hagwon* instructor was more approachable and provided more effective advice

than his school teacher. Another student participating in this study also perceived that he felt more comfortable talking to his *hagwon* instructors because they were more amenable to his feedback on their lessons. As a result, he thought that the lessons he was taking in *hagwon* were more useful compared to his school.

Students' perception that teachers were less effective than private instructors was a warning for many policymakers and educators, which served as an indicator that the current public education system was at risk (Kang, 2009). The necessity of improving teacher quality and teacher education has been emphasized by policy makers and educators. Based on the assumption that improving teacher quality will also enhance the quality of public education and lead parents to rely less on private education services, teacher education in Korea is facing a great need to improve its overall structure, curriculum, and policies (Seo, 2005). It is a widely accepted view in Korea that the quality of education depends on the quality of teachers; however, a reliance on private education services and the public perception that their instructors are more effective than school teachers imply that dissatisfaction with teacher quality must be resolved in the process of educating prospective teachers.

Common Problems in Both the United States and Korea

As discussed, the education systems in the United States and Korea are clearly different. The emphasis on test preparation and testing is a common phenomenon in both countries, yet it has occurred for different reasons and has emerged from different backgrounds. In the United States, the federal government has played a major role at least since the early 2000s in making testing a greater focus of schooling through policies such as NCLB and RttT. Testing in the United States is a high-stakes practice because its

results are used to make many important decisions regarding school staffing and turnaround, teacher evaluation and rewards, and increasingly teacher preparation program assessments, which could seriously affect many teachers' and students' lives. Teachers are increasingly expected to prove their effectiveness by preparing their students to achieve satisfactory results on tests. Unlike in the United States, test preparation and testing in Korea have been emphasized because of the historical and cultural backgrounds of its people and a social system that highly values students' academic success. Teaching to the test has been ingrained in Korean schools for many decades as a way to prepare students for college admission, and it is sustained and strengthened by parents' reliance on shadow education due in part to their dissatisfaction with the job school teachers are doing. Policy changes have had minimal effects on the pervasiveness of test-centered schooling in Korea. Just as with American teachers, Korean teachers are also expected to be good at test preparation, but the demands and pressures come primarily from parents and students rather than from state and federal regulations, as is the case in the United States.

Testing in both countries is emphasized by different entities for different purposes, but they both consider teacher quality a significant problem, and the predominant understanding of high-quality teachers in both countries is teachers who have competency in raising student achievement. Moreover, student achievement in this sense is primarily understood as test results (Tuck, 2013). To be more explicit, to a great extent high-quality teachers in both countries are regarded as those who are able to train students to perform well on tests.

Another common assumption among policymakers in both countries is that education is a means to and significant indicator of the nation's economic competitiveness. This idea is clearly addressed in Secretary Duncan's (2014) address, noted above, which asserted that US children must be as competent and competitive as children in other countries. President Obama (2011) also stressed the importance of education (and, of course, the necessity of having high-quality teachers) to develop the nation's workforce. In Korea, education has been the key to achieving economic success despite the fact that it is a small country with limited resources other than its people (Oh, 1996). For every Korean governmental administration, education has been an important agenda to develop the nation's human resources and improve its global competitiveness (Lee, 2008). In both the United States and Korea, improving the quality of education is a national task. To support this task, it is assumed that is necessary for policymakers to collect strong evidence based on objective scientific data (RttT Executive Summary, 2009). Thus, the scores and rankings from state (or provincial) tests, national tests, and international tests have gained more importance in both countries as they assess the performance of each nation's future workforce and anticipate their competency in the global economic market (Hargreaves, 2012; Knight et al., 2012; Tuck, 2013).

Furthermore, teacher education is highly emphasized in both countries because teachers play a major role in developing the nation's future workforce. Therefore, teacher education is responsible for preparing high-quality teachers who contribute to improving student achievement (Duncan, January 13, 2014; Jung et al., 2010; Obama, 2011). Raising the accountability of teachers and teacher education is a common tendency in both countries despite the distinctive differences in their education systems. However,

many teacher education programs in both countries do not address test-based accountability significantly in their curricula, practices, and policies (Connors & Bengston, 2014; Kim, 2013). In fact, most teacher candidates neither learn much about test preparation nor anticipate it will be their main responsibility (Brown, 2010; White, Sturtevant, & Dunlap, 2003). However, once they become teachers, many are expected to invest significant amounts of time and effort into preparing their students for tests. This is the reality that seems to cause significant challenges for teachers, especially beginning teachers.

Why Beginning Teachers?

Beginning teachers face many difficulties once they start working in schools (Le Maistre & Pare, 2010). When participating in teacher preparation programs, they develop their own ideas and philosophies about teaching and education (Schaefer, 2013), but once they become teachers, one of the main jobs for many teachers, especially those in urban and other areas where students have traditionally not fared well on standardized tests, becomes test preparation (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Ginsberg & Kingston, 2014; Um, 2013). Moreover, there are other problems new teachers face, including student discipline problems and relationships with administrators, colleagues, and parents (Clark, 2012). When all these problems occur simultaneously, beginning teachers' work becomes especially difficult. In the United States, many beginning teachers leave their jobs within five years (Clark, 2012; Clark & Byrnes, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). In the United States and Korea, some beginning teachers struggle and over time conform to norms that restrict their roles to being mere deliverers of curricula rather than agents who promote student learning and critical thinking (H. Kim, 2008; Tuck, 2013).

There seems to be a significant mismatch in both countries between what beginning teachers experience in teacher preparation programs and what they need to be able to do in schools. In both countries, teachers are pressured to raise student achievement, which is assumed to be represented by test results. In the United States, test results are emphasized as a means to assess not only student performance but also teacher and school performance (Berryhill et al., 2009; Plecki, Elfers, & Nakamura, 2012). Many teachers express anxiety and concern that the heavy emphasis placed on testing may reduce teaching to merely test preparation and bring about many repercussions in schools (Berryhill et al., 2009). In Korea, test-centered teaching is already the fixed norm in public education because schooling is considered a path to college admission among many Koreans and getting good results on every test is necessary if students plan to attend elite colleges (Kim & Kim, 2012). Hence, teachers are expected to be good at test preparation. Currently, Korean teachers are being pressured more than before because parents rely more on private services (Kim & Kim, 2012), and policymakers want to maintain the excellence of the Korean education system and improve its global competitiveness through education (Jung et al., 2010). In both countries, many teachers face the challenges of working within the testing regime. For most beginning teachers in both countries, working well within the testing regime contradicts aspects of their prior teacher education and their initial perspectives on teaching. Consequently, teachers may experience several conflicts and difficulties in schools during the critical period of the early years of learning to teach (Hover & Pierce, 2006; Meagher & Brantlinger, 2011). To gain a better understanding of this common problem, I used a phenomenological

research approach to examine the lived experiences of beginning teachers in the United States and Korea and the meanings they made of those experiences.

The Scope and Purpose of the Study

This study explores a common trend in two different contexts: beginning teachers working within testing regimes in the United States and beginning teachers working within testing regimes in Korea. In this sense, my study may be considered an international comparative study, although it has a different purpose and focus from other well-known international studies published in the market (e.g., Darling–Hammond & Lieberman, 2010; Sahlberg, 2011; Tucker, 2011). Unlike studies that focus primarily on learning the good practices of other countries and modeling them in the United States, in this study, I concentrate on a common phenomenon—the increasing importance of testing and test-based accountability—that deeply affects the lives of beginning teachers. By examining the realities of their lives within a test-based accountability system, I examine the teachers' perspectives and consider the implications of their experiences and viewpoints for teacher education, teacher policies, and teaching practices in the era of high-stakes accountability.

Research Questions

I have developed the research questions for this study guided by the perspectives of phenomenological research, which are detailed in Chapter Two. To inquire about beginning teachers' lived experiences of learning to teach in the context of test-based accountability, I have structured the questions with three goals: (1) understanding the essence of beginning teachers' lived experiences, (2) understanding the meaning that the teachers make of their experiences, and (3) understanding the commonalities and

differences of US and Korean teachers' experiences and their meaning making. The following are the three main questions and their sub-questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of beginning teachers' learning to teach in the United States and Korea within the context of intense teacher accountability based on testing?

o How do beginning teachers describe their lived experiences within the testing regime and what are the positive and negative aspects of their lives as beginning teachers?

o To what extent and in what ways does a teacher preparation program influence a beginning teachers' lived experience and what do the teachers say about the impact, adequacy, and appropriateness of their preparation?

o To what extent and in what ways does test-based accountability influence the teachers' lives and job satisfaction and what other factors shape their experiences of learning to teach?

2. What meanings do teachers make of their lived experiences?

o How do beginning teachers perceive themselves working within the testing regime? What makes them satisfied or dissatisfied with their present professional lives and what are they concerned about?

o How do the beginning teachers envision their lives in the future? What are their career plans, including their plans to remain in or leave teaching?

3. What are the commonalities and differences between teachers in the United States and Korea?

    o   In which areas are the commonalities and differences found and what might

        explain the commonalities and differences?

Through a phenomenological study of these questions, I document the many constraints the test-based accountability systems placed on teachers. However, I also argue that to greater or lesser extents, these beginning teachers were able to manage some aspects of the conflict between the teaching to the test they were expected to do in the schools and their own perceptions of good teaching and were able to grow as professionals over the early years of teaching.

        In Chapter Two, I review the literature relevant to this study in three major areas: teachers' perceptions and experiences in the context of test-based accountability; beginning teachers' learning to teach; and phenomenology, the theoretical framework of this study. In each part of the literature review, I synthesize the major findings and big ideas from the previous literature and their implications for this study. I also explain why my study is significant based on the review and implications.

        In Chapter Three, I discuss the research design of this study, which takes a phenomenological approach. I first explain the concept of phenomenological research, including its aims, purpose, and assumptions. I then discuss the specific process I carried out to conduct a phenomenological research study. This process involved: determining a phenomenon of interest and developing research questions; collecting phenomenological data through a series of three phenomenological interviews suggested by Irving Seidman (2012); and analyzing phenomenological data according to the three steps I devised from the suggestions made by scholars in this field of research. I also explain the

methodological challenges of phenomenological research and how I strived to resolve those issues in this study.

From Chapter Four to Chapter Six, I present my analyses and interpretations of the phenomenological interview data about beginning teachers' lived experiences within different test-based accountability systems. Since the teachers' lived experiences were significantly affected by their working contexts, I present the analysis in each chapter by country, first the United States and then Korea. In the last part of each chapter, I synthesize and compare the teachers' lived experiences and explain how my arguments built from the analysis of their experiences.

In Chapter Four, I focus on teachers' experiences prior to beginning their job, which involves their childhood experience and preservice education. I argue in this chapter that despite their varied backgrounds and preparations for teaching, both US and Korean teachers felt they were well prepared to teach. Yet the teachers had different kinds of prior beliefs about good teaching. All the US teachers and one Korean teacher held initial beliefs that good teaching included being supportive of students and enacting student-centered teaching, while the majority of Korean teachers hoped to be good at teaching content by incorporating in-depth content knowledge and various instructional strategies.

Chapter Five focuses on the teachers' lived experiences with testing and test-based accountability once they had completed preparation and were teachers in schools, which is the primary focus of this study. In this chapter, I describe how teachers planned and carried out lessons, how much test preparation they offered and how it was implemented, and their perceptions of testing and test-based accountability. My analysis

suggests that all beginning teachers in this study faced a significant tension between their initial beliefs about teaching and the teaching to the test that they were expected to do, and they all implemented teaching to the test to varied extents depending on their school contexts and education systems.

In Chapter Six, I look into the teachers' lived experiences of learning in the context of test-based accountability. Here I take up the question, what did the beginning teachers learn from their early years of teaching in such contexts? I argue in this chapter that all the US and Korean teachers I studied came to understand the importance of care and support to students, so they made constant efforts to integrate various student-centered practices in their predominantly test-centered teaching.

In Chapter Seven, I conclude the dissertation with an overview of the meanings of teaching and of learning to teach in a test-based accountability system based on my analysis of the teachers' lived experiences. I also suggest that my study adds evidence to the argument that strengthening testing and test-based accountability may not be the right approach for improving teaching and learning, based on a comparison of the US and Korean teachers' experiences. I then suggest implications in three areas: policy, practice of teacher education, and research.

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

This chapter reviews the literature that guided this study. The review of literature is constructed in three major sections. The first section focuses on teachers' perceptions and experiences in the context of test-based accountability to understand what issues have been identified in this area. This is followed by a review of literature about beginning teachers' learning to teach, which is another consideration of this study. This section presents a review of major conceptual and empirical studies regarding the concept of "learning to teach" as well as beginning teachers' professional learning and development and their struggles. Another major part of this section reviews studies that explore beginning teachers' experiences in the context of test-based accountability, as there are increasing numbers of studies in this area since the 2000s. The last section concentrates on phenomenology, which is the theoretical framework of this study. The literature reviewed for this section includes classic and conceptual studies about phenomenology and empirical studies in teaching and teacher education grounded in phenomenology.

Teachers in the Era of Test-Based Accountability

In this section, studies about teachers' experiences in the context of test-based accountability are reviewed. To find relevant studies, I first searched through various databases including Google Scholar, Educational Research Complete (ERC), and Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), combining keywords, "teachers," or "teaching" with "accountability," "testing," or "standardized test." Using these combinations, I searched studies published domestically and internationally since the 2000s. Along with the database search, a hand search was also carried out in major education journals, such as the *Journal of Teacher Education (JTE)* and *Teacher*

Education Quarterly (TEQ) for studies about the United States, *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies, Asia Pacific Journal of Education (APJE), and Australian Journal of Teacher Education* for international studies published in English*,* and *Korean Education, Korean Journal of Teacher Education* and *Korean Journal of Curriculum Studies* for Korean studies. Numerous studies in this area have been published since the early 2000s particularly after the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). I identified three major topics in this area: 1) research on teachers' beliefs and perceptions about test-based accountability, 2) research on teachers' practice in the context of test-based accountability, and 3) research on the recruitment, retention, and placement of teachers in the context of test-based accountability. Studies that specifically concentrate on beginning teachers' perceptions and experiences with test-based accountability are grouped in a separate section.

Research on Teachers' Beliefs and Perceptions on Test-Based Accountability

A number of studies investigated how teachers perceive themselves, their practices, and the policies and regulations demanded by test-based accountability. Teachers' perceptions were examined primarily using teacher surveys. Most of these studies explored about what it means to work within this regime and found that teachers generally have negative perceptions about test-based accountability. This tendency was clearly visible after NCLB was implemented in 2003.

Pressure, stress, and frustration. Regarding the impact of test-based accountability on teachers, most studies revealed it was common that teachers felt much stress and pressure due to accountability demands. For example, according to a 2003 survey conducted by the National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy,

teachers reported feelings of pressure to improve student performance from several parties including superintendents, principals, and parents. This survey was conducted with elementary with high-school teachers with different lengths of experience and from various states. These states were classified as high-stakes states (e.g., California, Florida, Massachusetts, and Texas) and low/moderate states (e.g., Hawaii, Maine, Montana, and Nebraska), depending on whether each state administered high-stakes state tests. Teachers' perceptions of testing were compared based on this difference. According to the survey results, teachers from high-stakes states responded that they spent more time with students for test preparation such as teaching test-taking skills and using supplementary materials for drilling. Similar results were found in another survey with elementary teachers from South Carolina. In this survey, two thirds of respondents said they had changed their teaching practices to more directed instruction due to the pressure to cover all content before the state exam (Berryhill et al., 2009). Some common changes in instruction were "no longer emphasizing that all students master principles before moving to the next topic" (35%), "deemphasizing group work" (15%), and "making learning more teacher-directed" (20%) (Berryhill et al., 2009, p. 7).

Although teachers responded that they made significant changes in their way of teaching because of the test, they did not think these changes improved student learning (Abrams, Pedulla, & Madaus, 2003; Berryhill et al., 2009). For example, in a mixed-methods study with elementary teachers working in 10 low-performing schools in the Chicago Public School (CPS) district, teachers responded that they increased their time and effort for test preparation since their schools were placed on probation. Several teachers in these schools mentioned that they are working harder and longer, and the

majority of teachers responded that they adopted new instructional methods to better prepare their students for tests. However, the teachers did not feel that their extended effort made any noticeable improvement in terms of student learning, although it might increase their test scores slightly (Finnigan & Gross, 2007). The results from these studies suggest that conflict between teachers' beliefs about good educational practice and their actual practice imposed by test-based accountability. The amount of pressure that teachers perceive was much greater than was anticipated by the policy makers, which led teachers to make significant changes in their teaching but in ways they perceived as not truly meaningful for student learning (Cruz & Brown, 2010; Finnigan & Gross, 2007). Increasing time and effort for test preparation may improve students' test scores, but this does not truly reflect an improvement in student learning. Moreover, teachers concluded that their extended effort due to test-based accountability had little value for their students or for themselves (Cruz & Brown, 2010; Finnigan & Gross, 2007). Teachers work harder for a purpose they perceive as meaningless. This conflict caused frustration and decreased morale among many teachers (Abrams et al., 2003). It is apparent in many studies that after the implementation of NCLB, teachers felt greater pressure to improve student performance and actually changed their way of teaching to prepare their students for tests (Abrams et al., 2003; Berryhill et al., 2009; Cruz & Brown, 2010).

Taking complete responsibility for student performance. To understand why many teachers have negative views on test-based accountability, it is also important to examine how teachers understand the pressure (Jones & Eagley, 2008). Several studies indicate that teachers were concerned about being targets of blame for low student

achievement. This concern was greater when the teacher was working in a high-stakes accountability context with sanctions for low student achievement, such as in a probation school (Finnigan & Gross, 2007). Some studies revealed that teachers were not completely opposed to accountability; however, they were worried about bearing the whole responsibility of improving student achievement based on test scores because other influential factors exist that affect student performance on tests (Vernaza, 2012). Among them, the teachers found student-related factors are most influential (Berryhill et al., 2009; Vernaza, 2012) and even more powerful than teacher-related factors (Anagnostopoulos, 2003). To further explore to what extent teachers perceive they are accountable for their students' performance on state tests, Vernaza (2012) conducted an open-ended survey with 720 third-grade Florida teachers. According to the results, most teachers perceived accountability as contingency-based, which means that students' performance on tests "should be contingent or dependent upon the consideration of certain factors" (p. 5) that may include "accountability for others; personal student factors beyond the teacher's control; and students' level of academic performance upon entering third grade" (p. 5). The teachers perceived students' academic backgrounds and their home environments as uncontrollable factors. Assuming that a student who lacked academic knowledge and skills entered a teacher's third-grade classroom and failed to achieve a certain level on tests, teachers believed it was unfair to attribute the student's failure solely to the teacher. According to teachers' arguments, this type of student already has a history of learning by the time of the test, which is unrelated to his or her third grade teacher's performance. However, the teacher needs to make more effort toward helping this type of student catch up over the academic year, which is a one-year

time period. In this regard, most teachers in this study believed that it was unreasonable to assess their fulfillment of accountability based solely on a student's performance on tests. Instead of attributing the entire cause and effect of their students' performance on the teachers, they were in favor of sharing the accountability of student learning with other factors (Vernaza, 2012).

Contrary to most teachers' wishes, the current accountability regime is moving toward holding teachers more responsible for their students' performance. Some states in the United States, such as Florida and Texas, have already announced plans to give monetary incentives to teachers based on the improvement in students' performance on tests. Using this type of value-added assessments that tie teachers to student test scores is considered, in many states, to be adequate assessment of the effectiveness of teacher performance (Konstantopoulos, 2014; Plecki et al., 2012). With this approach, testing becomes more high-stakes for teachers. Test scores not only represent the degree of student performance but also the degree of teacher performance, and their importance is being augmented to make many important decisions regarding the teaching profession, including recruitment, promotion, and dismissal of teachers (Konstantopoulos, 2014). In this situation, teachers cannot help but put more effort toward test preparation, even though it is not their preferred approach.

Studies have indicated that teachers become resistant when testing is high -stakes. A kind of resistance found among teachers was the use of "cognitive shields," which means attributing the cause of student failure to personal factors (e.g., students' prior knowledge or home environment), thus reducing the teacher's responsibility for the course of failure (Anagnostopoulos, 2003, p. 310). Based on a qualitative case study with

secondary English teachers from two urban Chicago high schools, Anagnostopoulos (2003) asserted that when teachers perceived that they had little responsibility for student failure—and thus student failure was due to students' personal backgrounds—teachers did not make any significant changes in teaching. Teachers responded in interviews that they would rather adopt simple, quick fixes to targeted students.

Teachers use cognitive shields not only for diminishing their responsibility for student failure but also to react to the administrative pressure that impedes their professional autonomy in the classroom (Anagnostopoulos, 2003). Anagnostopoulos (2003) argued that:

Within the context of the pressure to raise standards and improve achievement for all students, student failure becomes a strategic resource for teachers in urban high schools to use in their efforts to defend their professional autonomy . . . For teachers who teach in schools in which large numbers of students fail courses, district and principal policies that attempt to limit the number of failures further attenuate teachers' already tenuous control over student failure and threaten their autonomy. As accountability policies directly and indirectly impinge on teacher's control over instruction through direct pressure to raise test scores and lower course failure rates, many teachers struggle to maintain autonomy through maintaining control over the number of students who fail their classes (p. 311).

Aligned with this argument, interviews and observations of teachers' classroom teaching revealed that they clearly differentiated between "teaching to the test" and "teaching the real curriculum" (p. 303). From the teachers' perspectives, teaching to the test was not "real teaching" because it constraints teachers' autonomy to carry out teaching in a way

that he or she values. However, despite such differentiation, the teachers in this study did not present any form of real teaching. Rather, they maintained their routine practices in the name of teaching to the test and justified it by expressing that it is due to administrative pressure. Thus, teachers not only use students but also the external pressure as their cognitive shields to defend their mundane practice, which is unproductive for any aspect of student learning or achievement.

Different views on accountability. Whereas most studies presented teachers' negative attitudes and concerns about test-based accountability, a few studies revealed other perspectives. For example, in a survey of 708 Florida elementary school teachers, about two-thirds of teachers responded that they feel intense pressure to improve student test scores, yet half of the respondents said such pressure actually motivated them to do a better job (Jones & Egley, 2009). In this regard, Jones and Egley (2009) concluded that pressure from test-based accountability could work in a positive way that stimulates teachers to enhance their instruction for the purpose of improving their students' achievement. They also examined whether offering monetary incentives based on improved test scores further enhanced teachers' motivation for good teaching. The results suggested that monetary incentives did not have any significant effect on motivating teachers to do a better job. The incentives were found to be a less effective factor than testing itself. A further investigation is needed on what ways testing motivates teachers more than monetary incentives. As the researchers indicated, however, teachers could be motivated to increase test scores but "not necessarily motivated to develop practices that increase student learning and motivation" (Jones & Egley, 2009, p. 34). Therefore, it is

unclear whether this motivation would cause enhanced teaching for student learning or intense test preparation just to increase the scores.

Although most studies in this area shared the assumption that teachers' perceptions of degree of pressure was related to the level of student performance, Mulvenon, Stegman, and Ritter (2005) refuted this idea based on a survey with 141 fifth-grade teachers from a single school district in Arkansas. They found there was no statistically significant difference in student performance based on teachers' levels of anxiety (low, average, and high). The results suggested that teachers' negative attitudes toward test-based accountability were not necessarily associated with low student achievement. Instead, teachers' self-efficacy in their subject areas had a positive relationship with student performance, and this self-efficacy was higher for teachers teaching the tested subjects (reading and mathematics). These findings imply that the relationship between teachers' perceptions of test-based accountability and its effect on student performance might be more complex than has been assumed in many studies. Although the majority of studies in this area presented common voices concerning teachers being critical about test-based accountability and its decreasing their morale, autonomy, and motivation for good practice (which is eventually detrimental for student learning), the existence of a few studies yielding conflicting results or different stories should not be neglected. Those studies point out several areas that need further investigation to explore possibilities that test-based accountability might function in different ways that are more optimistic rather than all negative for teachers.

International context. A number of studies have been published in different countries regarding teachers' beliefs and perceptions about test-based accountability.

Most of these studies have results similar to those of most other US studies. For example, Müller and Hernández (2010) conducted a comparative study of seven European countries (Spain, Portugal, Ireland, England, Sweden, Finland, and Greece) to examine whether different types of accountability regimes in each country (e.g., performance-based accountability in England, higher parental control in Greece, and professional accountability in Finland) affected teachers' perceptions of accountability and their satisfaction in their work environments. The researchers adopted a mixed-methods approach, which was carried out by a combination of various methods, including surveys, observations, focus group interviews, and one-on-one interviews, depending on each country. The results indicated that regardless of the regional context and the stakes associated with accountability, teachers were doubtful about whether accountability policies had any positive effects. Teachers generally perceived that accountability policies required them to get involved in many practices that necessitate "continuous (self-) evaluations, curricular planning, strategy work and professional development" (Müller & Hernández, 2010, p. 319). However, teachers did not believe these were meaningful interventions that were helpful enough for dealing with everyday issues that they encounter in schools. Rather, those prescribed practices were considered as taking away time and effort that could be used for preparing better lessons. In a study with Australian middle-school teachers in low socio-economic contexts, the teachers indicated that accountability policies created more work that did not result in improved student learning (Comber & Nixon, 2009). Moreover, teachers from New Zealand perceived that their professional autonomy was marginalized due to high-stakes accountability policies, and parents were another source of pressure besides external agencies and administrators

that suppress teaching in certain ways (Penrice, 2012). Not surprisingly, accountability policies based on testing caused significant pressure on teachers and skepticism about the effects of those policies, regardless of the regional contexts, the type of implemented policies, and the grade level.

Teacher pressure still exists in low-stake contexts though to a moderate degree. For example, in a survey with elementary and secondary teachers from Alberta and Ontario in Canada, teachers believed that they were responsible for their schools' performance on tests (Klinger & Rogers, 2011). Although Alberta and Ontario do not apply any sanctions on schools for poor results, teachers specifically teaching the tested grades (third, sixth, and ninth grades) perceived testing as higher stakes. Teachers also expressed concern about publishing student achievement data in the press and having them used to assess teacher effectiveness or place sanctions on schools.

Summary. The review of studies about teachers' perceptions indicates that there is a significant mismatch between the intention of test-based accountability policies and teachers' perceptions of them. Although most of these policies were developed with the purpose of improving student learning and supporting teachers' improvement in teaching, many teachers perceived them as interrupting their work and having no effect on student learning. In other words, "the intended policies are not realized at the classroom level" (Abrams et al., 2003, p. 27). Moreover, many teachers felt that despite putting all the responsibilities of improving student achievement on them, there was a lack of adequate support from the district, administrators, or colleagues that help them enhance teaching (Finnigan & Gross, 2007). As a result, teachers were struggling with the pressure from test-based accountability that places the whole blame on them for poor student

performance while not providing sufficient support. In terms of the research design, most studies in this category were based on surveys or one-time interviews with multiple participants, thus they were limited to allow for an understanding of what makes teachers uncomfortable and how teachers actually deal with pressure from accountability measures.

Research on Teachers' Practice in the Context of Test-Based Accountability

Most of these studies about teachers' practice used qualitative research or mixed-methods research designs with small samples to identify the specifics of teachers' practice and the influence of test-based accountability on practice. It is not surprising that teaching to the test becomes part of the common practice of many teachers in the era of test-based accountability, yet teachers' practice is much more complex than "teaching to the test". This review of studies about teachers' practice includes research that specifically examines the nature and characteristics of teachers' practice carried out in the context of test-based accountability. The studies reviewed in this category include teacher participants with varied years of professional experience (either both novice and experienced teachers or experienced teachers only). Studies about beginning teachers are reviewed in a separate section, which follows this section.

Changes in teachers' practice. Comparing teachers' ways of teaching before and after the era of high-stakes testing is useful for understanding what changes have occurred in teachers' practice and what makes changes happen. In this regard, Eick and Valli (2010) compared teachers' attitudes about and interactions with linguistically diverse students during the "assimilation era" (1900–1920), when there was an influx of immigrants into the United States and assimilation of immigrant children was the primary

focus of public schooling, with views during the current accountability era (2002–present). To compare teachers' practices during these two different time frames, two types of data were used: historiographic data for the assimilation era and ethnographic data for the accountability era. For historiographic data, primary and secondary sources that illustrate teachers' stories with immigrant students were used, such as *Woman's 'True' Profession: Voices from the History of Teaching* (2009) by Nancy Hoffman. Ethnographic data that include teacher interviews and classroom observations were acquired to study current teachers teaching English in elementary schools with a high percentage of immigrant students.

Based on an analysis of those two different types of data that illustrate different time periods, Eick and Valli (2010) concluded that the current life of immigrant students is not so different from the past when assimilation was forced onto students to relinquish their cultural and linguistic identities to adapt to American society. Unlike teachers in the past, present-day teachers were aware of the importance of integrating immigrant students while not forcing them to lose their cultural identities. However, the problem was that their beliefs could not be realized in a school climate rushing to meet the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals under NCLB. Rather, teachers felt that these students become more marginalized under the current accountability regime, which is ironic given that NCLB emphasizes greater attention to these marginalized students (Eick & Valli, 2010). Eick and Valli (2010) argued that high-stakes testing plays a role here by stratifying these "at risk" students who typically fall into low-achieving groups. To improve their achievement, teachers needed to provide targeted lessons, intervention courses, and/or extra tutoring to teach all the requirements for the tests in a limited time.

During the assimilation era, when the stakes of testing were low, teachers were able to pay attention and provide care for each of these students to promote their adaptation. However, in present times, teachers' attention was given more by a form of remedial instruction rather than affection and care. Eick and Valli (2010) concluded that current teachers did not have much time to interact with students in the classroom to provide personal care and support, compared to the assimilation era, which implies that the situation for immigrant students has not improved much, but rather has become more challenging in the current accountability era.

Looking across these studies, the most significant problem that many teachers face with test-based accountability is that test preparation conflicts with their belief in good educational practice. This makes many teachers carry out test preparation as a separate task besides their regular classroom teaching (Rex & Nelson, 2004). For example, Valli and Chambliss (2007) examined how high-stakes testing affects teachers' instruction by observing the classroom of a literacy teacher. The teacher, Ms. Gabriel, was at that time teaching two types of elementary reading courses—a regular reading class and an intervention class (offered to prepare students for state tests). Based on classroom observations and interviews with the teacher, researchers found that the way that Ms. Gabriel taught these two courses was significantly different, although these classes were taught by the same teacher with a similar population of culturally and linguistically diverse students. For regular reading class, she chose texts that reflected students' various interests and experiences and that could enhance their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. On the contrary, the text choice for the intervention class was based on shorter texts that made it easier to practice test questions, so there was not much

consideration for students' interests. The way of teaching those lessons was also contrasted. Whereas Ms. Gabriel encouraged students to ask questions to think more in-depth and facilitated live discussions in her reading class, the intervention class focused on directing students to pick out the correct answers for the problems. This comparison of two contrasting classes taught by one teacher shows how teaching can be drastically changed in the context of test-based accountability.

To understand more about teachers' practice in the context of high-stakes accountability, Watanabe (2007) conducted a case study with two English teachers from the same middle school. 68 hours of classroom observations and six interviews were carried out for each teacher during a year. The researcher also recruited 11 teachers teaching the same grade and subject from other neighborhood middle schools to compare their responses with those of the two focal teachers—and conducted one interview with each participant. The findings demonstrated that test preparation greatly contradicted teachers' beliefs in good English teaching. The teachers in this study had a progressive, constructivist mindset that prioritizes "personal appreciation and enjoyment of literature, communication and collaboration skills, and writing 'like a real writer writes'" (p. 327) as their teaching approach. However, testing did not allow them to achieve these goals in the classroom. Rather, it made teachers narrow the curriculum to choose only the specific contents or skills included in tests and "squash" (p. 336) students' desires to choose, read, and enjoy the texts by selecting test-appropriate materials and drilling them on test-taking skills. Specifically, the two focal teachers in this study concentrated on "the identification of figurative language, elements of fiction, and inference skills in the short stories and novels" (p. 342) in their seventh grade reading classes. The writing classes were also

carried out "with time, length, and genre constraints" (p. 346) in which students "have few opportunities to engage in a process of writing that involves drafting, conferencing, discussing ideas, and revising individual pieces of work" (p. 346).

Across these studies, teaching to prepare for tests meant displacing teachers' progressive and constructivist learning approaches by emphasizing tested contents and skills (Watanabe, 2007). It was unlikely for teachers to teach beyond the objectives and levels required in tests to achieve their constructivist learning goals (Valli & Chambliss, 2007; Watanabe, 2007). In this respect, Valli and Buese (2007) indicated that while testing has increased, expanded, and intensified teachers' work, teachers have become more controlled and monitored by the institutional hierarchy and its regulations. Since the implementation of high-stakes testing, "curriculum coverage, matching taught content to tested content, and finding appropriate materials for students" (p. 546) have become significant considerations for teachers, yet these factors are not truly concerned with improving the quality of instruction rather than simplifying the teaching.

Finding a balance to resolve contradiction. Despite a number of studies that examined the negative transformation of teaching due to test-based accountability, some studies argued that it is possible for teachers to find a balance between their own good teaching and test preparation. Using in-depth interviews with 16 elementary bilingual teachers in Texas, Palmer and Rangel (2011) found that these teachers constantly made efforts to buffer the negative impacts of testing on their students. Even though the teachers admitted that they needed to focus on tested contents and provide directed instruction, most of them had strong commitments to authentic student learning, which led them to find a space—whenever possible during a school day—to integrate extra

knowledge and skills that promote student learning. Whereas teachers in the era of test-based accountability are facing the dilemma of choosing between student-centered teaching and teaching to the test, Palmer and Rangel (2011) indicated that:

> Teachers approach new [test-based accountability] policy messages not as automatons but rather through the lens of their own knowledge and experience and with the best interest of their particular students at heart. In an environment where pressure emanating from state and federal policy mandates pushed them to focus on test preparation, the teachers we interviewed refused to be "soldiers" of the system and instead sought out pockets of agency by seeking ways to bring authentic teaching back into their classrooms (p. 637).

Unlike much literature indicating teachers' loss of autonomy and agency due to the mandates of high-stakes accountability, Palmer and Rangel (2011) found that teachers in this study were eager to find a space between the prescribed lessons and created a balance between test preparation and authentic teaching. This effort was possible because these bilingual teachers had a strong commitment and agency for improving the learning of their underprivileged students. It makes the teachers not just accept and conform to the accountability policies as they are given, but carry them out in a manner that is most suitable without hurting their students.

Although teachers' work can be constrained by test-based accountability, whether its effects are detrimental to student learning depends on how teachers understand accountability and transform it for the classroom. In this regard, Neumann (2013) focused on the case of an eighth-grade social studies teacher, Margaret, and examined the impact of state-mandated testing on her classroom teaching based on a narrative approach. This

study took two and a half years and involved researchers' intense classroom observations and four in-depth interviews with the teacher. The findings suggested that testing actually had a positive effect on the teacher by helping her to be "more focused and efficient" (p. 22) in looking for effective strategies for her students from low-income families. Margaret continuously searched for strategies and tools that enabled her to "successfully play the accountability game *and* satisfy her desire to deepen her students' learning." (p. 22). To be specific, while Margaret mostly pursued teacher-directed lessons, she always attempted to create a balance by integrating several strategies and tools that engaged her students in the learning process, such as hands-on activities, student-led projects, and thought-provoking activities. Based on this case, Neumann (2013) asserted the possibility of teachers reconciling teaching to the test and student-centered learning, and that test preparation does not always conflict with teachers' beliefs, but it requires teachers' decisions about how much time and what proportion of the lessons are assigned to it. These findings suggest a different point of view about teachers' role in test-based accountability by arguing that their role and agency becomes more significant than constrained in this system. Test-based accountability is not an enemy that teachers must overcome and work against; it is rather one of the factors that make up the context in which teachers work. Therefore, how to play with this accountability game is up to individual teachers' decisions and actions in the classroom, as teachers are the ones who actualize the policies in every classroom.

       School context as the mediator of accountability pressure. Because teachers' agency plays a great role in transforming accountability policies in the classroom, some studies investigated the possibilities of maximizing it by teachers' collaboration through

communities within the schools (Buxton, Kayumova, & Allexsaht–Snider, 2013; Masuda, 2010). These studies argued that those teacher communities, often in the form of teacher study groups, provide a space for teachers to have honest discussions about their conflicts and dilemmas and get mutual peer support and encouragement to resolve complex issues they face under the demands of accountability. However, in the context of high-stakes accountability, it is not likely that every school offers favorable conditions for teacher collaboration. Some studies pointed out that school contexts, meaning the "leadership, culture, and resources" (Rinke & Valli, 2010) of single schools, impacts greatly on teachers' experiences with accountability (Rinke & Valli, 2010; Valli, Croninger, & Walters, 2007). For example, in a study about teachers' learning experiences in the context of achieving AYP goals, the teachers who were working in schools with low pressure to make AYP with supportive, inclusive principal leadership, engaged staff, and sufficient resources generally had positive experiences of professional learning. This did not happen in other schools with moderate or high pressure, lack of principal support and resources, and less staff engagement. In this regard, Rinke and Valli (2010) asserted that understanding teachers' experiences with high-stakes accountability systems not only requires consideration of the policies but also of the school contexts. Although in this study, AYP was a common policy requirement for every school, the degree and extent of this impact on teachers depended on particular school contexts with different natures of leadership, culture, and resources. In other words, the impact of accountability policies on teachers was mediated by the school contexts.

Stillman (2011) also emphasized the importance of school context on teacher learning and agency, especially regarding the school principal's leadership. The way

principals approach and manage accountability demands affected on mediating teachers'
experience with high-stakes accountability, particularly in terms of dealing with the
pressure. When a principal provides appropriate protection from strict accountability
demands and sufficient support to teachers simultaneously, it can maintain teachers'
professional autonomy and buffer the likely conflict between accountability demands and
teachers' established teaching practice. To summarize, the impact of accountability
policies on teachers and the way to carry them out in the classroom depend on individual
teachers' understanding of those policies and their agency for good practice, which are
greatly influenced by one's school context.

　　　　International context. Many studies from Western contexts, such as Australia,
Canada, and England, have presented similar results regarding teachers' responses to
high-stakes accountability policies and testing. These results were also based on similar
research designs that used teacher interviews as the primary data. In these Western
studies, it was evident that teaching becomes "an object of measurement, surveillance,
and control" (Kostogriz, 2012, p. 401), and teachers' "affective labor" (p. 402), which
provides care and emotional support to students, diminishes as the importance of test
preparation increases. Teachers also counteract the accountability regime by prioritizing
teaching goals and minimizing the work imposed by the policies (Tusting, 2009).
Overall, teachers' resistance to high-stakes accountability and their efforts to mediate its
impact and create balance in their teaching were commonly found across countries.

　　　　Although most studies presented similar findings, a multiple-case study with
teachers from England revealed an interesting result. Perryman, Ball, Maguire, and Braun
(2011) conducted an extensive case study with English and mathematics teachers from

four secondary schools in England using artifacts (e.g., school brochures and annual reports of student performance) and in-depth interviews. The English and mathematics teachers in this study had generally successful experience in dealing with accountability demands. The teachers' satisfactory performance was acclaimed in their schools by the provision of extra resources, funding, and time, which were not available for other subjects. Even though the teachers shared the pressure of producing good outcomes with others, the pressure was buffered by the "earned autonomy" (p. 193), which was awarded for their success. As a result, if teachers were successfully dealing with accountability demands, the pressure became bearable for the teachers and placed them in relatively strong positions in school (Perryman, Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2011). This study illustrated the complexity of teachers' experiences with high-stakes accountability. Not all their experiences were negative. Moreover, teachers' experiences have been influenced by several factors such as the policies, school contexts, individual teachers' conceptions of good teaching, and so on. Thus, understanding teachers' experiences in test-based accountability necessitates consideration of several factors and the assumption that one's experience is not as simple as it is often thought to be—either positive or negative.

There are also studies from low-stakes contexts, such as Norway and Germany, that address the influence of testing on teachers' work. For example, in a qualitative case study with Norwegian teachers from two primary (grade 1–7) schools, Mausethagen (2013b) indicated that even in a context where teachers enjoy autonomy and no sanctions are given for poor results, preparing the national test in Norway was integrated into teachers' daily work, and teachers were constantly negotiating to what extent and degree

to reflect test preparation in their teaching. In a survey with German teachers, Jäger, Maag Merki, Oerke, and Holmeier (2012) seconded this idea, indicating that regardless of the stakes, the existence of state testing itself led teachers to become involved in test preparation. They argued that this might be due to teachers being expected to follow the content standards, and whether they taught them or not in a sufficient level is revealed by the test results. Compared to the time before state testing was initiated, having a mandatory test itself may raise concerns among teachers that they need to tailor their teaching to the test. Maier (2010) also indicated that while teachers in lower-stakes contexts tend to use state test results more for the purpose of diagnosing student learning and enhancing instruction, those teachers were few among other German teachers. This raises doubt about the usefulness of testing for the purpose of improving teaching practice and student learning, regardless of the stakes associated with it.

Summary. Studies about teachers' practices under test-based accountability focused on how and to what extent testing affected teachers' practice and whether this caused a significant change of practice. Many of the studies have examined this topic through qualitative case studies that involved one teacher or a few teachers working in a particular school context. Studies in this area indicated that teachers faced significant conflict between test preparation and their own perceptions on good teaching that has constructed their routine teaching practices. Many teachers struggled to find a balance between them, which could hold them still accountable while not reducing teaching to test prep only. Teachers' agency for good teaching and meaningful learning facilitated teachers' efforts to make a compromise; however, this could be affected by the school context, as each school has different types of leadership, culture, and resources toward

accountability demands. Different views also existed regarding teachers' conflicts, which indicates that test preparation can be integrated into the regular course of teaching and does not significantly differ from teachers' usual classroom instruction. Still, how and to what extent to integrate test preparation into teaching depended on individual teachers' decisions and approaches to it. Thus, the agency of teachers becomes particularly significant in the era of test-based accountability.

Research on Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Placement in the Context of Test-Based Accountability

Besides the research on teachers' perceptions and their practice, the impact of test-based accountability on recruitment, retention, and placement of teachers has also been explored by some researchers. These topics have been examined more in the United States than other countries. In terms of recruiting teachers, Rutledge, Harris, and Ingle (2010) interviewed 30 school principals (elementary to high school) from a single school district in Florida and found that accountability policies based on state testing clearly affected principals' decisions in hiring teachers. This tendency was particularly visible in lower performing schools in this district, which included Title I schools. Those school principals tended to prefer candidates who possessed sufficient subject matter knowledge and teaching skills, which were characteristics they perceived as essential to meeting federal and state accountability goals. Meanwhile, many principals also considered other professional characteristics of teachers, such as race and gender, which were not directly related to achieving accountability goals but were still important for their school population. Thus, principals were constantly combining those characteristics with accountability-related characteristics to choose the best candidates who meet multiple

conceptions of good teachers. However, it was clear that candidates' competence and potential in raising student achievement was a significant consideration.

Teachers' placement in schools was also affected by testing. In elementary schools, it is likely that less effective teachers are placed in lower grades, which are not tested. For example, using the data from North Carolina teachers' licensure test scores and a weighted average of credentials based on the value-added model, Fuller and Ladd (2013) revealed that less effective teachers (based on both licensure test scores and the value-added index) were more often placed in the lower grades. Furthermore, variations in teacher quality were greater in low-performing schools, and the gap became greater after NCLB. This was a strategic reaction from principals to deal with incentives and sanctions from state accountability policies (Fuller & Ladd, 2013). However, it raises concern, as lower grade students are likely to have less effective teachers, which may cause disadvantages for their learning.

As found in those studies, high-stakes accountability policies have caused many unexpected results that severely affect the lives of teachers. Not only have they influenced hiring decisions and placement, but they also have impacted on retention. For example, Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, and Diaz (2004) examined two cohorts (1995 and 1997) of new teachers from North Carolina who were working in low-performing schools to see whether they remained in the same schools for the following six subsequent years after the state announced a heightened accountability program in 1997, which included a school shutdown if constant low performance of students occurred. The results suggested there were constant teacher attritions from these low-performing schools. In the case of the 1995 cohort, only 29.2% of the teachers remained in the same schools compared to

their initial year in 1994. The findings from the nationally representative School and

Staffing Survey (SASS) also provided similar results. Teachers who reported having less

control in their teaching practice and less influence on school decision making were not

likely to stay on the job (Ingersoll, 2009). Yet those negative effects of accountability on

teacher retention are refuted by a study that found there were not any significant increases

in teacher turnover in tested grades or in low-performing schools. Boyd, Lankford, Loeb,

and Wyckoff (2008) examined the teacher attrition rates and teachers' grade placement of

New York State public elementary schools from 1994—1995 through 2001—2001.

During this time, the state gradually strengthened its accountability policies. Since 1998,

the state published report cards of every school performance, which brought about wide

public attention and increased pressure on teachers (Boyd et al., 2008). However, the

attrition rates of first-year teachers during this time decreased relative to those of

experienced teachers, which conflicts with the results from other studies. This result is

astonishing, given the significant attritions of US beginning teachers. Yet this study is

aligned with other studies that indicated the placement of experienced, high-quality

teachers in the tested grades.

Summary. Although the number of studies in this area are comparatively few and

the findings are mixed, what these studies commonly suggest is the noticeable effect of

high-stakes accountability policies on the distribution of teachers. The majority of studies

in this area revealed this tendency by examining several years of state or nationwide data

that include information about teacher retention and placement. Studies suggested that

testing has an impact on principals' decisions for hiring and placing teachers as well as

teachers' choices of staying or leaving their jobs. Moreover, there is a strong possibility

of unequal distribution of quality teachers, even in the same school and grades, which could be detrimental for untested students' learning. The various responses received from the local schools regarding teachers require further investigation to understand the potential impact of testing on teacher distribution and its effect on student learning in both tested and untested grades (Boyd et al., 2008).

Implications of the research on teachers' experiences with test-based accountability. My review of studies in this section offers several implications for future studies. First, various factors constitute teachers' work, not just the accountability policies (Good, 2014). In other words, the impact of test-based accountability on teachers should not be understood merely as a one-dimensional, cause-and-effect relationship. Teachers' perceptions and practices in the context of test-based accountability are influenced by a variety of factors, including policies, school contexts, teachers' beliefs, and prior knowledge (Good, 2014). Therefore, researchers need to carefully consider those factors in the course of studying the impact of accountability policies on teachers' work.

Even though a number of studies have revealed that teaching is greatly influenced by accountability policies, more clarification is needed about the degree and extent to which testing constitutes teachers' classroom practice and how it is concerned and interplays with teachers' knowledge and beliefs on teaching and learning (Neumann, 2013), since there have been mixed results about the impact of testing on teaching. Instead of focusing on practice changes or the short-term effect of testing, a more comprehensive view is needed to understand teachers' work in the era of accountability because teaching is constantly developed and transformed through a teacher's

professional life span (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Limiting a study to a specific time frame (for example, right before and after the testing was initiated) may give only a partial understanding of teachers' work. In this respect, more studies are needed that explore the positive effects of testing (Mausethagen, 2013a) besides the majority of studies revealing the negative consequences. Given the complexity of teaching, it is necessary to examine teachers' histories as well as their future anticipation of teaching to grasp a full picture of teachers' work in the accountability era.

It should be noted that the majority of studies in this topic were conducted in Western contexts, predominantly in the United States, UK, and Australia, where the governing authorities are known to have initiated and implemented high-stakes accountability policies over a long period (Mausethagen, 2013a). I searched through various international journals and Korean journals to find adequate studies for review, but there was a significant lack of studies in this area from different contexts other than for Western education systems. This does not mean that accountability is not an issue in other countries. The global tide of neoliberalism has transformed the education system and policies in many countries in a way that holds teachers accountable for their students' outcomes (Spring, 2010). Test-based accountability is not only an issue within Anglo–Saxon countries, but it is a worldwide matter that requires more exploration from inside as well as outside of Western contexts (Mausethagen, 2013a).

Furthermore, more research is needed that encompasses various types and characteristics of teachers and school contexts (Mausethagen, 2013a; Palmer & Snodgrass Rangel, 2011). The majority of US studies are particularly concentrated on a

limited population of teachers, such as teachers of color or teachers working in low-performing schools with diverse students. Teachers' grade levels and subject areas mainly include elementary school teachers who teach ELA courses, which might cause partial understanding in terms of teachers' experiences with testing. Thus, more research on various teachers from different contexts is necessary.

Beginning Teachers Learning to Teach: What They Experience in Schools

Because this study is about beginning teachers' experiences of learning to teach in the context of test-based accountability, the first part of this section reviews conceptual and empirical work on beginning teachers' transitions from preservice to in-service, first-year teaching and professional learning during their early years as teachers. The purpose of this part is to understand the concept of learning to teach and the major research findings in this area concerning beginning teachers. The latter section reviews studies about beginning teachers' learning to teach and their challenging experiences in the context of test-based accountability, the focus of this study. Studies reviewed in this section were identified through keyword searches in major education databases, hand searches in renowned education journals, and reference searches in principal studies, which include a number of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and book chapters. Collected studies are not limited to publications from the United States, but also include international studies written in English and Korean studies.

Beginning Teachers' Learning to Teach

Understanding beginning teachers' "learning to teach" requires consideration of the following questions: "*who* is doing the learning, *what* they are learning, *how* the learning proceeds, and *when/where* the learning takes place" (Feiman-Nemser &

Remillard, 1995, p. 64). Learning to teach is a continual process that takes place over time throughout a teacher's professional career (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1995). It assumes "teachers as learners," "teaching as a practice to be learned," and "teacher learning as a complex social-psychological process that occurs over time in different contexts" (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1995, p. 64). Therefore, completion of a teacher's preparation program is not the end of learning about teaching.

The struggles of beginning teachers. Feiman-Nemser (2001) asserted that the difficulties faced by most beginning teachers stem from the fact that they have two jobs during this period: teaching and learning to teach. Numerous studies conducted domestically and internationally have revealed several issues that beginning teachers face. It is not a surprise that these teachers have more struggles than successes, regardless of the grade level or subject area they teach (Clark, 2012; Costigan, Zumwalt, & Crocco, 2005; Romano, 2007). The restricted amount of time available to perform a variety of school tasks, classroom management challenges, and a lack of resources or administrative support are common problems found across countries (Costigan et al.; Kim & Park, 2010; Shin, 2010; Ulvik, Smith, & Helleve, 2009).

In the process of learning to teach, the role of teacher preparation programs is to build the foundation of teachers' knowledge and practice of teaching to enable a smooth transition to teaching jobs (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Ulvik et al., 2009). However, the amount and degree of challenges that beginning teachers face certainly raise questions about the effectiveness of their preparation. Every teacher undertakes a preparation program before entering the teaching profession, yet many teachers do not find their preparation to be particularly useful (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1995; Kim & Park,

2010; Seo, 2005). Some scholars argued that this necessitates effective induction

programs for novice teachers to support their job transition and retention after completing

preparation programs (Corbell, Osborne, & Reiman, 2010; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

The problem of inadequate support was depicted in a qualitative case study conducted by

Meagher and Brantlinger (2011) with a novice mathematics teacher working at a high-

needs school in New York City. After completing an intensive preparation program

during the summer prior to the school year, this teacher was in great need of support,

especially regarding how to teach mathematics, because her preparation program did not

offer many courses related to teaching mathematics. The teacher struggled greatly to

control her teenage students while delivering the planned lessons according to the

curriculum standards. Although she belonged to the induction program and was assigned

three mentors (a university supervisor, an assistant principal, and a district mentor), they

were not able to provide any help regarding her specific concerns.

Other domestic and international studies (e.g., Kim, Park, & Kang, 2010; Kosnik

& Beck, 2008; Meister & Jenks, 2000; Shin, 2010) have also indicated this "missing

link" (Ulvik, Smith, & Helleve, 2009, p. 842) between preparation programs and the

induction stage. For example, Kim, Park, and Kang (2010) conducted a narrative inquiry

with two Korean novice elementary teachers during the first two years of teaching to

examine how they developed as professionals based on various kinds of data including

teacher journals, one-on-one weekly interviews, and researchers' field notes. The

teachers in this study faced numerous unanticipated issues such as students' disinterest

and boredom with lessons (because they already learned most of the contents from their

"*hagwon*") and disrespect of teachers (because they know when teachers are novice, first-

year teachers). Although the teachers in this study gradually improved their instruction through continuous self-reflection on their practice, Kim et al. (2010) indicated that the fact that they did not expect to have those difficulties and that they were unprepared to resolve those issues suggested there is an obvious problem with teacher preparation. They argued that the problem of most preparation programs is lack of consideration of reflecting school realities, which make them ineffective to prepare the candidates for various problems they are likely to encounter in schools.

Even after completing preparation, there are still more things that beginning teachers need to learn on the job. In this regard, Feiman-Nemser (2001) compared the central task of learning to teach during one's preparation stage and one's induction stage. During preservice, teacher candidates need to "examine beliefs critically in relation to visions of good teaching; develop subject matter knowledge for teaching; develop understanding of learners, learning, and issues of diversity; develop a beginning repertoire; and develop the tools and dispositions to study teaching" (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1050). During the induction stage, teachers need to: "learn the context— students, curriculum, school community; design responsive instructional program; create a classroom learning community; enact a beginning repertoire; and develop a professional identity" (p. 1050). Problems occur because there is a lack of "connective tissue" holding various tasks "together within or across the different phases of learning to teach" (p. 1049). Because bridging the gap between what was learned in preparation programs and the initial experiences in schools is an extremely challenging task for most beginning teachers to carry out alone, there need to be ways to support new teachers' constant learning and development.

Supporting beginning teachers' learning. Many studies have examined a variety of ways to support beginning teachers' learning, such as mentoring, professional development, and teacher learning communities. Among them, studies that suggested findings that are informative and relative to this study were selected for review. Lambson (2010), for example, explored the possibility of a teacher learning community to help novice teachers adjust and learn during their first year. The researcher examined three first-year English teachers' enhancements in learning and self-confidence while participating in a teacher study group, which was constructed with fourth- to sixth-grade English teachers who were all working in the same school. The researcher participated in the group meetings to observe teachers' interactions and conducted several interviews with both novice teachers and other experienced teachers in the study group. Throughout the year of conducting this study, the researcher found that the quantity and quality of novice teacher participation gradually increased. The teachers initially expressed discomfort regarding talking and sharing during the group discussions, but they gradually became more comfortable speaking up more frequently and for longer periods of time. Moreover, their sharing of teaching practices began to approximate the quality of experienced teachers' content, language use, and focus. In the beginning, the novices' sharing focused on describing the procedures of their individual practices and emphasizing how each process of a lesson was done and what worked and did not work for them. Compared to experienced teachers, there were fewer considerations of students' responses and learning, as well as teachers' own reflections on them, among novice teachers. However, the novices began to acquire language, depth, and ways of sharing through constantly communicating with experienced teachers in this study group. As a

result, the novice teachers gradually enhanced their membership in this community and gained more confidence and knowledge in teaching.

Lambson (2010) asserted that two factors were critical to improving the new teachers' engagement and learning in this community: allowing peripheral participation and the role of the facilitator. The opportunity of peripheral participation offered the new teachers "a safe place to observe, listen to, and learn from the other teachers" without the expectation of engaging as a full member (p. 1666). In this safe space, novice teachers could also grow "in their experience and understanding of the work and practices of the group" (p. 1666). With enough time provided to gain knowledge and competence, the novice teachers could steadily enhance the quantity and quality of their participation and develop into full members of the community. Moreover, the facilitator, an experienced literacy teacher educator, paid particular attention to these new teachers to ensure that their voices were included and respected in group conversations. She also provided new teachers opportunities to try out some strategies within the group before carrying them out in classrooms, so that the teachers could have the chance for practice and receive feedback from more experienced colleagues.

The importance and effects of collegial support have been emphasized in other studies, especially in the form of mentoring by experienced teachers (Clark & Byrnes, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Wang & Fulton, 2012). Although most of the previous studies concentrated on demonstrating the positive effects of mentoring on teacher development, there are some recent studies that suggested that the format and structure of mentoring are more important than just implementing a mentoring program (Clark & Byrnes, 2012; Paris, 2013). For example, Clark and Byrnes (2012) surveyed 136 first-

year elementary school teachers who graduated from the same teacher education program and participated in a mentoring program. The researchers compared the two methods of mentoring offered to the new teachers: common planning time with mentors and course observations of other teachers. The results suggested that both methods had a positive effect on their learning to teach yet the teachers indicated that common planning time with mentors was more helpful than observing other teachers. Some researchers also suggested that a mixture of support is more effective than a single mentoring or induction program. For instance, based on an extensive research review about the effect of mentoring programs for beginning teachers, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) concluded that the most effective factor in retaining new teachers was a combination of "support packages," including "having a mentor from the same field, having common planning time with other teachers in the same subject or collaboration with other teachers on instruction, and being part of an external network of teachers" (p. 706). Providing a variety of ways to support beginning teachers can simultaneously promote their adjustment, retention, and growth.

Importance of school context on teacher learning. Studies have suggested that school context is another important factor affecting beginning teachers' learning to teach. According to Feiman-Nemser (2003), "Whether the early years of teaching are a time of constructive learning or a period of coping, adjustment, and survival depends largely on the working conditions and culture of teaching that new teachers encounter" (Feiman-Nemser, 2003, p. 27). After completing a preparation program, one's learning to teach continues on the job. Favorable working conditions for beginning teachers are essential to enable ongoing support and for teachers to have a truly positive effect (Feiman-Nemser,

2003; Flores & Day, 2006). The impact of school contexts was highlighted in a study about four novice secondary teachers' first year of teaching. Cooper and He (2013) found that different teaching contexts, which in this case were influenced by different student populations due to the urban and rural locations of the schools, had a great influence on new teachers' perceptions of teaching. The two teachers working in urban schools faced greater challenges in teaching diverse students who had varied prior school experiences and linguistic and cultural backgrounds, whereas the other two teachers dealt with more homogenous student groups in rural areas. The particular student populations in the urban areas led the urban teachers to maintain a strong desire for culturally responsive teaching through building relationships with their diverse students, whereas the rural teachers did not need to significantly consider that aspect.

School culture and leadership are other significant factors contributing to novice teachers' working contexts. Having a school principal who promotes a collaborative school culture and is responsive to teachers' needs has been cited as a great mitigator for beginning teachers' struggles (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). In the United Sates, where the attrition of new teachers is a serious problem, school leadership plays a particularly significant role in teachers' decisions to leave. This importance was illustrated by a qualitative case study of two novice English teachers who worked in different schools where the school culture was isolated and unsupportive (Scherff, 2008). The teachers' interviews and writings revealed that their school environments were the main causes of their eventual departure from teaching. One teacher in this study was initially concerned about student apathy, but his concerns moved to the politics and bureaucratic culture of his school that "catered to parents" (p. 1325). The power in the classroom did not rest

with teachers, "but with students (and their parents) who, in turn, influenced how administrators operated" (p. 1329). His principal cared greatly about the school's reputation, but at the expense of teachers' autonomy and professionalism to suit the students' and parents' needs, which caused the teacher deep frustration and led him to quit. Another teacher in this study left teaching because of the "icy school culture" (p. 1326), where collaboration and discussions among colleagues were lost. This teacher's deep affection for her students could not offset such an environment. Both teachers were struggling in school contexts in which they were left alone without any support.

A Korean study with novice elementary teachers (Shin, 2010) also suggested the positive effect of a supportive school climate on new teachers' adjustment. In this study, the researcher conducted a teacher survey with 103 new elementary teachers from Daejeon, a city located in the southwest of Korea. The survey was constructed with three main parts: (a) the effect of school climate, (b) the effect of mentoring, and (c) new teachers' adjustment. According to the multiple regression analysis, both school climate and mentoring had strong positive relationships with teachers' adjustment. Shin (2010) also found that the effect of mentoring became stronger in a supportive school context where the administrators and teachers collaborated with one another and exchanged communication freely. In this respect, Shin (2010) emphasized that a positive school culture was an essential factor that helped new teachers experience a smooth transition from preservice to inservice. To retain novice teachers and promote their continuous professional growth, creating an encouraging and supportive working culture is necessary (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Flores & Day, 2006; Scherff, 2008).

Novice teachers' efforts in seeking self-survival strategies. There are few studies exploring novice teachers' own efforts to find strategies that help them survive the early years. The study about beginning teachers' use of "satisficing" (Le Maistre & Pare, 2010) is one of the few that illustrated the type of coping strategies used by beginning teachers when there is a lack of external support. When a problem occurs to a novice teacher but it is hard to find the best solution, the teacher must choose a solution that is sufficient to react to the problem and also satisfies the teacher. Yet the choice may not yield the best outcome because a "sufficient solution is not necessarily the optimal solution" (Le Maistre & Pare, 2010, p. 562). Thus, the teacher must get used to living with "a less than perfect solution" (p. 562). Because finding the best solution to the problem is often difficult for beginning teachers, Le Maistre and Pare (2010) argued:

> Instead of asking the difficult questions—Is this the best possible solution out of a number of possible solutions, and what is the probability that this solution will maximize the result? —the satisfier asks, consciously or unconsciously: Is this a solution that will work and can I live with the outcome? (p. 562)

After conducting extensive interviews with beginning teachers from Quebec, Canada, within their first year of teaching, researchers noticed that these teachers were gradually able to improve classroom management, lesson planning, and instruction by accepting "a less than perfect solution" (p. 564). The researchers concluded this was essential to surviving the early years of teaching.

Besides external support, learning to teach requires individual teachers' significant efforts to integrate all of the knowledge, theories, and skills learned in their preparation programs and to apply them to their specific school settings (Lampert, 2009;

Wideen, Mayer–Smith, & Moon, 1998). Wideen et al. (1998) pointed out that despite the importance of individual teachers' efforts to advance themselves, many previous studies did not considerably address this aspect in terms of understanding how to teach. Many studies in the area of beginning teachers' learning to teach referred to novice teachers as objects that needed special input that is typically provided by external experts in the form of a support program or special intervention to produce desirable outputs such as improving learning or reducing attrition. Wideen et al. (1998) indicated that the problem with these studies is that they were too inclined toward finding "what works" for beginning teachers while paying less attention to representing the participants' (beginning teachers') perspectives. Thus, future research needs to make more effort in considering teachers' viewpoints and reflecting on their self-led learning experiences.

Summary and implications of the review of studies about beginning teachers' learning to teach. A qualitative case study was used most among the reviewed studies about beginning teachers' learning to teach. This is because the review focus was understanding what beginning teachers experience in the early years and how they grow as professionals. Focusing on their experience may have resulted in selecting studies that were based on extensive teacher interviews and observations of their practices.

As Feiman-Nemser (2001) indicated, novice teacher's learning to teach is a continuous process after the preparation program. However, studies have suggested that there is a lack of connection between teachers' learning in preservice teacher education and learning on the job. Therefore, a number of studies have attempted to explore effective induction and support programs to retain and support the growth of beginning teachers, such as specific induction programs, mentoring, and teacher learning

communities. Providing new teachers with a mixture of sources support was found to be most effective for their adjustment and continuous development. Moreover, school context is a significant factor in the effectiveness of support programs and beginning teachers' adjustment and growth. Not only are the student population and school location important, but the school climate also greatly influences teachers' job satisfaction. Although a number of studies have been conducted in this area to examine effective ways to support beginning teachers' learning, there needs to be more consideration of teachers' perspectives and their individual efforts rather than simply examining the effects of the interventions themselves.

Beginning Teachers in the Era of Test-Based Accountability

Some scholars have pointed out that learning to teach is not only about learning what and how to teach, but also "learning to call oneself a teacher and to believe in what teachers believe in" (Lampert, 2009, p. 29). In other words, learning to teach involves developing one's identity and beliefs as a teacher in addition to learning the practice of teaching. Lasky (2005) asserted that a teacher's beliefs and actions are constructed by "cultural, historical, and social structures that are reflected in mediational tools" (p. 900). The policy mandates of school reforms function as such mediational tools and thus also contribute to teachers' working conditions. Recent studies regarding beginning teachers' learning to teach have explicitly reflected this idea by situating research in the context of high-stakes accountability and testing.

Beginning teachers' struggles intensify with testing. In the United States, federal and state policies require teachers to be increasingly accountable for improving student performance, and beginning teachers are not excused from such expectations.

Imig and Imig (2006) argued that an educational system based on such test-based accountability creates an "unjust path" (p. 288) for beginning teachers' learning and growth. They asserted that:

> New teachers who find themselves working on the unjust path must be prepared to give up great percentages of their instructional time to benchmark testing and test preparation. These teachers will be provided with detailed reports on the kinds and numbers of questions found on previous end-of-year exams and they will need to know how to shape instruction on these topics. New teachers will be expected to drill their pupils on how to take mathematics and reading standardized exams, how to correctly bubble in an answer, how to spot clearly incorrect answers, and how to work through the double negatives test makers frequently employ. In short, when new teachers are not instructing on material likely to be found on end-of-year exams, they must be prepared to teach their students how to take those very exams. (p. 289)

If new teachers follow unjust paths, they will learn to deliver accurate content for curriculum standards and devote the most amount of instructional time to test preparation at the expense of their creativity and intellectual freedom (Imig & Imig, 2006). Imig and Imig (2006) argued that such is contrary to the "just path" of learning to teach, which allows new teachers to develop lessons that involve standards, students, and their personal interests. On the just path of learning to teach, beginning teachers will have more flexibility to build their lessons, and this will encourage them "to work hard as they [new teachers] shape lessons that excite, motivate, and educate" (p. 290). Unfortunately, as accountability reform has wielded strong influences on local schools, the unjust path

has become the common path for most beginning teachers (Loh & Hu, 2014; Spring, 2010). As a result of upholding common instructional practices, teachers' practices hardly reflect students' or teachers' interests and build from students' prior learning experiences and their diverse backgrounds (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Agee, 2004; Spring, 2010).

Current educational reform movements in many countries that strengthen the accountability of teachers based on student performance are primarily led by neoliberals (Apple, 2006; Spring, 2010; Kim, 2012). Many scholars have indicated that such educational reform makes the lives of many beginning teachers more difficult (Gatti & Catalano, 2015; Imig & Imig, 2006; Loh & Hu, 2014). Particularly, studies have indicated that high-stakes testing-based accountability policies aggravate the hardships of beginning teachers (Certo, 2006; Hover & Pierce, 2006). In case of the United States, beginning teachers are more likely to work in under-performing schools where the majority of students are from poor family backgrounds and may have less English proficiency (Martinez–Garcia & Slate, 2012; Peske & Haycock, 2006). The fact that novice teachers often work in the most difficult schools raises concerns about the magnitude of their struggles.

Studies have indicated that testing adds another burden to beginning teachers and that it exacerbates the difficulties that they are already struggling with (Hover & Pierce, 2006). For example, in a qualitative case study with first-year elementary teachers in Virginia, Certo (2006) examined how testing related to other problems and affected new teachers throughout their first academic year. She recruited four pairs of new teachers and their mentors from two different elementary schools in Virginia and conducted separate

interviews with them three times during the academic year in September, December, and February. The results suggested that, at the beginning of the year in September, "immediate survival" was the foremost goal of new teachers (p. 345). For the first few weeks, they were in need of immediate support regarding lesson planning, locating and applying instructional resources, and understanding school and district policies. The second interviews conducted in December showed that the teachers moved to the experimentation stage from the survival stage, in which they applied various strategies learned in the preparation program and refined their practices for the next couple of months. The teachers came to have more confidence about teaching by February, around the time of the state test. At this time, the new teachers concentrated primarily on "fine-tuning" their skills for test preparation (p. 346). Most perceived that they were behind other experienced teachers in terms of pacing the curriculum standards and covering the entire test contents in a limited time. This perception put continuous pressure on the beginning teachers, in addition to other difficulties encountered throughout their first year.

White et al. (2003) asserted that the intense pressure felt by novice teachers occurs because they do not learn about the significance of standardized testing during their preservice education. The survey results and interviews with beginning teachers informed that most novices do not realize that test preparation is going to be their most important job responsibility until they encounter this reality in a school. One teacher in this study remarked that preservice education did not truly concern the reality of school practices, which caused this teacher to face a severe contradiction between what was learned and what was actually needed: "[T]he neat things that I remember learning in Dr.

X's class, and Dr. Y's, all these neat things that we talked about that I thought I was going to be doing with creative activities for groups—I don't do that much" (White et al., 2003, p. 51).

In contrast to White et al. (2003), who asserted that beginning teachers enter the profession without fully understanding the significance of testing from their preparation programs, Brown (2010) argued that many prospective teachers—the preservice teachers in Texas, in this case—actually come to preparation programs with an understanding of test preparation as their main job. This conclusion was derived from after interviewing eight teacher candidates in the same preparation program who all had experiences as students in Texas public education system. These teacher candidates were in their early to mid-twenties at the time of this study, had experienced standardized testing as students, and knew its significance (Brown, 2010). During their preparation program, they also learned that teaching is driven by high-stakes testing and how to incorporate curriculum standards into lesson plans and instruction. However, it did not mean that these candidates were agreeing with the current testing regime. Interviews revealed that these candidates had strong perceptions of "teaching their students to become lifelong learners" (Brown, 2010, p. 483). Although the prospective teachers understood the significance of test preparation, they were also motivated to teach more than the tested contents to promote students' learning. They came to realize during their student teaching periods, however, that this was a challenging task. They were concerned about doing test preparation while not having teaching be completely driven by testing. These results implied that such candidates are still likely to struggle once they are placed in schools,

even though they have prior experience with and understanding of testing and accept it as part of their work.

More serious challenges for beginning teachers of color. Some studies have pointed out that conflicts and struggles are more severe for new teachers of color who work in high-stakes accountability contexts than for White, middle-class teachers. This is likely because these teachers tend to have strong reform-oriented mindsets that emphasize constructivist approaches and culturally responsive teaching (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Agee, 2004; Gatti & Catalano, 2015). Moreover, these new teachers of color tend to volunteer to work in high-needs, urban schools whose student populations are similar to their own cultural and social backgrounds (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Agee, 2004). They are highly motivated to offer better educational opportunities to marginalized students and become role models for them, but once they are placed in a school context controlled by accountability policies, they encounter severe conflicts that are not easy to resolve by themselves (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Gatti & Catalano, 2015). To examine new teachers' difficulties further, Achinstein and Ogawa (2012) conducted a case study with 17 new teachers of color who graduated from different preparation programs, and all had similar missions for preparing teachers for diverse learners. They analyzed various sources including interviews, classroom observations, and surveys that represent the teachers' five years of experience during their preparation programs and up to four years of teaching. The findings suggested that the teachers' preparation programs played a major role in developing and promoting their constructive, reform-oriented mindsets and beliefs. Achinstein and Ogawa (2012) further explained why and how severe conflicts occurred when these teachers were placed in schools:

University-based teacher education programs recruited and prepared these teachers to address the educational needs of students from low-income and non-dominant cultural communities by teaching in culturally responsive ways. These teachers then entered schools in an educational system that prevented them from acting on their commitments by enforcing standardized instructional practices and curricular in order to raise test scores resulting in their internalizing the conflict between their aspirations and their work conditions by accommodating the need to prepare their students of color for standardized tests as a means to gain access to greater educational opportunities. (p. 27)

It was found that teachers' preparation programs and their school contexts emphasized conflicting ways of teaching, causing the beginning teachers of color severe tension in three major areas: "(a) Whose knowledge counts: cultural and linguistic relevance or standardization? (b) What type of classroom climate prevails: a community of learners or teacher transmission? [and] (c) Who gets left behind: social justice or enhanced test scores?" (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012, p. 12). These kinds of tension were also highlighted in other studies of beginning teachers of color, using metaphors such as "caught in the middle" (Agee, 2004, p. 771) and "Teaching is a journey" versus "Teaching is a business" (Gatti & Catalano, 2015, p. 150).

Surrender to the accountability regime. van Hover et al. (2007) pointed out that when navigating through the tensions becomes harder, most beginning teachers finally conform to the testing norm and become frustrated by the reality that does not encourage trying out their beliefs. This is well illustrated in a phenomenological study conducted by Agee (2004) with an African American literacy teacher, Tina. Agee (2004) examined

Tina's tensions that occurred through her first to third year of teaching using interviews and observations. When starting the first year, Tina had a strong desire to use multicultural literacy texts and a constructivist approach with her diverse students, despite the curriculum mandates. She initially believed that she could combine two conflicting goals in her literacy class—culturally responsive teaching and test preparation—by providing multicultural texts and tests drilling both in her lesson. However, she came to realize that even time to cover the required readings was limited, and she did not want to fail her marginalized students by insisting on her approach. As a result, she could not help but give up her approach and gradually moved to teacher-centered instruction in the third year.

One of the factors that promotes beginning teachers' surrender to the accountability control is that their performance is closely monitored by internal authorities. Achinstein and Ogawa (2012) indicated that administrators who monitored whether teachers were complying with the district-informed policies and practices easily intimidated beginning teachers of color. It also caused fear among these beginning teachers because administrators had the power to determine their tenure. Based on a qualitative case study with a female African American teacher, Gatti and Catalano (2015) asserted that a "programmatic surveillance" (p. 155) culture in her low-performing school made the teacher describe herself as a "product and a performer" (p. 155) whose performance was constantly observed, scrutinized, and evaluated by others. They conceptualized this situation as one of a teacher's becoming a "remote control teacher" and "machine" whose professional autonomy and intellectual creativity were vastly constrained by the accountability mandates.

The loss of professional control and beginning teachers' frustrations due to testing are not unique phenomena to the United States. For instance, Loh and Hu (2014) conducted a narrative inquiry with a Singaporean beginning elementary teacher (Natalie) to examine her experience as a novice teacher in a neoliberal school system in Singapore. Through several in-depth interviews with Natalie, Loh and Hu (2014) noted the impact of neoliberalism on creating an institutional system that forces each school and teacher to produce visible evidence of their performance. Working in this kind of system was daunting for Natalie, who was initially critical about teaching to the test. However, the head of the department in her school disregarded her opinion and resistance by warning her that "what would matter were examination results and [she] should keep [her] opinions to [her]self" (p. 18). Natalie was uncertain about her professional ability and concerned about her superior's comment that she was "too new in the service to know the workings of the system (p. 18)." Natalie eventually realized that it was necessary to comply with the system to prove her professional ability and develop self-confidence. In this respect, Loh and Hu (2014) asserted that student performance measures not only represent the productivity of the school, but are also used as "inscription devices that can contribute to a beginning teachers' self and public image as competent and performing teacher" (p. 19). Beginning teachers can be easily affected by the overpowering institutional system and finally comply with it in order to demonstrate their professional abilities (Loh & Hu, 2014). However, proving their professional abilities in such a system requires that teachers abandon their professional autonomy and agency in return.

When teachers have less autonomy and control in their instructional practices, they are likely to be dissatisfied with their jobs and leave the profession (Costigan et al.,

2005; Gatti & Catalano, 2015; Ingersoll, 2009). Ingersoll (2009) supported this assertion based on his analysis of the US national School and Staffing Survey (SASS) data from the 1990s to early 2000s. After controlling for school factors (e.g., location, school types) and teacher characteristics (e.g., teacher demographics), teacher control was negatively associated with teacher turnover. In other words, if teachers had less control over their classroom teaching and schoolwide matters, they were more likely to quit.

Supporting beginning teachers' growth in the context of test-based accountability. Although numerous studies have indicated that beginning teachers' struggles intensify within the context of test-based accountability, only a few studies explore how to support teachers' learning to teach within such a restriction (Costigan et al., 2005). Looking across the studies regarding this issue has shown that supportive school contexts, collaborative inquiry and communication with colleagues, and teachers' own reflections help beginning teachers overcome the pressure of testing and navigate their way through conflicting situations encountered in classrooms. School contexts are particularly important for creating a primary environment that can buffer the pressure on new teachers (Gratch, 2001). In one study, teachers of grade levels or courses that were not tested and teachers working in high-achieving schools were less affected by the accountability pressures (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012). Beginning teachers were also less stressed when school climates promoted communication between teachers and administrators (Gratch, 2001). This suggests the importance of school leadership in creating supportive environments for beginning teachers' learning.

Moreover, Paugh (2006) asserted that novice teachers' collaborative inquiry, which is supported and facilitated by experienced teachers or teacher educators, plays an

important role in their continuous growth within the test-based accountability context. She constructed a collaborative inquiry group with four novice urban elementary teachers and investigated its effect on the teachers' professional growth within the context of high-stakes testing. Paugh (2006) suggested that the inquiry group provide a space for novice teachers to reveal and deconstruct their conflicts and uncertainties through continuous dialogue and interaction with colleagues and the university partner (her). As a result, teachers were able to reconstruct and develop instructional practices focused on their concerns for student learning while still considering policy demands.

Besides supportive school community and collaborative inquiries, teachers' continuous self-reflection was another significant factor that helped beginning teachers make better decisions about test preparation and classroom management and improve their learning and practices each year (Costigan et al., 2005). Although these studies demonstrated that beginning teachers were able to grow as active professionals rather than fit themselves into the external accountability norms, they are still in the minority among other studies focused on the conflicts and frustrations of novice teachers. More studies are necessary to understand the possibility of teacher growth within the restrictions of test-based accountability.

Summary and implications. Most of the studies about beginning teachers' experiences within the context of test-based accountability were conducted using a case study approach, which is predominantly based on various types of qualitative data (e.g., interviews, observations, and field notes) from a small number of participants. Some studies (e.g. Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; White et al., 2003) also included teacher surveys in their case studies to supplement their qualitative data. Yet the majority of studies in

this area were generally qualitative as they were concentrated on understanding teachers'
specific experiences rather than examining a general tendency.

Studies in this area clearly suggested that beginning teachers face significant
conflicts and contradictions between their learning from preservice education and the
realities in schools. Many new teachers enter the profession motivated to promote student
learning and pursue a progressive, constructivist approach to teaching that was influenced
by their learning from their preservice teacher education. However, this motivation is
diminished by the policy mandates that hold teachers accountable for their students'
performances and other difficulties they encounter as novices. In many cases, beginning
teachers eventually give up their ideals and tailor their teaching to test content because it
is hard to find a way to resolve the conflicts and they are afraid of failing to meet policy
requirements. When beginning teachers realize that their professional autonomy is highly
constrained, they can be easily frustrated and dissatisfied with their jobs, which can
ultimately make them leave the profession. Although a few studies suggested that
supportive and collaborative school cultures and ongoing reflection reduce the pressure
on teachers, there needs more research regarding how beginning teachers can grow as
professionals despite the constraints from high-stakes accountability policies and testing.

Theoretical Framework: Phenomenology and Teaching

In this section I discuss the concept and history of phenomenology, which is the
theoretical framework of this study. Then I review empirical studies that used
phenomenological approach as their research design to examine teachers' experiences.

Understanding Phenomenology: Concept and History

This section first discusses the evolution of Husserl's idea of phenomenology and his fundamental ideas and concepts, including *experience, life-world,* and *phenomenological reduction (bracketing)*. These ideas are then compared with Heidegger's conceptualization of hermeneutic phenomenology to understand the implications both approaches have for social science research.

The Phenomenology of Husserl. Husserl's conceptualization of phenomenology began with his critiques of science and psychology during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). During those times, science held that everything in nature was verifiable through experiments, and therefore, absolute theories determined by objective methods must exist. Husserl was concerned that this approach had developed in psychology, in the sense of treating personalities as measurable and verifiable objects using scientific methods, which meant that psychology had lost its attention to human nature by treating it only as a variable in an experiment. Husserl argued that humans were not simple creatures who merely reacted to external stimuli but that the nature of humanity was more complex. Husserl's criticism of science and psychology was that these fields treated human beings as mere objects in experiments, not so different from other objects in the natural system. His conception of phenomenology was based on humans being capable of understanding, interpreting, and knowing about things (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). He suggested that if science constructed humans as objects to be examined in terms of *what is*, then phenomenology considered humans as capable of understanding *the meaning* of *what is*. Thus, in phenomenology, humans become the subject of understanding both their immediate

world and its meanings. This was a radically altered perspective at the time when positivist science was the dominant method in terms of understanding human issues (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990).

By placing humans as the subject of understanding, Husserl called for "a return 'to the things themselves'" (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990, p. 22). What he meant by "things" was "phenomena," which could be anything consciously recognized by humans (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990; van Manen, 2014). Stewart and Mickunas (1990) explained:

> There are many different things of which one can be aware: natural objects, mathematical entities, values, affective states, volitions, melodies, moods, desires, feelings—all these are things (Sachen) of which one is aware. All of these things Husserl calls *phenomena.* Phenomenology, then, became a program for a systematic investigation of the content of consciousness. (p. 23)

If one is aware of something, it is also said that he or she is experiencing this something. From this perspective, Husserl conceptualized the term "experience" to represent "anything of which one is conscious" (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990, p. 23). However, the acts of perceiving and experiencing a thing do not lead to the understanding of phenomena. One needs to have a "philosophical attitude" (Cohen & Omery, 1994; van Manen, 2014) that allows inquiring into a specific phenomenon.

Husserl explained the philosophical attitude by comparing it to a "natural attitude", which means one experiences something in the world as it is taken for granted. Husserl (1913/2009) specified it as follows:

> I am aware of a world, spread out in space endlessly, and in time becoming and become, without end. I am aware of it, that means, first of all, I discover it

immediately, intuitively, I experience it. Through sight, touch, hearing, etc., in the different ways of sensory perception corporeal things somehow spatially distributed are for me simply there, in verbal or figurative sense "present," whether or not I pay them special attention by busying myself with them, considering, thinking, feeling, willing. (p. 101)

As Husserl explained, the natural attitude is an essential attitude of human life. A person living life constantly experiences a variety of things. Husserl called the context wherein one's everyday experiences occurs the *life-world (Lebenswelt)* (Cohen & Omery, 1994). In one's life-world, many experiences occur naturally. Many of these experiences do not require any doubt, question, or reflection because they are so much a basis of common sense that they are taken for granted. For example, a mother feeds her baby and changes the diaper. This is a kind of experience that she is conscious about and living with, but it rarely raises any philosophical questions or doubts because it is a natural behavior. However, it becomes a philosophical matter when one is *intentionally* focusing on that specific experience. This is when the transition occurs from one's natural attitude to the philosophical attitude. Husserl asserted that "intentional consciousness" promotes the process of directing one's mind to a specific experience (Laverty, 2003; Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). This is how an experience becomes a phenomenon, the object of inquiry.

Investigating a specific phenomenon requires "phenomenological reduction", which Husserl also called *"epoché"* or *"bracketing."* Stewart and Mickunas (1990) explained:

It [phenomenological reduction] is a common mode of expression to speak of reducing a complex problem to its basic elements. This reduction involves a narrowing of attention to what is essential in the problem while disregarding or ignoring the superfluous and accidental. What one ignores when performing the phenomenological reduction is his previous prejudice about the world. By narrowing his attention to what is essential, he hopefully will discover the rational principles necessary for an understanding of the thing (or phenomenon) under investigation. (p. 26).

In the process of phenomenological reduction, one brackets the outer world except for the phenomenon. This means suspending all judgments or biases regarding the specific phenomenon. By doing this, one can focus on the object of phenomenological understanding and reveal its "ultimate structures of consciousness," in other words, "essences", which makes "the object identifiable as a particular type of object or experience, unique from others" (Laverty, 2008, p. 23). When it comes to understanding a phenomenon, which is an experience from the life-world captured by one's intentional consciousness, there is a common structure or substance that creates that experience. This is the essence that constructs "the purely immanent character" of a phenomenon, no matter who has experienced it or is experiencing it (Laverty, 2008, p. 23). For Husserl, the aim of phenomenology was revealing this essence of one's lived experience and describing the meaning of it using phenomenological reduction (Cohen & Omery, 1994; Laverty, 2008; Stewart & Mickunas, 1990; van Manen, 2014)

Hermeneutic Phenomenology of Heidegger. Since the time Husserl introduced the primary ideas of phenomenology, the field has further developed and diversified

among its followers (Cohen & Omery, 1994; Laverty, 2008). One of the most famous phenomenologists was Martin Heidegger, who conceptualized "hermeneutic phenomenology", which is compared to Husserl's "eidetic phenomenology." Husserl focused on understanding phenomena and was interested in investigating epistemological matters such as "what do we know as persons?" (Cohen & Omery, 1994, p. 142). His major concern was the acts of humans' "attending, perceiving, recalling, and thinking about the world" (Laverty, 2008, p. 24) based on the assumption that the humans are the subject of understanding, the active knower of the phenomena in his or her life-world.

Heidegger was in agreement with Husserl that the purpose of phenomenology was understanding the meaning of one's lived experience. However, the two disagreed with each other in terms of the way to reach this understanding (Laverty, 2008). While Husserl assumed human beings were independent knowers, Heidegger perceived human being as "concerned creatures" who live in the world and make relationships, being concerned with many other creatures (Laverty, 2008, p. 24). Thus he focused more on the mode of being human—*Daesin*—to understand the situated meaning of humans in the world (Cohen & Omery, 1994; Laverty, 2008). Cohen and Omery (1994) explained:

> *Being* referred to the presencing, or self-manifesting, of entities. Collective beings, or humanity, is *Daesin,* the temporal–historical world in which entities can manifest themselves, or "be." Neither being nor *Daesin* can be understood as particular entities in or of themselves; rather they are the conditions necessary for the specific entities to appear. (p. 142)

For Heidegger, analysis of phenomenon meant understanding the particular presence of being *within Daesin.* Instead of perceiving *Daesin* as the subject of understanding, it is

important to understand *Daesin* as it is concerned with other beings, not as a particular entity that has its own meaning (essence). Applying this idea to one's lived experience, he suggested that people's lived experiences were historically constructed, and therefore, understanding those experiences required interpretation of their backgrounds or histories (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). Further, he argued that the meaning of one's experience could not be revealed by eliminating all the presuppositions and biases; rather, it is found by considering one's background and experiences, because "we are constructed by the world while at the same time we are constructing this world from our own background and experiences" (Laverty, 208, p. 24). Thus, Heidegger emphasized interpretation as the critical process of understanding instead of phenomenological reduction.

Interpreting one's lived experience involves interpretation of all its concerning factors as this experience is constructed by them and cannot be understood without considering them. Therefore, in hermeneutic phenomenology, it is important to find all these concerning factors that account for one's experience (Cohen & Omery, 1994; Laverty, 2008). Because one's background and history are recorded by language, various forms of texts are used in the interpretive process, such as verbal or written texts, visual texts, or music (Laverty, 2008). The process of interpretation is cyclic: one first considers all those factors constituting aspects of one's experience, focusing on each part, then interpreting the experience as a whole, and repeating this process again until sensible meaning is developed that is "free of inner contradictions, for the moment" (Laverty, 2008, p. 25). This interpretive method was further developed into "hermeneutics", a specific genre of philosophical tradition that aims to describe and uncover the hidden meanings of phenomena (Cohen & Omery, 1994).

Application of phenomenology to social science research. Phenomenology has

substantial implications for social science research (Cohen & Omery, 1994; Laverty,

2008; Seidman, 2012). Stewart and Mickunas (1990) asserted that when it comes to using

a phenomenological approach in social science (including education), the approach does

not only focus on investigating the essential structure of society, but it concerns itself

with every area and facet of human life, such as values, goals, and meanings, not only the

material objects. In a phenomenological view, a social world is the lived world of human

beings, yet humans are not living there as separate, independent entities (Stewart &

Mickunas, 1990). The social world is fundamentally intersubjective where humans are

living in the world making constant relationships with other entities (Schutz, 1970).

These entities not only involve other humans, but also systems, values, and goals, which

are kinds of immaterial, abstract entities that significantly affect human life. Therefore,

the application of phenomenology to social science needs to take the intersubjective

relationships within the social world and consider various abstract social entities (e.g.,

values and goals) that affect human lives.

Such understanding and application of phenomenology in social science has been

expanded and developed from Husserl and Heidegger's original ideas. Cohen and Omery

(1994) suggested that three major schools of phenomenology have been developed by

their followers in social science: The *Duquesne school*, which aims to understand the

essential structure of a phenomenon influenced by Husserl and includes such scholars as

Griorgi, Collazzi, and van Kamm; *Heideggarian hermeneutics*, which focuses on

interpreting the hidden meanings of phenomena and includes such scholars as

Dinkelmann, Allen, and Tanner; and the *Dutch school*, which combines those two

approaches to social science research and includes such scholars as van Manen (Cohen & Omery, 1994). In education research, which is one of the major areas of social science, hermeneutics or the Dutch school approaches are used often, as discussed below.

Application of Phenomenology to Research on Teachers' Experiences

While various approaches have been used to understand teachers' work, there is still a lack of understanding of their lived experiences using phenomenological approaches (Baird, 1999; Pinder, 2013). Compared to the abundant number of studies about teachers that are based on quantitative research, case studies, narrative inquiry, or grounded theory, the use of the phenomenological approach for studying teachers is relatively rare. Though still in the minority among various genres of research, some effort has been made by scholars to apply phenomenological perspectives to explore teachers' experiences. This section reviews those studies that use phenomenology as their methodological approach.

Studies were collected in various ways: searching education databases, hand-searching through renowned education journals, and checking the references of collected phenomenological studies. Studies were selected for review only if they met the following three criteria: concentration on teachers' experiences, explicit use of phenomenology as the methodological approach, and robust research design based on phenomenology. Because this review focuses on the application of phenomenology to researching teachers, the review is constructed in four major parts: rationale for using a phenomenological approach, types of research questions, types of collected data, and the ways of analyzing data.

Rationale for using phenomenological research. Some studies stated explicitly why they used a phenomenological approach for their topics. For example, Bean and Gillet (2009) investigated high-school teachers' experiences of student behavioral problems using a descriptive phenomenological approach because it allowed "teachers' voices to be heard," and "permits full exploration of the essence of their experience with the phenomenon" (p. 83). In a descriptive phenomenological study approach suggested by Moustakas (1994), the researchers collected a full range of information that described each participant's lived experience concerning the studied phenomenon. Bean and Gillet (2009) found it a useful approach because most of the previous studies about teachers' dealing with student behavioral problems had used a quantitative approach. The phenomenological approach yielded deeper and more specific understandings of teachers' experiences, including their "emotions, thought processes, and feelings pertaining to this process" (p. 83). Chehayl (2012) found hermeneutic phenomenology very useful for studying teacher candidates' early placement in urban schools. Although specific methodology and types of collected data were different from Bean and Gillet (2009), Chehayl (2012) asserted that this phenomenological approach "authentically engage[d] with individuals as they experience[d] a phenomenon" and considered participants as "co-constructors of the body of knowledge examined" (p. 128), not the mere subjects of study as they are in most quantitative studies. Olson and Osborne's (1991) rationale for using a phenomenological approach to explore four Canadian beginning teachers' first-year experiences indicated the limitations of both quantitative and qualitative approaches:

Explanatory studies have provided a variety of decontextualized attributes or symptoms of the first year teaching experience, but have not clarified the relationships among these variables and the process of learning to teach. On the other hand, extant descriptive studies have not addressed the commonalities that transcend specific individual experiences, nor have they fully addressed the interdependent nature of these commonalities and their relation to the process of learning to teach. By using a phenomenological approach to explore the question "What is the experience of being a first year teacher like?", we sought a deeper and broader understanding of the subjective reality of the experience of learning to teach. (p. 333)

As stated in their rationale, Olson and Osborne's (1991) phenomenological study considered the interdependent relationships of various variables that constructed a specific phenomenon and aimed to explore the commonalities of individuals' lived experiences pertaining to that phenomenon. Olson and Osborne (1991) asserted that each of those features supplements the limitations of quantitative and qualitative research, respectively. Phenomenological study was supported by researchers as it allowed them to investigate each participant's lived experience as it was experienced and understood by participants themselves. Thus, it provided greater opportunities to reflect participants' voices and points of view explicitly in the research than was the case using other methodologies.

What kind of questions are explored in phenomenological research? In phenomenological research, the commonalities of individuals' lived experiences are assumed to construct the studied phenomenon. Therefore, while investigating each

individual's lived experiences, the focus of phenomenological research is to find a common structure or substance from each person's experience that can explain the studied phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Because of such uniqueness, certain types of questions are commonly explored in phenomenological studies. For example, in their phenomenological study of two novice science teachers' experience of practicing inquiry science pedagogy, Dreon and McDonald (2012) presented their research question as "How do beginning teachers describe their experiences enacting inquiry science pedagogy in their classrooms?" (p. 299). In another phenomenological study about seven secondary experienced teachers' mentoring experience, Jewell (2007) explored two research questions: "How can mentoring create a capacity for teacher understanding?" and "What does mentoring mean to experienced teachers?" (p. 290). Similar kinds of questions are also explored in a study about Saudi Arabian female teachers' experiences of teaching Islamic Studies (IS), which is a unique context that has many differences from Western education contexts. In this study, the researcher addressed four research questions to analyze those female teachers' experiences using a phenomenological perspective:

> What does it mean to be an IS teacher in Saudi Arabia today?; How do IS teachers experience their roles as IS female teachers in Saudi Arabia today?; What meanings and beliefs do teachers ascribe to their roles and what themes emerge from their experiences as IS teachers?; and What do IS teachers actually do in the classroom? (Jamjoom, 2010, p. 549)

As seen from these questions, understanding individual experiences and their meanings are common tasks in phenomenological research. The research questions need to be

developed in a way that will guide researcher's exploration of individual experiences and illustrate the certain phenomenon that is distinguishable from other phenomena (van Manen, 2014).

The types of data used in phenomenological research. The data used for phenomenological research are typically qualitative. They are generally obtained from the participants who are recruited by purposive sampling (e.g., Dana &Yendol–Hoppey, 2005) or criterion sampling (e.g., Flowerday & Schraw, 2000), depending on researchers' judgment of who the appropriate participants are for the study of their phenomenon of interest. In terms of selecting participants, Jewell (2007) also asserted that it is important to maximize the variation among samples to get "the broadest range of information" about the phenomenon (p. 291).

Among the 13 phenomenological studies about teachers' experiences that I located, 11 s used various kinds of interviews as the primary means of understanding participants' lived experiences. Bean and Gillet (2009), for example, used focus group interviews to investigate high-school teachers' experiences with student behavioral problems. The researchers constructed four focus groups, each of which comprised four to eight high-school teachers. Semi-structured interviews that lasted about 45–75 minutes were carried out with each group. Because previous studies in this area were mostly quantitative, Bean and Gillet (2009) asserted that focus group interviews allowed for understanding the phenomenon from the perspective of a group of people who share this common experience.

Still, the most common types of interviews used in phenomenological studies are one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with individual participants. For example, in their

study of one early childhood teacher's growth as a teacher leader and advocate for social justice, Dana and Yendol–Hoppey (2005) used "phenomenological interviewing," a method suggested by Seidman (2012). Based on this model, they carried out a series of three interviews with an early childhood teacher educator. Each of the interviews lasted from 60–90 minutes and had specific topics for investigating the teacher's experience. The first interview focused on the participant's life history up until the present time; the second interview concentrated on her present experience as an early childhood teacher and her experience of leadership; and the last interview asked her what meanings such experiences had for her. Such multiple, in-depth interviews promoted a specific understanding and description of participants' experiences concerning the phenomenon.

Participant interviews were also supplemented with other kinds of data, such as researchers' field notes (e.g., Chehayl, 2012; Jamjoom, 2010), participants' reflective journals or writing prompts (e.g., Jewell, 2007; Kabilan, 2013; Olson & Osborne, 1991), or even a participant's drawings (e.g., Sumsion, 2002). For example, Sumsion (2002) used regular conversations and participant's drawings to understand what caused a novice teacher in this study to eventually leave teaching. This study was conducted for seven years with one novice early childhood teacher. Besides regular conversations with the participant that occurred in a casual atmosphere, the researcher used participant's drawings that represented the important stages and themes of her experience. The teacher used a metaphor as the title of each drawing, such as "1993: the wall at the back of my classroom" (p. 872) and "1994: the journey through the forest" (p. 873). Those other kinds of data were mostly collected to supplement single or short interviews with a small number of participants or as a part of the multiple texts gathered for hermeneutic

phenomenological studies as a means to understand the comprehensive history and factors of participants' experiences (e.g., Chehayl, 2012; Dreon & Mcdonald, 2012; Greenwalt, 2008).

       The analysis of data in phenomenological research. Because the data gathered for phenomenological studies are qualitative in nature, analyzing the data usually involves a coding process that is similar to other qualitative research designs. Dreon and McDonald (2012), for example, derived themes that constructed the essence of two novice science teachers' experiences of enacting inquiry pedagogy. The themes were developed from descriptive codes, which were originally obtained from repetitive reading of participants' collected data, including interview transcripts, observation notes, and journal posts. The common descriptive codes that were found across various data sources were then organized into thematic codes, which illustrated common patterns of participants' experiences. In a study about Malaysian student teachers' international practicum experiences, Kabilan (2013) used a similar process to analyze the participants' open-ended questionnaires and reflective journals. He divided the process of analysis into the following five steps: "(i) becoming familiar with the data; (ii) generating initial codes; (iii) searching for themes; (iv) reviewing themes; and (v) defining and naming themes" (p. 202). Through this process the researchers finally obtained themes that represented the substantial elements (essence) of participants' experiences regarding their international practicum.

       While most of the studies followed a similar process to that illustrated above, a combination of two approaches was used in a study with Saudi Arabian female teachers by Jamjoom (2010). To analyze the teachers' interview data and researcher's field notes,

she used a "horizonalization" method developed by Moustakas (1994) as the main

analytical approach of coding the interview data and supplemented it with hermeneutical

phenomenological methods suggested by van Manen (1997). Using horizonalization, she

derived themes that illustrated the patterns of teachers' particular experiences. She also

analyzed certain idiomatic phrases or textual expressions made by participants as

suggested by van Manen (1997), focusing on terms that highlighted "the personal" aspect

of their experiences to consider the uniqueness of individual experiences (p. 550).

Some studies used member checks to ensure the validity and accuracy of analysis

(e.g., Flowerday & Schraw, 2000; Greenwalt, 2008; Sumsion, 2002); yet other studies did

not clarify what methods and procedures they used to ensure the quality of their analysis.

This makes their findings contestable because it is not certain whether the analysis

successfully revealed the essence of participants' experience regarding the phenomenon.

Moreover, while those studies asserted that they significantly considered reflecting

participants' experiences and their points of view, it is unclear what specific role the

researchers played in, and consideration they gave to, reflecting the participants' voices

and perspectives in the study. Given that researchers also possess their own perspectives

and biases, it was problematic that many studies did not address how they dealt with

those issues in the process of analyzing the data. These problems are revisited in the next

section, which discusses the research design of this study.

Challenges of phenomenology. Since Husserl introduced the idea of

phenomenology in the late nineteenth century, numerous followers have further

developed its concepts and methodologies. As a major philosophical tradition,

phenomenology has also influenced many areas of research in psychology, religion,

social science, and natural science (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). Because phenomenology

has constantly transformed over time, and the change is still ongoing, Spiegelberg (1982)

defined phenomenology as a movement that highlights the flow and evolution of ideas

among its followers until the present.

The fact that the phenomenological movement is still ongoing as new ideas are

introduced suggests that there could be disagreement or conflicts among different ideas

under the umbrella of phenomenology. For example, Heidegger's hermeneutic

phenomenology was prompted by his disagreement with Husserl regarding how to reach

understandings of the essence of one's lived experience. Merleau–Ponty and Sartre also

disagreed with each other in terms of how the knower of the phenomenon can be aware

of his or her "self" (*ego*; Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). Whereas Merleau–Ponty arguing

that the self of the knower is implicit in his or her consciousness and thus cannot be an

object of phenomenological understanding, Sartre refuted that one's self can be detached

from one's consciousness and thus can be an object of understanding. Such

disagreements on certain issues are still ongoing in phenomenology; thus, for someone

seeking a solid approach in philosophy or research, this flow of various conflicting ideas

within phenomenology could be problematic. In this regard, Creswell (2012) pointed out

that "phenomenology requires at least some understanding of the broader philosophical

assumptions, and *these should be identified by the researcher* [emphasis added]" (p. 62).

Because multiple realities may exist in phenomenology, depending on who is (are) the

knower(s) and who is (are) the known(s), it is solely the knower's (researcher's)

responsibility to decide what approach or stance among these realities to follow.

Conclusion: The Significance of Studying Beginning Teachers' Lived Experiences

with Test-Based Accountability

The literature review for this study was conducted in three major areas: research on teachers' experiences with test-based accountability, research on beginning teachers' experiences of learning to teach, and discussions of phenomenology that serve as the theoretical framework of this study and its applications to researching teachers' experiences. Reviews of each of those areas clearly suggest why this study—understanding US and Korean beginning teachers' learning to teach in the context of test-based accountability—is significant and necessary.

First, the review of teachers' experiences with test-based accountability implies that teachers' pressure and frustration because of testing is not a tendency limited to the United States. Internationally, there is more pressure on teachers to be accountable for their student performance and prove their effectiveness based on that. However, the reviewed studies suggest that teachers' experiences of living with the pressure of test-based accountability were not all negative; there were some positive influences on their self-confidence and professional growth that require further exploration. Because the majority of studies in this area are inclined to demonstrate the negative aspect of teachers' experience with testing, more studies are needed that explore teachers' experiences with a broader perspective, because the review suggests that teachers' experiences with testing are more complex rather than just one-dimensional. Moreover, because most of the studies in this area were conducted in Western countries, there needs to be more cases from non-Western contexts to mitigate the limitations of current findings.

My review of research about beginning teachers' learning to teach showed that many studies in this area were intervention studies that focused on the effect of specific programs or interventions on beginning teachers' learning and growth. Also, studies about beginning teachers' experiences with test-based accountability mostly illustrated that beginning teachers eventually surrendered to the accountability regime while complaining and being frustrated by the fact that their belief on good teaching was not encouraged in such a restricted system. In terms of studying beginning teachers' learning to teach, we need more studies that focus on and reflect teachers' perspectives and their independent efforts for learning to teach, rather than treating them as mere subjects that need special intervention or guided support. Furthermore, as there have been some studies revealing that teachers' ongoing reflection and supportive school culture and leadership reduce beginning teachers' pressure with testing, more evidence is needed that would examine how the working contexts affect beginning teachers' learning and growth as professionals.

Lastly, phenomenological approach has seldom been used to study teachers' experiences. Among all reviewed studies, the common types of research designs were quantitative analyses or case studies, and a few used a narrative inquiry approach. The majority of studies regarding teachers' experiences with testing and high-stakes accountability were qualitative case studies that examined a small number of participants in a single context. Studies that analyzed this problem from two or more distinctively different contexts were rarely found; this tendency clearly restricts further understanding of this issue. Moreover, there are significantly more studies about elementary teachers' experiences than about those of secondary teachers, and more studies about teaching

English literacy courses than about other subject areas, such as mathematics or science.

This is why this study concentrates on secondary teachers and includes mathematics

teachers as participants in addition to English teachers. By using a phenomenological

approach to investigate multiple teachers' lived experiences with testing, this study

reveals the essence and meaning of beginning teachers' learning to teach in the era of

test-based accountability.

Chapter III: Research Design: Phenomenological Research

This chapter discusses the research design for this study, which is based on a phenomenological orientation, as well as the specific process and ways of conducting this study. This section begins with the concept of phenomenological research, then explains methods for collecting and analyzing data, and finally addresses the methodological challenges of this study. In discussing each topic, I explain what scholars in phenomenological research have already learned and suggested, as well as how their ideas are applied in this study.

Understanding Phenomenological Research

As I illustrated in the previous chapter, the theoretical and methodological perspectives that inform this study are grounded in phenomenology. A study is considered phenomenological if the researcher embraces the theoretical perspectives as well as the methods of phenomenology (Schram, 2006). To use phenomenological research appropriately as a methodological framework for this study, this section focuses on understanding the concept of phenomenological research, including its aims and purpose.

Definition, Aims, and Purpose

Various researchers have suggested different perspectives and approaches for conducting phenomenological research, yet all have a common purpose: to develop a fundamental understanding of a specific phenomenon by investigating individuals' lived experiences pertaining to that phenomenon (Cohen & Omery, 1994; Creswell, 2012; Schram, 2006). The focus is on describing "what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2012, p. 58). The common structure or substance

of the participants' experience of the phenomenon is referred to as *essence* in phenomenological terminology.

Schram (2006) explained that "essence" in this context refers to "the essential, invariant structure or central underlying meaning of some aspect of shared experience [by participants]" (p. 98). For example, researchers may seek to understand the essence of being an African American female student in a predominantly White urban school or to uncover the essential structure of novice educators' learning to teach in a context of high-stakes accountability. Analysis based on the individual experience of multiple participants is necessary to understand a phenomenon. Through such investigation, researchers extract the essence of the participants' collective lived experience that is fundamental to the studied phenomenon, no matter who has experienced it (Schram, 2006). In this respect, van Manen (1990) asserted, "Phenomenological research is the study of essence" (p. 10). He argued:

> In other words, phenomenology is the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience. A universal or essence may only be intuited or grasped through a study of the particulars or instances as they are encountered in lived experience. (p. 10)

The essence of a phenomenon, then, informs the researchers' understanding of the *meanings* that participants' lived experience have for each of them. Eventually, researchers are able to gain a deeper understanding of participants' experience as it is lived by them. This is why phenomenology is also called *human science*; it studies a phenomenon in terms of "always the structures of meaning of the lived human world" (van Manen, 1990, p. 11). Every phenomenon is constituted of several individuals'

experience, and each individual experience has its own meaning for the person who has lived through it. By investigating the meaning of each participant's particular lived experience, researchers come to understand what it means to experience that same phenomenon in the researchers' lived world as well. For example, phenomenological research on a question such as, "What does it mean to be a mother?" provides the researcher with an understanding of the meaning of being a mom as he or she lives through it. Thus, in phenomenological research, researchers strive to determine the essence that involves the meaning of living through a particular experience.

Assumptions of Phenomenological Research: Acceptance of Multiple Realities

Because phenomenological research has the clear goal of identifying the essence of a particular experience, the question naturally follows whether this essence can be an absolute truth that is universal for every person and every occasion. This is not the case according to Husserl, who believed that a reality revealed by phenomenology is but one among many other realities (Laverty, 2008). Phenomenology originated from Husserl's critique of the positivist paradigm, which holds that an absolute reality exists that can be defined by a researcher who is free from any values or biases (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). This positivist perspective is rejected in phenomenological research, which instead assumes that "reality is not something 'out there', but rather something that is local and specifically constructed" (Laverty, 2008, p. 26).

Research is performed by human beings (Laverty, 2008). It involves the researcher's interactions with participants and reconstruction of previous knowledge. In phenomenological research, in particular, there is constant interaction between the researcher and participants in reconstructing the participants' lived experience and

understanding its meaning (Laverty, 2008). In this respect, the essence defined by phenomenological research is not an absolute reality but rather one reality, among several, that is reconstructed by the researcher and the study participants.

Carrying Out Phenomenological Research: Discussing the "How To"

Building on the discussion of what constitutes phenomenological research, this section focuses on specific methods and procedures for conducting phenomenological research. It begins by determining a phenomenon of interest and developing questions, then discusses ways of collecting and analyzing phenomenological data. For each process, I introduce suggestions made by scholars in phenomenological research and explain how they are applied in this study.

Determining a Phenomenon and Research Questions

To begin a phenomenological research study, researchers need to select a phenomenon of interest. Scholars agree that the topic or question of phenomenological research typically originates from the researcher's particular interest in that topic (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). For example, as I illustrated in the first chapter, I have a strong interest in how beginning teachers learn to teach, which is influenced by my own experience as a struggling novice middle school English teacher in Korea. This personal interest strongly affected my choice of this topic for my phenomenological research, which involves studying beginning teachers' experiences in learning to teach in the context of test-based accountability. van Manen (1990) explained the process of choosing a topic more specifically:

To do a phenomenological study of any topic, therefore, it is not enough to simply recall experiences I or others may have had with respect to a particular

phenomenon. Instead, I must recall the experience in such a way that the essential

aspects, the meaning structures of this experience as lived through, are brought

back, as it were, and in such a way that we recognize this description *as a possible*

experience, which means *as a possible interpretation* of that experience. This then

is the task of phenomenological research and writing: *to construct a possible*

interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience. In order to make a

beginning, the phenomenologist must ask: What human experience do I feel

called upon to make topical for my investigation? (p. 41)

van Manen's account implies that the topic of phenomenological research is not simply

prompted by the researcher's personal interest. Social meaning is another consideration in

choosing a phenomenon to study (Moustakas, 1994). In addition to having personal

significance, a phenomenon must have meaning and significance for other human beings

in the lived world because I, the researcher, am not the only person living in this world,

alone, but rather am someone who is living through constant relationships with other

people and entities in the world. The phenomenon I choose must have interest and

meaning not only for me but for others as well. Thus, while identifying a topic for

phenomenological research is certainly guided by the researcher's personal interest, it

must also take into consideration the topic's meaning to others, especially those who are

concerned with that particular phenomenon—that is, those who possibly have

experienced, are experiencing, or will experience that phenomenon.

    After a phenomenon for study is identified, researchers develop questions that

guide the research process. van Manen (1990) indicated that "to do phenomenological

research is *to question* something phenomenologically and, also, to be addressed by the

question of what something is 'really' like" (p. 42). Thus, a key phenomenological research question typically takes the form of, "What is the nature of this lived experience?" (van Manen, 1990, p. 42).

In addition, Moustakas (1994) described five characteristics of phenomenological questions that are distinct from other research methodologies:

- It seeks to reveal more fully the essences and meanings of human experience;

- It seeks to uncover the qualitative, rather than the quantitative factors, in behavior and experience;

- It engages the total self of the research participant and sustains personal and passionate involvement;

- It does not seek to predict or to determine causal relationships;

- It is illuminated through careful, comprehensive descriptions and vivid and accurate renderings of the experience, rather than measurements, ratings, or scores. (p. 105)

The research questions for this study are framed according to van Manen's and Moustakas's suggestions: to explore the in-depth experiences of beginning teachers within the context of test-based accountability. That phenomenon has been selected by my intentional consciousness, prompted by my own experience in preservice teacher education and my teaching experience. I also perceive this phenomenon as one that concerns the experiences of other people (e.g., novice teachers, teacher educators, administrators, students, and policy makers), not only my own experience, and has meaning for them as well as for me. By identifying a phenomenon of interest and developing a goal of understanding beginning teachers' lived experience pertaining to the

phenomenon, I have derived a phenomenological research question that guides the selection of the participants and the collection and analysis of the data: What is it like and what does it mean for beginning teachers to learn to teach in a context highly affected by test-based accountability?

The major question is then categorized into three sub-questions according to the specific research contexts and participants:

- What are the lived experiences of beginning teachers learning to teach in the United States and Korea within the context of intense teacher accountability based on testing?

- What meanings do teachers attach to their lived experience in this context?

- What are the commonalities and differences between teachers in the United States and teachers in Korea?

The first question aims to understand the essence of beginning teachers' lived experience of learning to teach in the context of test-based accountability. The second question focuses on understanding what specific meanings this experience has for the teachers, beyond just understanding the factual reality. The last question is intended to investigate whether there are significant commonalities or differences regarding the essential structure of teachers' experiences between two countries and if so, what factors might account for them. The last question also allows further investigation into whether a common essence is found across the countries or whether teachers' experiences are more context bound.

Bracketing Out Researchers' Assumptions and Pre-understandings

Before beginning to study participants' experience, there is a crucial first step in phenomenological research, which is called *bracketing* (also called *epoché* or *phenomenological reduction*). This means setting aside any presuppositions or preconceptions and suspending judgment to reveal the essence of a particular, distinct phenomenon (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). According to phenomenologists, bracketing is an essential process to fully understand and describe participants' lived experiences. van Manen (1990) explained how a researcher can "bracket out" any presupposition and suspend judgment of a phenomenon:

> It is better to make explicit our understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions, and theories. We try to come to terms with our assumptions, not in order to forget them again, but rather to hold them deliberately at bay and even to turn this knowledge against itself, as it were, thereby exposing its shallow or concealing character. (p. 47)

To explicate and bracket out his pre-understandings, van Manen (1990) conducted a comprehensive review of the literature regarding the topic of his study, which was to understand the meaning of being a parent. His literature review not only discussed gaps in previous research and the significance of his study but also presented his own assumptions and knowledge regarding parenting. Explicitly revealing his assumptions and background knowledge actually helped him bracket them out and concentrate solely on his participants' experiences. In this regard, Schram (2006) also asserted that researchers need to "set aside" (p. 100) any preconceptions about the studied phenomenon so that the only probable assumption of phenomenological research is the

researchers' belief that there exists an essential structure or substance for the phenomenon.

With regard to this study, I have my own assumptions and preconceptions about beginning teachers' experiences of learning to teach in the context of test-based accountability. Based on my experience and my review of the relevant literature, I have preconceptions and assumptions that beginning teachers have a generally critical view of testing and that they have more negative than positive experiences. It also seems clear that these teachers are still making progress in their learning and are growing as professionals even though they are working in a challenging context. I am aware that in the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting participants' data, I need to set aside those preconceptions and not let my assumptions affect my descriptions of participants' experiences.

Moustakas (1994) also asserted that bracketing promotes researchers' receptiveness to participants' experiences. He stated that when bracketing is carried out,

> I [the researcher] am more readily able to meet something or someone and to listen and hear whatever is being presented, without coloring the other's communication with my own habits of thinking, feeling, and seeing, removing the usual ways of labeling or judging, or comparing. I am ready to perceive and know a phenomenon from its appearance and presence. (p. 90)

This state of mind is what I strived to achieve before beginning to explore participants' experiences.

Collecting Data for Phenomenological Research: A Series of Three

Phenomenological Interviews

Describing one's experience requires language, which is an essential tool by which participants convey their stories and meanings (Schram, 2006). This is why interviews are generally used in phenomenological research as a means of investigating participants' experiences (Creswell, 2012; Moustakas, 1994; Schram, 2006; Seidman, 2012; van Manen, 1990). Long, in-depth interviews are the method typically used in phenomenological research (Moustakas, 1994). Other supplemental resources may be obtained through observations or by collecting artifacts (participants' journals, diaries, or writing prompts) (van Manen, 1990). Certainly, the question of whether interviewing is "the" method or "a" method for phenomenological research can be debated. Regarding this question, Seidman (2012) wrote:

> In many cases, research interests have many levels, and as a result multiple methods may be appropriate. If the researcher is interested, however, in what it is like for students to be in the classroom, what their experience is, and what meaning they make out of that experience—if the interest is in what Schutz (1967) calls their "subjective understanding"—then it seems to me that interviewing, in most cases, may be the best avenue of inquiry. (p. 10)

Agreeing with this perspective, this study adopts the phenomenological interviewing method set out by Seidman (2012) as the method of exploring participants' experiences. The following sections describe Seidman's concept of phenomenological interviewing, its procedures, and its application to this study.

The concept of phenomenological interviewing. Seidman (2012) suggested a series of three in-depth phenomenological interviews as a means to access and investigate participants' lived experience. Through this method, each interview assumes a different focus when the researcher inquires about the participant's experiences and the meaning of those experiences. In the first interview, the participant is asked to describe his or her life history related to the context in which he or she is presently located; the second interview aims to grasp the details of participant's present experience within the context; and the third focuses on the participant's reflections on the meanings of his or her experience. Seidman (2012) asserted that this method of phenomenological interviewing emphasizes researchers' attempts to develop a subjective understanding of participants' experiences, which means that they need to reflect on and address "participants' point of view of their experience" (Seidman, 2012, p. 17). This process can reveal the true essence of participants' experiences as reconstructed by the participants themselves rather than being driven by the researchers' hypothesis or preconceptions.

In phenomenological interviewing, Seidman (2012) assumed that participants' lived experience was the foundation that constructed the phenomenon. To gain information about participants' individual experiences, researchers need to ask them to describe their experiences and make a concerted effort to guide participants in reconstructing specific details of their lived experience (Seidman, 2012). Moreover, understanding the meaning of participants' experience is important in phenomenological research because "the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience" (Seidman, 2012, p. 18). Thus, researchers need to ask participants not just to reconstruct their individual experiences but also to reflect on the

meaning of those experiences. When participants reconstitute both their lived experiences and their meanings, the researcher is able to grasp the essence of the phenomenon.

Conducting phenomenological interviews. In this section, I discuss how I conducted phenomenological interviews for the present study based on the suggestions of scholars in phenomenological research. More specifically, I discuss interviews in terms of the research context, participants, and interview methods employed.

Research context. Choosing an appropriate research context is particularly significant in phenomenological research because the context is where participants' experiences are constructed, reconstructed, and understood by the researcher (Seidman, 2012). To better understand the phenomenon of beginning teachers' experiences of learning to teach in the context of test-based accountability, I have chosen secondary schools in the United States and Korea as the research context.

I focus on secondary school teachers because the literature review reveals that though numerous studies on the topic of how teachers learn to teach have been conducted with elementary school teachers, few have addressed secondary school teachers. Thus, more studies regarding secondary school contexts are needed. In addition, the content of each subject is more comprehensive and advanced at the secondary level, meaning that teachers at that level should have substantial in-depth knowledge and skills in their content areas. Furthermore, secondary schools more than elementary and primary schools generally administer official tests, including not only state (US) or provincial (Korea) tests, but also midterm and final examinations, national achievement tests (Korea), and scholastic aptitude tests (e.g. SAT, ACT, and *suneung*). Whereas most US studies have considered state tests as the primary evidence for test-based accountability, in Korea

regular midterm and final examinations, as well as *suneung*, have more significance as evidence of student performance (Kang, 2009; Kim, 2013). Accordingly, in choosing the research context in terms of school level, I needed to consider that the primary evidence of student and teacher performance in both countries has been gathered through different types of tests. Because these tests are generally implemented at the secondary level, it is more adequate to study secondary school than elementary school teachers. Furthermore, secondary school is a critical time when good academic records become important for college admission. Therefore, testing could exert more impact on students and teachers in secondary schools than on those in elementary schools.

In terms of regional context, I chose the greater Boston area of the United States and, for Korea, the Seoul capital area, which includes the city of Seoul and the neighborhood districts of Incheon and Gyeonggi-do. These areas are both major urban districts (with some suburban areas) and have reputations for having a number of good schools. State or national standardized tests and other kinds of tests (e.g., regular school tests and exams for college admission) are administered in both areas, allowing a comparative analysis of teachers' experience. Secondary teachers in both countries are not strictly differentiated by school levels; therefore, the teachers' school levels for this study involve middle schools and high schools.

Identifying participants. The participants in phenomenological research need to have lived experiences related to the topic of the study (Laverty, 2008; Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2012). Because I aim to explore beginning teachers' lived experiences of learning to teach in a context of intense test-based accountability, I first sought to recruit teachers in their first, second, or third year of teaching (not exceeding three years of total

experience) by the time of the interview. I also wanted to include participants who teach

subjects typically included on various types of tests implemented in both countries. As a

result, I decided to recruit beginning teachers of either mathematics or English.

Regarding the number of participants, I initially planned to have an equal number

of participants—either three or four—from each country. Though that number is

relatively small, given that three in-depth interviews were conducted with each

participant and that the interviews occurred in two different countries, having a realistic,

manageable number of participants was essential. Creswell (2012) suggests that having a

small number of participants for phenomenological research also encourages a more

profound analysis of their experiences and could yield richer results. In the present study,

I ended up with eight participants, four from each country.

Recruiting process. I recruited participants by using both purposive and

convenience sampling strategies. Based on the criteria for participant selection defined

above, I sought out candidates who met the requirements of the study as follows. To

recruit US teachers, I first contacted colleagues in my doctoral program at Boston

College, professors at the university's School of Education, and friends who were

teachers and could recommend teachers whom they know. When I asked them to

recommend teachers, I explained the specific selection criteria in terms of years of

teaching experience, content area, and school level, among other particulars. For

example, I asked to be introduced to high-school English teachers with fewer than three

years of experience and who completed a preparation program at an institution other than

Boston College. I sought participants from various institutions because I wanted to have

as diverse a pool of participants as possible, as per Laverty's (2008) suggestion that

including participants who are "diverse enough from one another" (p. 29) can help

researchers to obtain unique, rich stories related to the phenomenon studied. Once I

obtained a teacher's email address from a source, I sent an email to the teacher that

explained the purpose of the study, the number of interviews, the time commitment, and

the payment awarded and asked if he or she would be interested. Ultimately, I recruited

four teachers, whose brief profiles appear below. I offer a more detailed introduction of

each teacher in the next chapter.

Table 1

Profile of US Teachers

Name	Subject	School Level	Years of Exp.	Gender	Race
Jim	English	Middle	2	M	White
Dana	English	High	1	F	White
Chelsey	Mathematics	High	2	F	White
Alice	Mathematics	High	2	F	Asian (Korean American)

Korean teachers were recruited in similar way. While scheduling and conducting

interviews with US teachers in Boston, I also contacted friends who were teachers and

professors at various schools of education in Korea to request recommendations of

teachers who could participate. Already having US participants, I wanted to recruit

Korean teachers who possessed characteristics similar to those of US teachers in order to

facilitate comparison. To illustrate, of the four US teachers recruited, two were

mathematics teachers and two were English teachers; one was a middle-school teacher,

and three were women. Similarly, I wanted to recruit four Korean teachers: two English

and two mathematics teachers, at least one of whom works in a middle school, and at

least one of whom is a man. When I asked teachers and professors in Korea for recommendations, I specifically explained the characteristics of teachers who I sought as participants, just as I had done with US teachers. I contacted potential participants by email or text message to explain the study and request their participation. Four Korean teachers were recruited for this study by way of this specific purposive sampling follow the recruitment of US teachers. The profiles of the Korean teachers appear below, and I offer a more detailed introduction to each teacher in the next chapter.

Table 2

Profile of Korean Teachers

Name	Subject	School Level	Years of Exp.	Gender
Minwoo	Mathematics	Middle	2	M
Somi	Mathematics	High	2	F
Yubin	English	High	2	F
Jieun	English	High	2.5	F

Time, place, and means of interviews. Once a teacher agreed to participate in the study, I scheduled a date, time, and place for the three interviews according to the participant's availability. I conducted all interviews with US teachers by the end of June 2015; the interview period coincided with the end of the 2014–2015 academic year, so that teachers would have more time and flexibility in scheduling the interviews. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with Alice, Chelsey, and Jim at my office at Boston College or at a nearby café. Dana opted to conduct all interviews via Facetime.

I conducted interviews with all of the Korean teachers while I was in Korea during summer 2015. All of those interviews were conducted face to face and in Korean.

Except for Jieun, whom I met at her school for all three interviews, the teachers were interviewed in cafés. The interview period (late June–July 2015) coincided with the end of the first semester of the 2015 academic year in Korea, when the teachers were less busy than in the middle of the semester.

   Interview method and process. In following the phenomenological interview method suggested by Seidman (2012), I conducted a series of three phenomenological interviews with each participant to understand their lived experiences pertaining to the phenomenon under study: beginning teachers' learning to teach in the context of intense test-based accountability. Since participants were from two different countries, each interview was conducted in his or her native language (i.e., English or Korean).

   Before starting the first interview with each participant, I performed the informed consent procedure following guidelines set by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Boston College. I explained the purpose of the study, what would happen in the study, and all potential risks and discomfort that could arise during their participation. I also informed each participant of his or her rights as a participant and about the payment that he or she would receive for participating. I asked all of the teachers to review the consent form carefully and sign it if they were willing to participate and to allow me to audio-record the interviews. For Korean teachers, I prepared two versions of consent forms—one in English, the other in Korean—as suggested by the IRB. The consent form used for this study is included in the appendix.

   After the participant granted his or her informed consent, the first interview began. This interview focused on the teacher's life history up to the point when he or she became a teacher. According to Seidman (2012), the first interview locates participants'

life histories within their current contexts. Accordingly, the questions asked during the first interview probed the teachers' motivations for and intentions in becoming teachers, including their expectations and hopes of what teaching would be like, the kind of teacher that they wished to become, and relevant events and people that they encountered before beginning to teach.

The second interview focused on understanding specific details of participants' present lived experiences concerning the research context. For these interviews, it was important to ask participants to reconstruct the details of their present experiences (Seidman, 2012). To that purpose, the interview included questions about participants' everyday lives in schools: how they planned and taught lessons, how they provided test preparation, how testing was integrated into their overall teaching practice and how they experienced relationships with other teachers, administrators, students, and parents. Such interrelated questions provided rich descriptions of participants' lives in their current professional context.

The third interview concentrated on meanings that participants had assigned to their lived experiences. I asked questions that encouraged participants to reflect upon their experiences, based on what they had mentioned in the two previous interviews. In that sense, reflection did not seek a judgment of mere satisfaction or dissatisfaction, but aimed to help participants to connect their past experiences to their present ones and to envision their future lives in the same context. Seidman (2012) elaborates:

> Making sense or making meaning requires that the participants look at how the
>
> factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present situation. It also
>
> requires that they look at their present experience in detail and within the context

in which it occurs. The combination of exploring the past to clarify the events that led participants to where they are now, and describing the concrete details of their present experience, establishes conditions for reflecting upon what they are now doing in their lives. (p. 22)

Although a participant's creation of meaning occurs throughout all phases of the interviews—for instance, in choosing specific events and reconstructing their experiences with them—this final interview focused chiefly on their creation of meaning. The questions thus asked participants to examine their lives as beginning teachers who faced the pressure of test-based accountability and to describe their understanding of their lives in relation to their past, present, and future experiences as teachers or in other fields (in case they were planning to leave their job). Figure 3 summarizes the interview process used in this study.

Figure 3

Interview Process: A Series of Three Phenomenological Interviews

In terms of interview questions, Seidman (2012) suggests formulating questions that ask "how" instead of "why," which can generate a more comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences as well as more relevant information. For example, the question "Why did you become a teacher?" restricts participants to giving

their reasons for becoming teachers. Instead, a question such as "How did you come to the teacher education program?" encouraged participants to describe their past experiences in more detail and in terms of events that prompted them to become teachers. I developed the specific interview protocols and questions used in this study in the light of this suggestion, all of which appear in the appendix.

Length of the interviews. The average length of the interviews was 60–90 minutes. Seidman (2012) suggests that each interview should last at least 90 minutes in order to generate the richest information from participants. Shortening interviews too much can prevent researchers from obtaining the necessary information, yet extending the interviews much longer can diminish the focus of the interview by introducing unrelated information or leading the interview to another direction. Nonetheless, a 90-minute interview is longer than other interviews typically conducted in qualitative research, and participating in three long interviews requires a considerable time investment from participants. Given my concern that requesting 90-minute interviews would put undue pressure on participants, instead of forcing them to sit and talk for exactly 90 minutes, I established a 60–90-minute timeframe for interviews, with some flexibility built into the framework. I allowed participants to shorten or extend the interview time if they wished, but most interviews still lasted over an hour. If the participant had a busy schedule, then I also allowed single interviews to be split into two sessions to be completed at his or her convenience.

Spacing. In terms of spacing out the phases of the interview process, Seidman (2012) suggests implementing breaks of three to seven days between interviews. That strategy offers participants a reasonable amount of time to avoid being influenced too

greatly by their previous interviews, yet to maintain enough connection to move the focus into the next phase. However, since participants in the present study were beginning teachers at secondary schools, I needed to consider their busy schedules first. When scheduling interviews, I explained to them the suggested spacing of the interviews, yet also told them that their availability mattered above all. Fortunately, all participants scheduled their interviews according to the suggested spacing, with three to seven days between each interview. Before I began each interview, I briefly summarized the previous interview and informed the participant of the day's topic so that he or she could make sufficient connections between the interviews.

Saving and transcribing interviews. All the interviews were audio recorded upon the permission of participants. The recorded interviews were then transcribed into their native language. All the interview transcriptions were printed and imported to NVivo (ver. 11.0) for data analysis.

Analyzing Phenomenological Interview Data

In this section, I discuss the process of analyzing the phenomenological interview data collected in this study. I conducted analysis in three steps: understanding the individual participant's lived experience, comparing participants' lived experiences, and constructing the essence of the studied phenomenon. Although I present the process here in a stepwise structure, data analysis for this study followed a cyclical instead of a linear process, meaning that I repeated some steps or went back and forth between steps. According to Laverty (2008), such cyclic analyzing process is typical in phenomenological research. In what follows, before illustrating what I completed in each

step and how, I first explain how I came up with the three-step analytical approach that I developed in reference to researchers' suggestions.

Ways to analyze phenomenological data. There have been various ways suggested to analyze the phenomenological interview data. For example, many studies conducted in the social sciences have used thematic analysis, or *horizonalization*, as their analytical approach. Horizonalization was developed by Moustakas (1994) as a particular means of analyzing phenomenological data. From all of the transcriptions of interviews with participants, the researcher lists every expression that is relevant to the phenomenon and groups those expressions into themes in order to develop a "composite description of the meanings and essence of the experience, representing the group as a whole" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). Other methods have also been suggested by Colazzi (1978), who emphasized the co-construction of meaning with participants, and by Giorgi (1985), who suggested developing a synthesis of all meanings that provide consistent descriptions of participants' experiences. Although various methods of analyzing phenomenological data have been suggested, there are not any significant differences among those approaches (Creswell, 2012). In fact, after reviewing those methods, Laverty (2008) concludes that:

> In each of these methodologies [for analysis of phenomenological data], one can see *a working toward meaning* [emphasis added] through a structured process that is pre-determined, yet influenced by the data. The goal of this analysis is to reach a place of understanding of the experience through the development of an integrated statement about the experience. (p. 30)

Laverty (2008) points out that the analysis of phenomenological data is a predetermined, structured process that aims to work toward forming the meaning of a certain phenomenon. It should be informed by data, not the researcher's preconceptions, because this is how the essence of a phenomenon can be revealed. In that sense, analyzing phenomenological data can be defined as a structured process to understand the meaning of the phenomenon studied as informed by the data, as is commonly emphasized in the various ways of analyzing phenomenological data suggested above. After reviewing those methods, I developed a structured process for analyzing the interview data for this study. In the next section, I explain how I worked toward meaning based on participants' interview data.

Working toward meaning: Three-step data analysis. I analyzed the interviews in three steps: understanding each individual participant's lived experience, comparing participants' lived experiences, and constructing the essence of the phenomenon studied. Figure 4 summarizes the major tasks carried out at each step.

Figure 4

Analytical Process for Phenomenological Interview Data
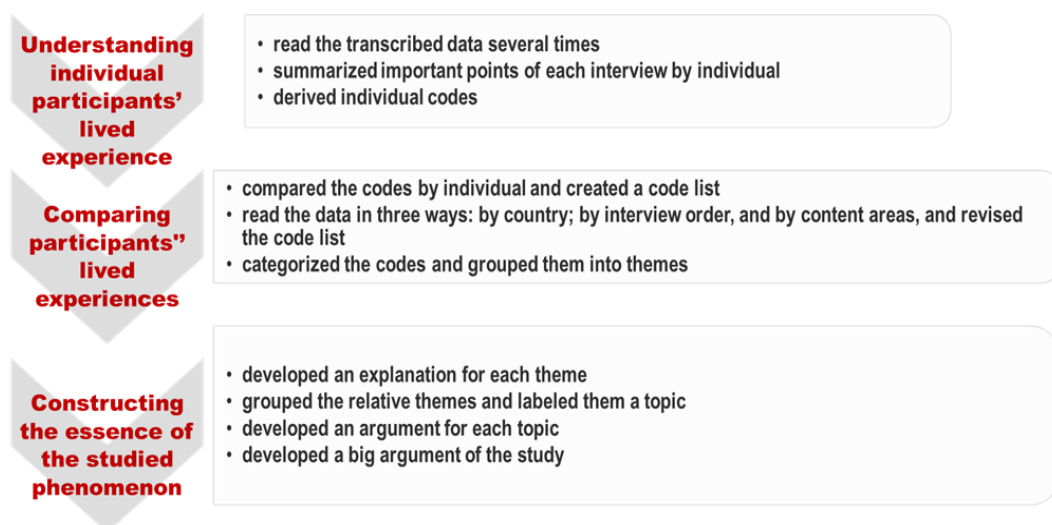
Step 1: Understanding each individual participant's lived experience. The first step of analysis focused on gaining a thorough understanding of the individual's lived experience. It is necessary to identify the common structure or substance—essence—that construct the studied phenomenon. I performed this step without the assistance of NVivo, first by reading each participant's transcripts several times and highlighting statements that illustrated important events in their experiences. I also added notes as I developed any ideas, impressions, or opinions and summarized important points of each individual's interviews. That summary helped me to understand participants' lived experiences in chronological order and to identify important events in their lived experiences. An example from the summary of Jim's second interview, which focused on his present life as a beginning teacher in a context of test-based accountability, appears in Appendix C.

After having fully understood the content of each interview, I derived individual codes based on the highlighted quotes. When I coded the individual data, I considered "What is the subject of the marked passages? Are there words or phrases that seem to describe them, at least tentatively? Is there a word within the passage itself that suggests a category into which the passage might fit?" (Seidman, 2012, p. 127). These questions were important in deciding whether a passage could be coded. For example, codes derived from Jim's second interview were "interest and focus on providing an engaging lesson," "flexibility in lesson planning," "completely teaching to the test," "pressure due to teacher evaluation," "self-pressure to teach to the test," "ambivalent views on testing," "unfair testing," "constraints due to the test," "intrinsic reward and motivation from students," and "feeling of growth." These individual codes were compared across the participants and continually revised in the next step.

Step 2: Comparing participants' lived experiences. After generating the initial

codes for each participant, I determined whether there were any common, similar, or

conflicting codes across participants. For example, "pressure of preparing students for

MCAS" was a common code across all four US teachers, despite differences in terms of

how much and in what ways the teachers felt such pressure. I made a list of codes derived

for more than two teachers, since those codes could be a common substance (i.e., part of

the essence) that constructs the phenomenon under study. Moreover, if any code were

found only for a single participant, yet has especially important meaning for him or her,

then I included the code on the list. A complete list of codes is provided in the appendix.

Here is an example from the code list:

Table 3

An Example of the Code List

Code	Jim	Dana	Alice	Chelsey	Yubin	Jieun	Somi	Minwoo
Frustrated by teaching to the test	vv	v	vv	v	vv	vv	v	v

In this code, I marked Chelsey, Jim, Jieun, and Yubin twice, because they expressed

significantly more frustration than the other teachers. I continually revised the code list

by reading all interview data in three ways. I first read the data by country; I read each

US teacher's interviews first and then each Korean teacher's interviews. Second, I read

all of the interviews in the order in which I conducted them for each participant. That is, I

read all teachers' first interviews—US interviews first, then Korean interviews—

followed by their second and ultimately third interviews. Lastly, I read all interviews

according to content area; I read all US and Korean mathematics teachers' interviews

first and all interviews with English teachers. Throughout this intensive reading, I continually revised and added codes, as well as took notes about my ideas, impressions, and questions if I encountered any powerful quotes.

As a result of this intensive reading, I finalized the code list. Next, I imported the codes and all of the interview data into NVivo, a program that allowed me to sort each excerpt by code. I then reviewed all coded excerpts belonging to the same code and examined whether any patterns or connections emerged among them from the same or another participant. I focused specifically on excerpts connected to other excerpts from the same or another participant, some repeated accounts of a particular experience from one or two more participants, and excerpts related to what has been described in previous literature (Seidman, 2012). I also took notes about my understanding of the patterns, connections, and relationships of the excerpts within the same code.

With NVivo, I also grouped relative codes into broader categories across both countries. For example, the category "teaching to the test" included codes such as "test preparation integrated into lessons" (US and Korea), "frustrated by teaching to the test" (US and Korea), and "positive aspects of MCAS" (US). I could thereby review all excerpts in the same category. From this process, I derived the themes of the study, which represent the "invariant constituents of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122) across participants.

Step 3: Constructing the essence of the studied phenomenon. The final step of analysis was to develop an explanation for each theme and construct an argument about the essence of the phenomenon under study based on those explanations. I first grouped the relative themes and labeled them as topics. Each topic became the title of a chapter of

the findings of this dissertation. Table 4 shows the topics and grouped themes of each

topic.

Table 4

List of Themes by Topic

Topic	Themes	
	US Teachers	Korean Teachers
1. Becoming of competent Novices: Teachers' childhood and preparation experiences	From varied backgrounds to a common interest in teaching	Studying hard for college
	Teacher education as a preparation for future practice	Teacher education, a bridge to pass the teacher recruitment exam
	Feeling prepared and confident in teaching content	Feeling prepared and confident in teaching content
2. Navigating tension: Beginning teachers' lived experiences within test-based accountability systems	Teaching to the test as part of the regular practice of teaching	Teaching according to a fully test-oriented system
	Being pressed by the system as well as by themselves	Dealing with unhappy students in an unhappy system
	Ambivalent views about MCAS and the necessity of test preparation	Feeling constrained by the school system
3. What It means to be a "good teacher" in a test-based accountability system	Learning to deal with student-related issues	Developing greater interests in students
	Pursuit of student-centered teaching	Taking student-centered approaches while teaching to the test
	Developing confidence and hope about becoming better teachers for the sake of students	Developing confidence and hope about becoming better teachers for the sake of students

Next, I reviewed all of the summaries and notes that I made during the previous

stages in order to develop explanations for the themes. I also reread the coded excerpts

according to each theme. From this process, I developed an argument by each topic that

represents the essence of participants' lived experiences pertaining to the phenomenon. From those arguments, I next developed the broader argument of the study, which is presented in the next chapter. The essence was reconstructed by participants in the stories that they told during interviews, as well as in my analysis of them. It is important to note that these arguments were developed primarily from interview data, rather than from my assumptions and biases, because bracketing them out was necessary to reveal the purely immanent structure of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Schram, 2006). However, it remains questionable whether completely bracketing out a researcher's preconceptions is possible when conducting phenomenological research. How I strived to resolve this issue is discussed next.

Bracketing: A Methodological Challenge

Although phenomenological research is useful for gaining a deeper understanding of a phenomenon by inquiring into the relevant experiences of several individuals, it is not free of methodological challenges. One of the most significant challenges is whether it is possible for a researcher to truly bracket out his or her assumptions and biases throughout the research process for the purpose of finding the true, foundational structures of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Bracketing is obviously an essential component of phenomenological research and has a valid purpose: to prevent researchers from relying on their own viewpoints in interpreting participants' experiences. However, scholars such as Heidegger and his followers in hermeneutics phenomenology doubted that researchers could truly bracket out their assumptions and biases; instead, they asserted that researchers should embed their assumptions and biases in the process of interpreting their own experiences (Cohen & Omery, 1994; Laverty, 2008).

In hermeneutics research, the researcher's interpretation and constant reflection are necessary to understand participants' lived experiences, because it is unrealistic to expect a researcher to completely set aside his or her assumptions and biases. van Manen (1990) also made the researcher's interpretation of the meaning of participants' experiences a crucial step in phenomenological research; his approach combines Husserl's phenomenology with hermeneutic phenomenology (Cohen & Omery, 1994). Seidman's (2012) approach to analyzing phenomenological interviews further emphasizes that the researcher's interpretation is necessary after describing participants' experiences. Creswell (2012) indicates that approaches that include the researcher's interpretation in phenomenological research imply that completely bracketing out the researcher's assumptions and biases is impossible, meaning that different understandings or approaches need to be developed for this component of phenomenological research.

To conduct phenomenological research, researchers need to be honest about their assumptions and biases. They also need to realistically consider how their perspectives will influence their portrayal of participants' experiences and the meaning of those experiences (Creswell, 2012). Because it is nearly impossible to completely suspend a researcher's preconceptions and judgment throughout the research process, van Manen (1990, 2014) and Seidman (2012) explicitly note that a researcher's interpretation should be included in the study as a separate process. I appreciate their concern and agree that, as a phenomenological researcher, if it is impossible for me to completely suspend my judgment, then I need to reveal that explicitly while also clearly differentiating my perspective from those of my participants.

Admitting that it is impossible to completely bracket out my preconceptions and biases, I followed the suggestion of van Manen (1990) and Seidman (2012) and explicitly revealed my perspective, yet to differentiate it from that of my participants. I took that measure in the present study in two ways. First, I conducted a comprehensive review of literature about the studied phenomenon, which appears in the previous chapter and reveals my preexisting knowledge and prejudgment of the phenomenon. Second, in each of the findings chapters, I added a separate section that synthesizes and compares each US and Korean teacher's lived experiences. These sections weave in various studies from the literature review that are relevant to the presented lived experiences of the teachers in order to explain how the I interpreted their experiences and generated an understanding of the essence (which is presented as an argument of the chapter). In this way, readers may reach an understanding of the phenomenon that has been constructed and reconstructed by the participants as well as through the researcher's interpretation that is differentiated from the views of the participants.

Chapter IV. Becoming Competent Novices: Teachers' Childhood and Preparation Experiences

The following three chapters discuss the essence of US and Korean secondary beginning teachers' lived experiences within their respective, test-based accountability systems. To understand the essence of teachers' lived experiences and their meanings, I explored three research questions:

- What are the lived experiences of beginning teachers learning to teach in the United States and South Korea within the context of intense, test-based accountability?

- What meanings do teachers attach to their lived experiences in this context?

- What are the commonalities and differences between teachers in the United States and teachers in South Korea?

Based on these research questions, I conducted a series of three phenomenological interviews with each of eight beginning teachers (four teachers from each country) and analyzed their interviews to capture their lived experiences.

Based on my analysis, I argue that despite many differences between US and Korean teachers' lived experiences in the context of test-based accountability, the groups were also similar in important ways. The teachers indeed felt constrained by the test-based accountability system, yet were able to manage the conflict between their personal beliefs about good teaching and expectations to teach to the test, and they all strived to create a balance between teaching to the test and student-centered teaching.

My overall argument about the essence of secondary beginning teachers' experiences is built on three sub-arguments, each of which addresses different aspects of teachers' lives within that system:

- Despite being of different backgrounds and having had different kinds of preparation before beginning to teach, teachers in both countries felt well prepared to teach content. While all US teachers and only one Korean teacher initially believed that they wanted to support students and enact student-centered practices, most Korean teachers emphasized that excelling in teaching content could improve students' in-depth learning and performance with that content.

- The teachers faced significant conflict in enacting their initial beliefs, for they worked in contexts that emphasized test preparation. All teachers in this study thus carried out teaching to the test, yet to varying degrees and extents depending on their particular school context and education system.

- Through their experiences with managing the conflict between teaching to the test and enacting their beliefs about good teaching, the teachers learned the importance of support and caring students, as well as established strong student-centered beliefs. Consistent with those beliefs, the teachers strived to enact student-centered practices as much as they could and maintained the hope that they could enact such practices better as they become experienced.

In the following three chapters, I elucidate each argument based on reconstructed stories about the teachers' lived experiences.

This chapter focuses on the first argument and explains what common aspects of teachers' past experiences led them to teaching and to hold similar beliefs, despite their

varied backgrounds, childhood experiences, and teacher preparations. This chapter is structured in three major parts: (a) a description of US teachers' past experiences including their childhood experiences and teacher preparation; (b) a description of Korean teachers' past experiences; and (c) a comparison and synthesis of teachers' past experiences.

In keeping with other phenomenological studies, I offer the essence of these teachers' experiences in the next sections. I do so by staying close to the words and frameworks that the teachers used in recounting their lived experiences. My reason for presenting the teachers' experiences by country is that they were significantly influenced by their lived context, which was distinctive by country. Those experiences are then compared and synthesized in the final part to explore the commonalities and differences by country. Relevant literature is used to support my interpretation of their experiences.

<div align="center">

Becoming Competent Novices:

US Teachers' Childhood and Preparation Experiences

</div>

Three themes emerged from US teachers' accounts of their past experiences: from varied backgrounds to a common interest in teaching; teacher education as preparation for future practice; and being competent in content but more attentive to students. Before looking into teachers' experiences regarding each theme, I begin with providing a brief introduction to the four teachers.

Introducing the Teachers

Four beginning teachers of secondary mathematics or English in the greater Boston-area schools participated in this study. Jim Fuller was a second-year teacher of seventh-grade English at Jackson Middle School, a public middle school located in

Fulham, a suburb of Boston. He was born in Brooklyn, New York, and grew up in a small town in Long Island until moving to Boston to attend college. He was from a white, upper-middle-class family and was in his early twenties at the time of the interviews. He received his BA in secondary education (English) at Ignatius College, a prestigious Catholic university located in a suburb of Boston. During his first two years of teaching, he worked on his master's degree (MEd) in curriculum and instruction at the same institution and had nearly finished this program at the time of the interviews. Dana Summer was also an English teacher who was in her first year at West Durban High School, a large public, urban school located in Durban, close to South Boston. She called herself a "townie" (Interview 1) because she was born in and has been living in Durban her whole life. Dana also went to West Durban High as a student. She was from a white, lower-middle working-class family and was in her late twenties. After graduating from West Durban High, Dana went to several schools to study different majors, such as art, architecture, and education. She ended up receiving her BA in English and MEd in secondary education (English) at Boston Metro University.

Chelsey Pittsburg was a second-year mathematics teacher at Durban High School, another large public, urban school located in Durban. Similar to Jim, Chelsey was born and grew up in a small town in upstate New York until she moved to Boston for college. Chelsey was in her mid-twenties and was from a white, upper-middle-class family. She received her BA in mathematics education from Beacon University, a highly regarded private university in Boston. She will be working on a master's degree in curriculum and teaching at the same institution when she begins her third year in September 2015. Alice Kim was another mathematics teacher who was in her second year of teaching

mathematics at Durban High School. She is Korean American and bilingual in English and Korean. She was born in Seoul, Korea, and raised in Ilsan, Gyeonggi Province, until she relocated to Seattle in tenth grade. She was initially a permanent resident but gained citizenship later. Alice was in her early thirties and from a middle-class Korean family. Her parents still live in Korea, but they often come to the United States to visit Alice and her younger brother. Alice received her BA in chemistry at the highly reputable State University of Washington. After a few years, Alice moved to Boston to get her MEd in secondary education (mathematics) at Ignatius College.

From Varied Backgrounds to a Common Interest in Teaching

Across these teachers' childhood experiences before they entered to teacher education programs were remarkably different due to various factors, including socioeconomic status, race, ethnicities, and family support. Each of these factors impacted their decisions to be a teacher. For this reason, in this section, I describe the essence of the teachers' childhood experiences as indicated by the teachers themselves in three categories. I grouped Jim and Chelsey together because the essence of their childhood lives was very similar. I then describe Dana and Alice separately because their experiences were distinct from one another.

Jim and Chelsey had many commonalities in their past lives. They were both white and from upper-middle class families. Their parents had high expectations regarding their academic achievements and were supportive of their education. Both Jim and Chelsey attended all public schools because their towns were located in good school districts. Moreover, many of their family members had been teachers.

Both Jim and Chelsey grew up in small towns in the state of New York which were suburban, "very white neighborhoods" (Chelsey, Interview 1) and "not diverse at all" (Jim, Interview 1). Jim said:

It's [His hometown] very much just white upper middle class. Everyone likes to put on the front that everything's perfect in everyone's house. It's a lot about the façade in terms of everyone's got the nice lawns, everyone's [got] a two-parent house, very stereotypical. Country clubs were big in my town, so you had to belong to the right country club. You had to play golf; you had to go to Sunday brunch; you had to go to church. The town was very Catholic. It was like you had to go to church to be seen at church, not necessarily to be very [particularly] religious, if that makes sense, but you did have to be seen at church; that was a big thing. Sports were big. I didn't play lacrosse or football, but for boys, those were two really big sports. Soccer was big when we were younger. Everyone played soccer, but it faded out, and lacrosse and football kicked in. I don't know; it was just very stereotypically a white, Long Island town. (Interview 1)

Both Jim and Chelsey were from affluent families. Jim's father was a businessperson working in a large financial industry in New York City, and his mother was an elementary mathematics teacher. Chelsey's father worked at his family-owned company, and her mother was a school psychologist who held a PhD degree. Both Jim's and Chelsey's parents were well educated and highly supportive of their children's education. Chelsey said her parents were "Around all the time. Definitely. They came to all of my sporting events. They were very, very involved with everything. Both parents were always home by 5:00 pm. We had family dinner every night. That was like a staple"

(Interview 1). This family atmosphere was similar for Jim, who stated, "Family dinners were a big thing in my house. Doing homework at the kitchen table was a big thing after school" (Interview 1).

Jim's and Chelsey's parents also had high expectations of their children's academic achievement. Jim recalled that "It was second or third grade, and I got a 98 on a spelling test, and Dad [was] like, 'Where'd the other two points go?'" (Interview 1). Jim said as a child he was "always trying to please [his] parents" (Interview 1) and that "school was very important for me in how I was a son for them" (Interview 1). Chelsey also stated that getting a master's degree was taken for granted within her family. She explained:

> I think we just were brought up in an environment where that was very expected, if that makes sense, that we would go on to college and all that. It was just how we were raised. Schoolwork is very important. It comes first. You also want to do other activities, but make sure your schoolwork is number one. (Interview 1)

Growing up in families that put significant emphasis and priority on school work, Jim and Chelsey both did well throughout schools. They were used to being among the best students in class, "a straight A student" (Chelsey, Interview 1) who always "behaved" and "participated" (Jim, Interview 1). For both of them, this was constant from elementary through high school. They both attended only public schools because their hometowns had very good public education systems. They both mentioned they had very good teachers who were knowledgeable in their subjects and supportive of students.

For both Jim and Chelsey, deciding on what they wanted to study in college and what career to have in the future was not a challenging task. They were both interested in

teaching because they had positive images of the teaching profession from the good teachers they had in schools. Both Jim and Chelsey had many teachers in their families and relatives; therefore, teaching was familiar to them and always one of the possibilities they could choose. Chelsey said:

> [Teaching] was in the family. It's just always something I think I had in the back of my mind even when I was little because I think I just loved learning. I thought I would love to be in the other place where I could instill my love of learning into everyone else. I think it's always been what I was going to do in some way even though I had thought of other options, but I think it was the constant that never changed throughout my growing up. It was like, 'You can always be a teacher.'
>
> Let's think about other things, but it always came back to that. (Interview 1)

In addition to the input from their families and schools, Jim and Chelsey also aspired to help people in need. Jim said that his volunteering experience in high school with special needs students fortified his interest in teaching:

> I was doing special needs soccer and basketball, which were two things that I was passionate about. I had a lot of fun doing that. I thought it was really cool just to see them get so excited to do that and see their parents be really proud of them, because it's not something they really have the opportunity to do all the time.
> (Interview 1)

Chelsey said she considered both teaching and nursing because people in both professions help and care for people in need (Interview 1). Having inspiration from their good teachers, growing up with teacher families, and willing to be helping hands, Jim and Chelsey applied mostly to education schools. Among the accepted programs, Jim chose

Ignatius College and Chelsey went to Beacon University to do their preparation in teaching.

In contrast to Jim and Chelsey, Dana was a first-generation college student who followed her interests more than her need for money. Dana was born and grew up in the small town of Durban, Massachusetts. She described her hometown as "a very diverse neighborhood" with "people of all cultures and ethnicities and backgrounds" (Interview 1). People in her hometown were friendly and close to each other. Dana added, "You know everyone [in my hometown]. You bump into people no matter where you go. You go to a restaurant, and you see people and everybody is like, 'Oh, how's your mom? How's your brother?'" (Interview 1) According to Dana, the city of Durban was a working-class community where the majority of people commuted to Boston and had blue-collar jobs. Like Jim and Chelsey, Dana also had working parents, but her dad was a plumber, and her mom worked at Dunkin' Donuts when she was growing up.

Neither of Dana's parents went to college, so Dana was the first in her family to earn a Bachelor's degree. She said, "I think that [college] was expected [by my parents], but it wasn't pushed" (Interview 1). Dana was close to both of her parents, especially to her mother, because her dad passed away when she was 13 years old. Dana described her mom as "very generous, very, very caring. We didn't come from money, but she would do anything for anyone regardless of the cost, just a very caring person" (Interview 1). Later her mom switched to the nursing field, and they lived together in the same house where she grew up.

In school Dana was quiet and well behaved. She recalled that according to her elementary school teachers, she was always "the sweet girl who never really was a

problem" (Interview 1). In that regard, Dana stated that she was a "good kid" (Interview 1). English and art were always her favorite subjects in school, yet Dana thought she generally performed "very, very much so average . . . I should have pushed myself a little harder, but I didn't have that push at home for higher achievement" (Interview, 1). She did not take honors classes; she was not one of the highest achieving students in her classes. In the high school she attended—which was also where she was teaching at the time of the study—she was taught in all "standard-level" inclusion classrooms (which are the basic level classes) among others, including honors (intermediate) and AP (advanced) classes. Dana reflected later that her experience as a student in all standard-level classes helped her better connect with her current students, who are all in standard-level English classes.

Dana's interest in teaching started when she was in elementary school. Dana said it was because she had "amazing teachers" who were "like the mother figure and very nurturing" (Interview 1). Dana still remembered all her teachers' names and went back to the school several times to visit them. Dana said:

That's why I started off that way. I think it was just my whole life even. I think

elementary school is what started me, my desire, because I used to come home

from school in elementary school and play school. I had a chalkboard and a chalk,

and I'd teach lessons that I learned and take extra worksheets and do them at

home and play school. So it started then. (Interview 1)

When Dana was a high-school senior, she needed to make an important decision in her life. Going to college seemed to be obvious for Dana, as she explained:

I knew [college] was the path that I was going to take no matter what. The way I went about it was just very spontaneous. I think the reason that I even decided to do it was my guidance, the guidance counselor at my school, who would just [say it was] "inevitable that everybody was going to go to college if you had reasonable grades." All of my friends were going. That's when I made my decision on where I went. It was based on my group of friends. (Interview 1)

For Dana, the more important issue to her was which program or major to choose. Although she always wanted to be a teacher, she did not have anyone in her family or near her who could guide her through the process:

I don't know because I think, through high school, I knew I wanted to do something creative, and I think, in the back of my mind, I always knew I wanted to be a teacher, but I never got clear in, like, an education major. I never even took the initiative for that because I didn't know if that was an option. I don't think I knew that teaching curriculum [is] like the route, the avenue to finally get your degree in it. I thought that you just needed a degree in whatever you wanted to specialize in. That's why I went for art, and I said, "Okay, I'll just use my art degree and go to a school, and they'll let me work there with an art degree." (Interview 1)

Wishing to become an art teacher, Dana first majored in art at a small local college near Durban. After a year, she went back home and went to a different school to study architecture because her family was worried that she would not make enough money to support herself as an art teacher. However, Dana did not find architecture interesting, so she left there again and enrolled in an early childhood education program in another local

college where she got her associate's degree. Dana said during that time, she was "just jumping from schools because [she] had no idea" (Interview 1). Dana said:

As soon as I realized, I was, like, "I'm bouncing around schools, I need just to figure [it out]" . . . I think money is what got to my head initially because everyone said you don't make a lot of money [if you are a teacher]. It's true, but, if you don't like what you do, there's no reason to do it, so I kind of just put that on the side. (Interview 1)

After getting her associate's degree, Dana transferred to Boston Metro University. She said that was when she finally realized she wanted to be an English teacher:

That's when I was like, "I don't care what anybody else says. If I want to be a teacher, that's what I'm going to do." I went back, and I said, "What do I love most?" I started taking English classes again. Like, I reignited my passion for it [English] (Interview 1).

Dana finished her bachelors' degree in English there and continued her MEd degree in secondary education.

Alice was a Korean immigrant who struggled with managing cultural differences and her parents' expectations. Alice was born in Seoul, Korea, and grew up in Ilsan, a city of the Gyeonggi province, about a 30-minute drive from Seoul. She described her family as a typical Korean middle-class family with a father who worked in a bank, a stay-at-home mom, and a younger brother. When Alice was in third grade, her family moved to Seattle because her father was transferred by his company. When she first arrived in Seattle and went to her new school, Alice said she did not know how to spell or read the alphabet. However, she learned to speak English fluently within a year.

According to Alice, her parents were passionate about their children's education. When they came to Seattle the first time, her father had a 3-year work term and then needed to go back to Korea. This made her parents greatly concerned about their children's readjustment to Korean schools because they have a much heavier study load than American schools. Therefore, her parents had Alice study Korean workbooks after school every day. After three years the family went back to Korea. Alice said that transition was smooth because, speaking Korean fluently, she was able to make friends. Moreover, her friends were greatly interested in her because she was from America and spoke English very well.

During her middle school and high-school years in Korea, Alice's parents sent her to *hagwon* (cram school) for Korean Language Arts (KLA) and also provided private tutoring in mathematics. At the beginning of middle school, Alice was below average in her class, but then she caught up quickly and maintained high rankings (between 1 and 10 out of 50 students) in her class. Alice attributed her high achievement to the various shadow education services that she was taking at that time and to her own ambition. Like other Korean students, Alice studied hard all day. She explained, "After school, [I would go to] probably *hagwon*, I would get done around, like ten [or] eleven and go home. Then do homework and then go back to school and then *hagwon* again and then, same thing" (Interview 1). Having such a busy schedule, she often fell asleep at about midnight. That life continued until she went to high school. Alice was accepted into one of the special, private high schools in Korea that specialized in foreign language education. Many Korean parents wished to send their children there for a better quality of education, which they also believe would increase the chance for their children to be accepted into elite

universities. However, her life changed drastically when her parents decided to send

Alice and her brother back to Seattle after they received their green cards. Alice said:

> My dad said, "You know, I'm going to spend that money on private institutions
>
> [*hagwon*] anyway, why don't I spend that money so that you guys can go to
>
> America?" Because he knows how it is in Korea. How hard it is to study in Korea.
>
> My dad was not fond of the Korean education system. He thought it would be
>
> better for my brother and me to go to the States and study. (Interview 1)

As a result, Alice, her brother, and her mother moved back to Seattle after she completed

tenth grade while her father stayed in Korea to work and support the family. Alice

returned to the town where she used to live and was sent to a good suburban public high

school in that area, but she was strongly opposed to her parents' decision. She explained

why:

> Because I had my friends in Korea and I knew how it was like to come to another
>
> different country where I'm not the . . . What do I say? I'm not American. If I
>
> come to the States, I would be the minority. The feeling of being a minority and
>
> getting used to the new culture and meeting new people, I knew that was going to
>
> be hard. Because I think I have that little memory inside my head from that third
>
> grade, when I first came to the states where I did not have any friends or had
>
> anyone to speak to, as a kid I think that was in my head. I wasn't really fond of
>
> going back to the States. . . I just didn't like the new environment. I was a
>
> teenager at that time, and coming or going somewhere that I'm not used to and
>
> putting into a new place with new people, I think with my personality it was just
>
> like . . . I wasn't open to accepting newness. (Interview 1)

As a reaction to her parents' decision, Alice started acting like a "rebel" (Interview 1) in school. While Alice kept getting good grades in all classes, she skipped school and walked out of class often. Although she resisted her parents' decision for a while, Alice ultimately had no choice but to follow her parents' guidance on her college and her future career. Alice's parents wanted her to be a doctor, and Alice thought she could be as her parents' wished. Thus, she majored in chemistry at the State University of Washington and prepared for the medical exam (MCAT). During her undergraduate time, Alice also did volunteer work at the university hospital, which is when she realized she did not like the working environment at the hospital. Alice was not even interested in her major. Instead she developed an interest in teaching because she had been tutoring mathematics to many Korean American students as her part-time job in college. She tutored various students from elementary to high school in various subjects in mathematics, including AP Calculus and the SAT. She also volunteered at her Catholic church and taught Korean language to Korean American children. This whole experience led her to make a life-changing decision:

> I loved teaching. I didn't know. It was just part of my life. Teaching was just part
> of my life. I didn't even know it. But when I was struggling to decide whether I
> wanted to go to medical school or not, I just thought maybe teaching is the
> direction that I wanted to head to. I was like, "Maybe I should apply to a school in
> education." (Interview 1)

Instead of applying to medical schools, Alice applied to master's programs in education schools. She decided to get her licensure at Ignatius College, so she moved to Boston from Seattle. To my question of whether her parents approved of her decision, Alice said,

"They weren't happy about it, but then I think . . . They didn't say they were happy, but then they just . . . I think they were just glad that I found something that I like to do" (Interview 1).

Teacher Education as a Preparation for Future Practice

Each of the US teachers I interviewed entered preparation programs with an interest in a teaching career. Because the teachers shared many commonalities in their preparation experiences, the following sections describe the essence of those experiences from the perspective of all four teachers together. They talked about their preparation experiences in three ways: how they decided on the preparation program and subject to teach; their learning experience from the coursework; and their learning experiences from student teaching.

Deciding on the program and subject to teach. The teachers explained specifically how and why they selected the program and the subject area to teach. Among the four teachers, Chelsey, Alice, and Dana had firm ideas about the program and the subject area to choose. For example, Chelsey knew from her school experience that she wanted to teach mathematics, because it was her favorite subject and one at which she excelled. She thus applied to only mathematics education programs, saying, "I didn't come in undecided. I knew from the get-go that's what I wanted to do" (Interview 1). Among the accepted programs, Chelsey chose Beacon University, because it was a small program with only seven people in her class, so she could have more attention from and interaction with the faculty. Moreover, its location in the downtown Boston area was attractive to Chelsey who wanted to "get out" (Interview 1) of the small town she had grown up in.

Alice was also determined to be a mathematics teacher. She had been tutoring more than twenty Korean American students in mathematics, so she felt comfortable with teaching mathematics. When she was considering applying for mathematics education programs after undergraduate, Alice thought she should convince her parents to support her decision even though they had anticipated her going to medical school. To assure them that she had made the right career choice, Alice only applied to a few teacher education programs, all of which were top programs. Alice decided to study at Ignatius College, because it allowed her to finish her MEd in one year. She thought her parents would be reassured if she could complete her master's degree quickly and get a full-time teaching job as soon as possible.

Dana was similar to Alice in that she completed her teacher preparation later, after finishing her undergraduate degree in English at Boston Metro University. During her undergraduate studies, Dana decided she wanted to be an English teacher. Teaching was, in fact, what Dana had dreamed of doing since she had been in elementary school. The reason it took a long time to start the preparation was because she had no one in her family or school who could guide her to get a licensure through the preparation program. At Boston Metro University, Dana was introduced to their master's level preparation program. They also offered a significant amount of financial support, so she did not need to pay very much tuition to get another degree. Due to such advantages and her familiarity with the university, Dana decided to stay in the same institution and get her MEd in English education. Dana said she was "not big on change" (Interview 1) when she made the choice for her preparation program.

The way Jim came to major in English education was different from that of other teachers who knew about their subject areas and had a preference for teaching in secondary schools. Jim certainly had an interest in teaching when he was applying to college; however, he was not certain whether it could be his life-long career. Then Jim got accepted into the elementary education program at Ignatius College, one of his top university choices. Jim said the way he took his preservice education was exploratory at the beginning: "I just went. I didn't really know if I was going to stick with education, but I wasn't scared about it because I was going to be able to get into Ignatius College and figure it out from there" (Interview 1). Jim soon found that he was not interested in the mathematics courses that were a requirement of the elementary education program. Hence, he decided to switch into secondary English education, which he noted, "It wasn't for a good reason [he changed programs in order to avoid having to take mathematics courses]" (Interview 1). Jim confessed, "I don't know if I would have said that in high school, [English] was my favorite subject" (Interview 1). He said, however, "[English] just never was hard. I always did well. That's what I majored in at Ignatius College. I like to write; I like to read" (Interview 1).

Valued practical coursework and practica. Developing a foundation of the knowledge and practices of teaching is a significant goal and purpose of preservice education (Feiman-Nemser, 2011; Ulvik et al., 2009). Well-established knowledge and practices in preservice education enables beginning teachers' smooth transition to inservice (Feiman-Nemser, 2011). This idea was evident in the teachers' accounts of their coursework. All four teachers had great concerns about whether their coursework had taught them the knowledge and skills they needed for future performance in schools

(Lampert, 2009). Such applicability of courses was a significant factor that affected teachers' satisfaction with the preparation they had. Chelsey, Alice, and Jim asserted that their coursework was helpful in this respect.

Chelsey particularly mentioned one of her teaching method courses, the Problem Solving for Mathematics Teachers, which she had taken in her second semester at Beacon University. The professor taught a discovery-based learning approach to let students figure out their own ways of solving a mathematics problem step by step. Instead of him showing how to do it, the students in this class learned how to teach problem-solving by themselves, through the process of exploring their own ways of resolving a difficult mathematics problem provided by the professor. Chelsey said:

> It was just a really new way of being taught and of someone teaching me that I had never seen before. It just made me think in a completely new way. That really affected the rest of my college career. It taught me that everything doesn't have to be cookie-cutter and I don't need to have a recipe for mathematics. Like, let's just go crazy and figure out something new. I think that's what really blew my mind that first class. (Interview 1)

Because of that class, Chelsey came to have a strong wish to use this discovery-based learning approach and made several attempts to do so in her classes after she became a teacher, a point to which I return later. Similar to Chelsey, Alice also said the teaching methods courses at Ignatius College were particularly helpful because she used many strategies she learned from that class in teaching her current lessons. Besides the teaching method courses, Alice also listed special education and bilingualism courses as being helpful, because they helped her to be aware of those students when she had them in her

class. Jim, who also went to Ignatius College but as an undergraduate English Education major, agreed with Chelsey and Alice that teaching method courses were the most useful. Like Alice, Jim perceived that the strength of those courses was that he could apply what he had learned from those classes to his lessons. Jim was generally satisfied with the courses he took at Ignatius College, yet he noted that some undergraduate electives were too general, which meant they were not useful for him "to put it into practical work" (Interview 1):

> One of my electives was Literacy and Assessment. It was very overarching, so it's hard to zoom in, whereas maybe you could take a class on teaching creative writing, like, very specific, so that over the course of a semester you could maybe create a really, really well-refined unit instead of, like . . . because we take so many classes that are very broad. I have a lot of knowledge on stuff, but when it came to me starting to plan units for my first year, I had a lot to draw from, but I didn't have anything specific yet, so kind of zoom in a little more. (Interview 3)

A lack of applicable courses was why Dana did not like her preservice education at Boston Metro University. She felt her coursework was not helpful because the curriculum of her program was too much inclined to elementary education. In most of the teacher education classes, they had far more student teachers in elementary education than secondary education. Therefore, these classes did not meet her expectations, which were to learn about classroom management at the high-school level and teaching high-school English. Dana said:

> In one class, I was one of two high-school teachers. It was difficult because the majority, like I said, were elementary, so, when it came to doing projects and

stuff, everything was too fine-tuned to elementary. Even, like, taking classes on theories, teaching theories, they were more relevant to children transitioning into adolescence. My kids are pretty much, I mean, they've transitioned. It's not relevant to them, transitioning now into adulthood. It was very child-based.

Again, yeah, I think it's because we were extremely outnumbered. (Interview 1) Dana said her graduate English content classes were more helpful than education classes because she took those content classes with many other English teachers who were taking them for professional development. Dana said, "I actually got more teaching at a high-school-level English experience there than I did in my actual teaching courses" (Interview 1). While Dana was disappointed by the unpractical teaching methods and education courses in her program, she maintained her desire for teaching through the English courses.

Student teaching experiences were meaningful for all the teachers because they could observe how the knowledge they learned in the coursework was carried out in practice, trying it out and using it themselves (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). For Chelsey, Alice, and Dana, their student teaching particularly helped them obtain first-hand experience in their future workplace because they were hired as full-time teachers in the same schools where they had student taught.

Chelsey and Alice did their pre- and full practicums at Durban High School. Alice said she was nervous at the beginning of her pre-practicum about teaching a whole class, because she had only taught a small number of Korean American students. However, her pre-practicum went well since she had a very supportive cooperative teacher (CT). After the pre-practicum, Alice received an offer from the school because they needed to hire a

part-time teacher. During her full practicum period, Alice worked as a part-time

mathematics teacher and taught two freshman-level and one junior-level Algebra classes.

Alice said, "That was a pretty difficult choice to decide, but I did decide on taking over

those classes" (Interview 2). During her full practicum, Alice started to teach her own

classes. Alice said she managed to teach well due to the help of other teachers who were

eager to share their exam questions and worksheets as well as advice on various topics,

such as how to do lesson planning, where to find good worksheets, and how to use the

smartboard. Alice got a full-time offer from the school during her practicum and began

teaching full time at Durban High the following year.

Just like Alice, who student taught at Durban High, Chelsey said that she had a lot

of support during her pre- and full practicums there. Chelsey said the way her two CTs

helped her was to let her stand alone, rather than teaching her every little thing:

They didn't give me anything. They didn't give me any of their notes. They're

like, "You need to make your own because you want to start learning how to do

this." I made all my own tests. I graded all my own tests. They just pushed me

right in, but they also gave me great feedback. They would always take notes. I

learned not to apologize. I'd be like, "I'm sorry the class went long today." She's

like, "You never apologize. They apologize to you when they're being

disrespectful but don't you dare apologize to them because that shows weakness."

(Interview 1)

Chelsey said she got the most help from her CTs in lesson planning. Both teachers

used PowerPoint and a smartboard in their lessons. Chelsey thought using them was more

effective than writing on the blackboard because in that way the teacher can save and

update those materials and tweak them as needed to use yearly. After student teaching,

Chelsey taught in their summer school program and was hired as a full-time teacher the

following year.

Dana's student teaching also led her to her full-time job in the same school. She

did her student teaching at West Durban High School where she had attended as a

student. On the first day of her student teaching, the department head asked her to take

over three English classes (two junior classes and one senior class). Dana said she was

"scared" and "nervous" (Interview 1) because she did not feel like she was ready to teach

yet. Her CT provided some help, yet Dana said, "I created everything on my own from

scratch" (Interview 1). Although teaching on her own was difficult, Dana thought it was a

good experience because she developed many skills that she still uses. After the

practicum, Dana worked at the school as a substitute teacher, and soon got a full-time

offer.

Jim was distinct from the other teachers in that he had abundant practicum

experiences during his undergraduate years at Ignatius College. He had his practica for

four full semesters. He went to three different schools for pre-practicum, and did his full

practicum in one of those schools. Jim said he learned different things from each school,

which all helped him be more prepared for his first year. Concerning his first pre-

practicum at a diverse, urban high school, Jim said:

> It did open up my eyes because originally it's like, teaching, OK, you stand in the
>
> room, you teach the kids, the kids learn, and give them homework, very simple,
>
> but I started to realize how much more involved and how much random stuff
>
> could occur on any given day. (Interview 1)

In the second and third schools, Jim came to have more confidence about teaching English by observing and reflecting on a number of lessons taught by different teachers. For his full practicum, he came back to the second school, a high-performing, public middle school in Boston. Of his full practicum, Jim said, "I was given a ton of responsibility in a good way" (Interview 1). His CT had Jim teach the last lesson of the day, every day. Because Jim had already observed the lesson at least three times, he could teach the lesson without many difficulties. His CT stayed in the classroom with him, but she encouraged Jim to do it on his own. Jim said he could develop more creative lesson plans and get many resources from this practicum. Jim said, "A lot of the stuff I use now is from that practicum, modified a little bit for seventh graders. I really liked that practicum a lot" (Interview 1). Although he began his career at a different school, Jim thought he was fully prepared after having four practica. Through student teaching, all teachers could develop their own basic beginning repertoires that encompass "becoming familiar with a limited range of good curricular materials, learning several general and subject-specific models of teaching, and exploring a few approaches to assessment that tap student understanding" (Feiman–Nemser, 2001, p. 1018).

Being Competent in Content but More Attentive to Students

What was common across the teachers' childhood and preparation experiences was that despite the different backgrounds and preparations they had, the teachers all felt prepared before they began to teach. They felt particularly competent in teaching their content areas. Moreover, the teachers held similar beliefs, which were to care for and be supportive of their students.

Before beginning their full time careers in teaching, all teachers said they were prepared to teach. They perceived content-readiness as the most significant element constituting their preparedness, which meant to have competency in their content knowledge and skills and know how to teach them. For example, Chelsey said mathematics content was the part that she felt most confident about and knew how to control and organize from the very beginning. Alice said she was very familiar with the content even before her preparation because she had tutored various types of mathematics. Dana and Jim also felt prepared content-wise. Some of them confessed they were not fully competent in every aspect of their jobs in the beginning—such as classroom management and communication with parents and colleagues, which are other problematic areas for new teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). However, from the very beginning, teaching the content was always the part teaching that these teachers felt they were most capable of doing.

While the teachers emphasized being competent in teaching the content, their beliefs about teaching were centered on the students. All of them expressed that they wanted to be considerate, attached, and supportive teachers. For example, Alice said that the reason she became a teacher was "to help the students who need more support and attention" (Interview 3). Her primary concern was helping the students with their needs rather than being excellent in teaching mathematics. Lasky (2005) argued that such care and consideration of students is necessary for teachers to build rapport with their students because it is a precondition for facilitating students' interests and participation in learning. When students know the teacher cares about them, they become more engaged in what he or she is teaching them. In this respect, Jim stated that he wanted to be a

teacher whose students liked and felt comfortable being with so that he could engage them in the learning process:

> I always wanted to be more of the teacher that—this is almost shallow—the kids liked. I wanted to make sure that everyone felt comfortable in my room because, as anyone has, I've had teachers that everyone's uncomfortable with, and not just "on edge, trying their best" uncomfortable, but it's a little awkward or you don't know if they really know what they're doing sort of thing. I definitely wanted to be very academically on top of my game, but also be able to teach in this student-friendly manner because I've also had those teachers that just use a lot of big words to prove that they know what they're talking about and everyone's sitting there like, "This is not engaging." I definitely wanted to be engaging, I wanted to bring a lot of different lesson plan ideas that kids had not really seen—get them thinking in different ways. (Interview 1)

Both Chelsey and Dana also had strong aspirations to be caring and supportive of their students and for that purpose, they particularly wanted to teach in a diverse, urban school. Dana thought a diverse school was where she could best attach herself with the students since she was familiar with diversity from her childhood experiences. Dana said:

> The only school I knew that I wanted, [was] a diverse school. I didn't want a school with all white kids from a rich family. I wanted socially, economically, ethnically diverse because that's what I know and that's what I can connect with the best. (Interview 1)

That was different from Chelsey, who was from a small, white, upper-middle class town:

I wanted some place where maybe I can be a positive adult role model in their life if they don't have one yet, and maybe I can help them love mathematics. I feel like I just needed a change from where I was as a youngster, and I wanted the challenge. I feel like there aren't enough good teachers in the urban setting because of how challenging it can be and how difficult . . . teaching English language learners and teaching people of different backgrounds is. It's challenging, and it's much easier to teach in the school where I grew up. (Interview 3)

Chelsey understood diversity as a challenge to her and believed she must be a help to the students who may have lacked the academic input that she used to have from her teachers and family. Although Dana and Chelsey shared their beliefs on supporting diverse students, the way they came to have those beliefs was significantly different, which reflected their dissimilar cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds (Rodgers & Scott, 2008).

US Teachers as Competent Novices

These four US teachers were from varied backgrounds, had dissimilar childhood experiences, and went to different preparation programs. There were many variations in their childhood lives, yet their preparation experiences had many commonalities that were also consistent with what has been shown in the previous literature.

The teachers acknowledged that preservice education is for preparing them for their future practice. This perception was aligned with what Lampert (2009) argued as learning to teach in the preservice education as a "rehearsal" for future practice. For the teachers, learning what to do primarily involved developing subject knowledge and

beginning repertoire (Feiman-Nemser, 2001), which are closely related to teaching the content. They assessed the quality and satisfaction of their preparation programs based on how well it prepared them for teaching content knowledge, which Shulman referred to as "pedagogical content knowledge" (Shulman, 1987).

The way the teachers perceived their preparedness was also related to their readiness in the content knowledge as well as teaching such knowledge, which Shulman (1987) pointed out as one of the major areas of a teacher's knowledge base. All of the US teachers felt they were prepared in teaching content through preservice education. This tendency is consistent with previous studies indicating the positive impact of university preparation programs on teachers' sense of preparedness to teach (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002).

While the teachers primarily perceived their preparedness in relation to teaching the content, their beliefs about teaching were centered on students. Lasky (2005) found a similar tendency in her study with secondary teachers in Ontario, Canada, who emphasized that caring for students and building trustful relationships with them were prerequisites to facilitating their learning. The teachers in this study also highly emphasized those aspects in their beliefs, although they were mostly influenced by their childhood experiences, rather than from their preservice education.

Understanding preservice education as preparation for future practice, feeling well prepared to teach content through the preparation programs, and holding beliefs centered on students were three essential aspects of the teachers' preparation experiences of the US teachers. These points are revisited and compared later with Korean teachers' experiences.

Becoming Competent Novices: Korean Teachers' Childhood and Preparation

Experiences

Parallel to the US teachers, three themes emerged across Korean teachers'

childhood and preparation experiences: studying hard for college; teacher education, a

bridge to pass the Teacher Recruitment Exam; and feeling prepared and confident in

teaching the content. Before describing teachers' experiences by themes, I provide a brief

background of Korean education and then introduce the teachers, in order to help readers

understand the context in which they lived.

The Korean Context

In relation to the teachers' descriptions of their past experiences, I briefly explain

the school system, college admission process, secondary teacher education system, and

secondary teacher recruitment process in Korea.

School system. Korea has a compulsory public education policy from the first to

ninth grade. Normally, elementary school contains first to sixth grade; middle school

involves seventh to ninth; and high school involves tenth to twelfth. Most Korean schools

are run by the homeroom system, so every grade has a number of homerooms with a

teacher and a group of students attached. Each homeroom is numbered (e.g., homeroom

1, 2, and 3 of the ninth grade).

It should be noted that the definition of "public education" in Korea includes all

public and private schools, from elementary to high schools. This is because private

schools also receive partial funding from the local education offices or the Ministry of

Education (MOE), and are mandated to follow the national curriculum. Therefore, the

teachers in this study did not specifically mention whether they attended public or private

schools, because these schools all belong to the public education system. Yubin, one of the English teachers, went to a foreign language high school, the same kind of special high school that Alice attended when she was in Korea. This kind of special high school also belongs to the public education system because they follow the national curriculum as well as the grade systems, just as other high schools.

In Korea, the term "private education" generally refers to shadow education services, which are paid for by parents, after-school services that are typically carried out as individual or small-group tutoring or through taking classes at *hagwon*, a cram school (Spring, 2011). Such private education services have prospered in Korea as a means of supplementing school study and preparing for tests (Kim & Kim, 2012).

College admission process. Two major indicators of students' academic performance are considered significant in the admission process: a student's performance in school work (*naesin*), including one's grades in regular school tests (midterm and final exams and occasional assessments) and performance in extra-curricular activities (e.g. volunteer activities, foreign language skills, and awards from various contests); and *suneung,* the national standardized test that takes place once a year in November to evaluate college readiness. Many colleges operate their admission process using these indicators: the early admission process, which is typically operated before *suneung* and for accepting students who have good performance in school tests and extra-curricular activities; and the regular admission process that takes place after *suneung*. While *suneung* grades and scores are the primary indicators for regular admission, these are not significantly considered in early admission.

Secondary teacher education system. To become a secondary teacher, one must acquire a teacher licensure in the subject he or she wants to teach. The licensure is issued by the MOE if the candidate completes all requirements of one's teacher education program which follows the guidelines set out by the MOE. Similar to the US, teacher education in Korea is carried out at colleges of education. They offer undergraduate and graduate (master-level) teacher education programs. There is also a "teacher training track," which is for students whose content area is not an affiliated department within the college of education or if their university does not have a college of education. For example, if a university does not have a department of history education within its college of education, students who majored in history at the college of liberal arts can apply for the teacher training track. Accepted students take extra courses in education and teaching methods and receive the licensure if they complete all of the requirements successfully. In many cases, the teacher training track accepts only a few freshmen or sophomore students based on their GPA.

Similar to the US, the curriculum of secondary teacher education consists of coursework and practicum. During the coursework, students take certain credits of education (pedagogy) courses, teaching methods courses, and content courses, as required by their department. The practicum typically occurs in their senior year during a four-week period.

Secondary teacher recruitment (public schools). To be a secondary teacher at public schools, the applicant must have a teacher licensure and pass the Teacher Recruitment Exam (TRE) of the provinces or metropolitan cities where he or she wants to work. The number of accepted recruits differs by regions, years, and subjects, but it is

always highly competitive. The exam takes place only once a year and consists of a written exam, a teaching demonstration, and an interview. The written exam assesses applicants' knowledge of the content, teaching methods, and general education, which involves subjects such as philosophy and history of education, curriculum and assessment, and educational administration. In the written exam, the section for content knowledge and teaching methods have more importance than education. Only if the applicant passes the written exam can he or she then proceed to teaching demonstrations and interviews. The applicant who passes the exam is officially hired as a secondary public school teacher of the provinces or metropolitan cities, and is then placed in a school by the local education office. All public school teachers rotate schools within their local areas after working three to five years. Private schools have their own recruitment process.

Introducing the Teachers in This Study

Four Korean beginning teachers of secondary mathematics and English participated in this study. The teachers are from Gyeonggi Province and Inchon Metropolitan City area schools, which are all neighborhood areas of Seoul and belong to Seoul Capital Area (SCA). Just like the US teachers, the Korean teachers were all public school teachers who passed the provincial or metropolitan city's Teacher Recruitment Exam (TRE). They were also all homeroom teachers.

Yubin Kang was a second year high-school English teacher in charge of a senior (12th grade) homeroom at Jangmi High School located in Gimpo, the city in Gyeonggi Province where she grew up and was still living with her family at the time of the study. In her mid-twenties, Yubin had graduated from Sunwha Women's University, a private

women's college located in Seoul, where she double-majored in education studies and English education in the College of Education. Jieun Lee was a third year English teacher and a senior homeroom teacher at Hansung High School in Ansan, a city in Gyeonggi Province. Jieun was in her mid-twenties and was originally from Namwon, a small city in Jeonbuk Province, located at the southwest area of the Korean peninsula. Jieun received her BA in English Education at Jeolla National University, a public university located in Jeonbuk Province's capital city, Jeonju. After graduating from college, Jieun took the recruitment exam for Gyeonggi Province and moved to Ansan after she passed and was assigned to her current school.

Somi Jung was a second year high-school mathematics teacher who was in charge of a junior homeroom (11th grade) in Muhan High School at Shiheung, a city in Gyeonggi Province. She was born and grew up in Bucheon, another city of Gyeonggi Province. Somi was in her early thirties and was living near her school at the time of the study. She received her BA in Chemistry and Mathematics Education at Minkuk University, a private university located in Seoul. Somi was initially accepted to the department of Chemistry at the College of Natural Science of her university. Then she applied and was accepted to the teacher training track after completing her first year and received her licensure in mathematics. Minwoo Park was a second year middle school mathematics teacher in charge of a freshman (seventh grade) homeroom in Bora Middle School in Incheon, a metropolitan city near Seoul. He was born in Seoul, but grew up in Shiheung, Gyeonggi Province most of his life before he went to college. Minwoo received his BA in Mathematics Education from Jeolla National University, the same university that Jieun

also attended. He took the recruitment exam in Incheon and moved there after passing the exam and being placed in his current school.

Studying Hard for College

When they talked about their childhood experiences, the Korean teachers in this study talked much more about their lives in schools than their relationships with their families. Three points in their childhood lives appeared common across the teachers: the teachers had less pressure to study from their parents than many other Korean students; the teachers began studying hard and doing well at some point before high school; and they all had stressful lives in high school to prepare for *suneung* and college admission. The teachers shared many aspects of their childhood lives, including their family backgrounds and school experiences, thus the essence of their past experiences are presented across all teachers.

"Atypical" Korean parents. "Education fever" is a term that describes the competitive and nerve-wracking nature of the Korean education system. It is defined as Korean parents' obsession over and great desire to improve their children's academic performance for the purpose of sending them to elite colleges (Kim, 2013; Seth, 2002). As commonly illustrated throughout world-wide media, Korean parents are notorious for doing whatever they can for their children's education (Kang, 2009; Kim, 2013). Surprisingly, this was not the case for any of the four Korean teachers in this study. The teachers felt that they did not have much pressure from their parents in terms of study. Yubin, for example, talked extensively about her parents:

I think they weren't very interested in my academic achievement. Even when I was in middle school and was studying hard, they said, "Why do you study so

hard? Don't do that." I didn't even go to many *hagwon*. Just one *hagwon* [for test

prep] when I was in seventh and eighth grade, but they never forced me to go.

When I lived in the dorm during high school and would come home every

weekend, they told me "Don't study." I think they were worried I would have too

much stress by studying all the time at the dorm. I think they didn't have much

interest [in my studies]. (Interview 1)

Jieun also said her parents always let her "do what [she] wanted" (Interview 1), which

was similar to Somi's and Minwoo's parents who were not strict about their studies. The

teachers recognized that they had atypical parents, compared to their friends' parents.

Their parents were not the kind of ordinary Korean parents who would do anything so

their children could do well on tests and college admission. Yubin and Jieun had

concerns about this because they felt their parents were not as supportive as their friends'

parents were. Jieun said she was a little "distressed" by her parents whom she thought

were "apathetic" about her study (Interview 1). Yubin also had similar perceptions,

stating:

Other parents would find and recommend good *hagwon* [to their children],

research colleges and admission processes, and buy workbooks and do everything

[for their children]. But my mom and dad told me not to study, so it was a bit

stressful [for me that I didn't have much support from my parents in that respect].

(Interview 1)

Having parents who put less pressure on their studies, the teachers did not need to spend

much of their time, at least when they were in elementary school in rotating among

hagwon, taking private tutoring, and sitting in front of a desk for long hours of study,

even though this is a common routine for many other Korean students, even for

elementary students (Kang, 2009; Kim & Kim, 2012). Minwoo said, "Elementary school

was all friends. Hanging out with friends, going to different places like that. I used to

play many sports with friends" (Interview 1). Jieun, who grew up in a rural area of

Namwon, also recalled:

> [I was] just an ordinary student in elementary school. And I lived in a rural area,
>
> so we only had two homerooms in each grade [in school]; students were not
>
> pushed to study hard. My first *hagwon* experience was learning the computer,
>
> because the school had an Internet connection for the first time when I was in fifth
>
> grade. So I went to [computer] *hagwon*, learned computer, rather than focusing on
>
> studies, just doing various [other] things. Because I lived in the countryside, I
>
> remember we played Samulnori (Korean traditional music) and Korean traditional
>
> dance [at school], and our team got an award. Besides that, not much study.
>
> (Interview 1)

The four Korean teachers were similar in that they had received less pressure from their

parents to study hard, especially in their early years of schooling. The teachers' parents

were certainly different from many other Korean parents who greatly pressure their

children to succeed academically and support them in whatever ways that they can. One

teacher, Yubin, explained that her parents did not want to force her to study because they

knew that she received pressure from elsewhere: the school and *hagwon*. Her parents

were concerned that if they pushed her to study hard, then it would be too much for her to

bear. Moreover, all Korean teachers in this study were self-motivated, meaning that they

found a personal reason and motivation to study hard and perform well on schoolwork.

Therefore, it was unnecessary for their parents to push them hard, a point illustrated in greater detail in the following section.

Motivated to study hard. Following such peaceful early school lives, the Korean teachers experienced significant changes as they moved into upper grades. All four teachers went through the Korean public education system, which is notorious for severe competition among students for good grades and rankings in tests, long study hours, and heavy study loads. Although the teachers did not have the common feelings of intense pressure about their studies, especially during their elementary school years, they gradually came to realize the necessity and value of studying hard and getting good grades in schools. While the teachers in this study did not have too much pressure from their parents during their early years, each of them had a critical incident in his or her life that sparked the motivation to study. For Somi and Minwoo, this instigator was a teacher. Somi described herself in elementary school as "a quiet, reserved student" who was "not ambitious to do well" (Interview 1). She always sat quietly in the classroom, paid attention to the teacher, and did her homework, but she was not passionate about being one of the best students in class. Somi said, "I was just a complying student" (Interview 1). What made a drastic change in her attitude was a teacher she met in fourth grade. Somi said:

> She gave me a lot of compliments. She also gave me a lot of attention in class. I was [initially] bad at handwriting, but I tried hard to write better so that I could show her I was making an effort to do well. I showed her my handwriting and she said, "Somi, your handwriting is getting better!" and she complimented me again. (Interview 1)

After meeting this teacher, Somi became a more active and participating student. At the beginning, it was to please the teacher, but Somi said she came to have more "self-confidence" (Interview 1) and a belief that she could do well in study and be one of the best students in class.

Similarly, Minwoo also had a mathematics teacher in his middle school who was "one of those two new, young teachers who were popular among the boys" (Interview 1). Just like Somi, Minwoo began to study hard, especially in mathematics, in order to gain his teacher's attention. Minwoo recalled, "When I came back to my middle school for a visit, the teacher said she remembered me as a student who always came and asked many questions after class" (Interview 1).

Yubin had experiences that were different from Somi and Minwoo that helped her to become a hardworking student. After third grade, Yubin left her family and went to the Philippines for two years with her cousin. She said it was her decision to go, rather than her parents' push. In the Philippines, Yubin was homeschooled by a Korean family and spent most of her time learning English. After two years, she went back to Korea and started sixth grade in elementary school. Because she was from the Philippines and there were not many students in her school who had been overseas, everyone thought she spoke English very well. Yubin felt that she needed to prove her English abilities, so she began to study hard to earn perfect scores and grades in English. She initially focused on English, but then she began working hard on all subjects throughout middle and high schools.

Jieun's experience regarding schools and studies was distinguished from the other teachers because she attended elementary and middle schools in the rural area of

Namwon. While Somi, Minwoo, and Yubin grew up and attended large, populated schools located in cities, Jieun's elementary and middle schools were small. The students all knew each other and they had a lot of attention from the teachers. The schools were surrounded by mountains, so the students had many chances for field studies and playing outside, which was not common for students attending city schools. In Jieun's town, the reason students went to *hagwon* was mostly to hang out with their friends after school rather than to study. Jieun said her life in elementary and middle schools was different from many other Korean students because of the area in which she grew up. She did not feel very much pressure to study hard until middle school because she had almost no pressure at school or from her parents. However, this changed after she became a high-school student at a school located in the city center. Just as other Korean high-school students, Jieun needed to face the intense pressure placed on her to prepare for college admission.

Stressful high-school lives for college admission. Many Koreans perceive secondary education as critical because it has a deep impact on college admission. They believe a student's academic performance, especially in high school, directly affects his or her chances of being accepted into colleges. Higher performance in high school increases one's chances of getting into higher-ranked colleges, so the competition among students to get good scores and grades on every test becomes more intense in high school (Kang, 2009). For most Korean students, this is a huge source of pressure and stress. Despite their early experiences which were not typical, the teachers in this study were not an exception to that stress.

All four teachers expressed that they had a stressful time in high school preparing for college admission. Even Jieun, who was never pushed to study hard by anyone until middle school, said she spent most of her time in high school studying. Jieun described her day in high school in the following way:

School started at 7:30 a.m. and I stayed [in school] until 10 p.m. in 10th and 11th grades. When I was a senior, I lived at the dorm [to save time commuting to school]. There [in the dorm], I studied until 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. the next day.

(Interview 1)

Such long school days and study hours were common for the other teachers in this study. Yubin also lived at the dorm when she attended a foreign language high school because the school was not in her town. Although foreign language high schools have curriculum which specializes in learning foreign languages, her life was similar to other teachers in this study who went to regular public or private high schools. Yubin said:

[In high school], I woke up at 6:20 am. Then I ate breakfast and did morning self-study in the classroom from 7 until 9 a.m. Then, the classes began at 9:20 a.m. The lunch time was around 12 p.m., then the afternoon classes continued until 7th period, which ended at 4:20 p.m. Then, we [students] were sent to the self-study room and did the first-term self-study from 4:40–6 p.m. Dinner started at 6 p.m. Then, we did the second-term self-study from 7:30–9 p.m. After that, we had a 20-minute break and then studied again until 11 p.m. I then came back to my room, took a shower, and went to bed around 12 a.m. When it was exam period, I studied more. When I was a senior, I studied more in my room, turning on my desk lamp. (Interview 1)

Yubin added, "All of my high-school memories involve studying and dorm life. That's all. No fun" (Interview 1). Minwoo and Somi also agreed they were stressed out in high school. Minwoo said:

> It [the reason for my stress] was not that I must compete against my friends.
> Rather, it was…because I wanted to study really hard, I made a lot of plans but I
> could not achieve them all… I think that's why I was stressed out so much.
> (Interview 1)

Somi said she had health problems due to the stress of preparing for *suneung* in her senior year. She said:

> [In high school] there is a huge amount of pressure because of college admission.
> I needed to have time to ease my pressure, but I didn't. I kept thinking, "you must
> study, study, and study" denying my urge to relax. So, I think it [the stress]
> affected my body; it made my body ache. (Interview 1).

Although all four teachers in this study were high performing and hardworking students during high school, no one was free from the pressure surrounding college admission. It was not their parents who pressed them to study hard; rather, it was the school culture and system as well as the college admission system that exerted the biggest pressure. Spending too much time studying, Yubin and Jieun said they had fewer opportunities to deliberate on their majors and future careers in high school. When it was time to apply to college, Jieun said applying to education programs was an obvious choice to her, because she was a "high performing," "female student" (Interview 1). In Korea, teaching is one of the most popular career choices for high-performing female students because it is a stable job, pays reasonably, offers good benefits including vacations and leaves, and is well

respected and highly favored among many Koreans. When Jieun made up her mind to apply for the college of education, she did not significantly consider the university rankings because education majors, especially in Korean, English, and mathematics, are typically the most competitive programs in many universities. At that time, Jieun was interested in American culture and movies, so she applied to the English education program at Jeolla National University and was accepted through early admission.

Yubin said she did not know what she wanted to do in high school. Because she liked and was good at English, she was hoping to do something related to English, such as being a flight attendant, translator, or diplomat. Because she had high scores on several English proficiency tests (e.g. TOEFL scores), her homeroom teacher pushed her to use those scores for early admission and to apply for only education programs, because "it is a good job for a woman" (Interview 1). Yubin was accepted to several universities' education programs, including Sunwha Women's University. She did not prefer women's colleges, but her teachers and father strongly recommended study there because it was ranked higher and had a better reputation than other universities to which she was accepted. Yubin said, "I just went to Sunwha [as I was told]" (Interview 1), without much interest in teaching.

Compared to Yubin and Jieun, Somi and Minwoo were certain they wanted to be teachers. Both of them were influenced by their favorite teachers who provoked their interests in study. Minwoo was inspired by his mathematics teacher in middle school, choosing at that time to eventually become a mathematics teacher. Minwoo said, "I studied hard ever since to achieve my dream [mathematics teacher]…because I knew I must do well [to become a mathematics teacher]" (Interview 1). In *suneung*, Minwoo got

lower grades than he expected. He was disappointed by the results, but he believed that university rankings did not matter if he was going to major in mathematics education and become a mathematics teacher. Minwoo applied to the mathematics education program at Jeolla National University because his relatives lived around that area and the tuition was less expensive than private universities. Minwoo moved from Shiheung to Jeonju after he was accepted.

Somi's interest in teaching began with one of her elementary school teachers, who had a great influence on her. Her parents and friends also encouraged her, "you would do well in teaching" (Interview 1). Somi said, "I didn't set up my goal like, 'I want to be a teacher so let's study hard for that.' The reason I studied hard was for my own satisfaction. But when it came to my career, I thought maybe I could do teaching…" (Interview 1). In high school, chemistry was Somi's favorite subject, so she decided to major in science education. After taking *suneung* in her senior year, Somi applied to several universities, but did not get in to any science education programs. Instead, she was accepted to the chemistry department at Minkuk University, which was on her "safety" school list. Somi was disappointed and considered waiting for another year to reapply, but she did not want to spend another year preparing for *suneung* again. She went to Minkuk University and applied for their teacher training track after her freshman year.

Teacher Education as a Bridge to Passing the Teacher Recruitment Exam

Just as the teachers shared many aspects of their childhood lives, there were many commonalities across their preservice education experiences in college. The essence of teachers' experiences in the preparation programs and in preparing for the Teacher

Recruitment Exam was characterized by three common features: the teachers had their

preservice education primarily focused on the content knowledge; the teachers found

their preservice education was unpractical and had minimal impact on their preparedness;

and the teachers came through various events while preparing for the Teacher

Recruitment Exam, but they worked hard and eventually passed. The detailed

descriptions of each point follow below.

Teacher education focused on content knowledge, not practicality. Although

the four Korean teachers in this study went to different universities and programs, their

preservice experiences did not seem to differ noticeably. To a great extent, this is because

every teacher education program in Korea follows the standards and guidelines set up by

the Ministry of Education (MOE), so there are not many variations in teacher education

curriculum by universities and subject areas (Korean Education Development Institute,

2009). The teachers agreed that their teacher education curriculum was weighted heavily

towards learning content knowledge, which Shulman (1987) categorized as one of the

knowledge bases of teaching. For example, Minwoo thought the curriculum of the

mathematics education department at the College of Education was similar to the

mathematics department at the College of Natural Science, except mathematics education

students took extra courses in teaching methods and education courses:

> The mathematics department and the mathematics education department both deal
>
> with pure mathematics. It is obvious for the mathematics department [focusing on
>
> pure mathematics] but the reason the mathematics education department also
>
> emphasizes learning pure mathematics is because when students ask
>
> [mathematics] questions or to understand, for example, how the concept of "limit"

was derived, it is pure mathematics that provides the answers [to those questions].

So, we learned that a lot in the mathematics education department and took

additional courses in teaching methods and did practicum to learn how to teach

students. So, that was different from the mathematics department. (Interview 1)

Somi agreed with Minwoo, adding:

In mathematics education, there were only about four teaching methods courses.

Other than that, everything was mathematics, [so the curriculum was] almost

identical to the mathematics department. The only difference was the mathematics

department does in-depth mathematics while the mathematics education

department cuts down some content because they need to focus more on the

content covered in the Teacher Recruitment Exam. (Interview 3)

Jieun and Yubin, the two English teachers, also agreed that content courses comprised the

majority of their teacher education curriculum. Jieun indicated the curriculum of her

English education department consisted of, "adding a couple of teaching methods courses

to the English department" (Interview 1). The English education curriculum emphasized

the need for students to have advanced English skills. Because Jieun had never been

overseas like Yubin or taken any intensive English language training, she was worried

that she did not possess enough skills to teach English. Thus she decided to take a leave

of absence after her sophomore year in college for language training in Toronto, Canada.

She took English as Second Language (ESL) courses and TESOL courses for a year and

came back "with more confidence in English" (Interview 1).

In her preparation program, Yubin said she did not like the English content and

teaching methods courses because she initially came to the College of Education without

much interest in teaching English. Instead, she found that the education courses were more meaningful to her because she could have opportunities to reflect on herself, formulate her beliefs about teaching, and deliberate on the major education issues in Korea. One of those courses that had a great impact on her was an educational philosophy class she took in her junior year. Yubin said before she took this class, she was not sure of what she wanted to do in her career:

> I've never had any hobbies. I've never really liked anything. I've never had any dream and there wasn't anything I could do well. [I] Just liked English a little bit. And there was nothing I wanted to do. I realized I've never tried to really understand myself until I took that class. (Interview 1)

She said this course allowed her to think about herself, focusing on who she was and what she wanted to do. In fact, it was the first time that she ever had a chance to reflect on herself. Yubin said she developed her interest in teaching from that course and other education courses she took. On the contrary, the other teachers in this study complained about education courses, indicating that they did not expand their understanding of educational issues (Somi) or develop the knowledge and skills needed to work in schools (Somi, Minwoo, and Jieun). Somi pointed out:

> They [education courses] were not interesting and were irrelevant to present schools. I was only taught the theories, not how to apply them to my students. I wanted to know how I could apply those theories if I become a teacher, but I never learned those things. They were all just theories. (Interview 1)

Minwoo and Jieun also mentioned that the education courses were not useful in preparing for the Teacher Recruitment Exam. The written test of the Teacher Recruitment Exam

(TRE) is constructed in three major parts—education studies, teaching methods, and content knowledge. While most teaching methods and content courses in the preparation programs focused on the contents included in the TRE, many education courses did not cover them. Thus, the teachers needed to take additional paid online courses or attend a TRE *hagwon* to study for the pedagogy section of the exam. Jieun said:

> I actually did more shadow education in college [by taking online TRE prep courses]. There were so many subjects, so many things to study for TRE. Pedagogy, I did take education courses for credit [in my preservice program], but I needed to study a different kind of pedagogy for TRE (Interview 1).

All four teachers in this study also expressed their dissatisfaction with the teaching methods courses. Somi and Yubin complained that there were only a few opportunities to practice the methods they learned. Somi said she had only one 20-minute teaching practice from one of her teaching methods courses. Yubin did a teaching practice twice. Jieun raised another point that most of the teaching methods and strategies she learned from those courses were not applicable to the English lessons carried out in the present, test-oriented schools, although they were still included in the TRE:

> I liked the various English teaching methods I learned, but I knew I couldn't use them if I was going to teach in high school. There are so many teaching methods in English, but if I am teaching in high school, I can only do the grammar translation method (GTM) [because it is the most common way of teaching English within the current school curriculum and system]. Then, why do I need to learn other methods that I'm not going to use? Even though I learned and knew all

of them, I couldn't use them in teaching. That was what I was mostly concerned

about [when I was taking the teaching methods courses]. (Interview 1)

In addition to the impractical coursework, the teachers all agreed that the four-week time

period of student teaching was too short to have a comprehensive experience and

understanding of their future workplace. Although all four teachers had pleasant

practicum experiences in general, three of them, except Minwoo, did not have many

opportunities for classroom teaching. Overall, learning the in-depth content knowledge

was the most significant part of their preservice education. The teachers wanted to learn

more applicable knowledge in their education and teaching methods courses and to have

a chance to practice them through student teaching, but it was not achieved as much as

they wished.

Preparing for the Teacher Recruitment Exam. Just as many other students

graduated from the College of Education, all teachers in this study took the TRE in their

senior year of college. Minwoo, who wanted to teach in the Seoul Capital Area,

considered applying to Seoul, Gyeonggi, or Incheon. Minwoo said he "strategically chose

Incheon," (Interview 1) because he thought most applicants would prefer either Seoul or

Gyeonggi to Incheon. It turned out that he made the right decision. Because the TRE is

highly competitive, it is usual for many applicants to take the exam more than twice for

several years. Nevertheless, Minwoo passed the exam on his first try. Minwoo said he

was lucky because when he took the exam, the competition rates of mathematics in

Incheon were slightly lower than the last years'—about 12:1—compared to the average

15–20:1. Just as he did in high school, Minwoo studied very hard for this exam in his

senior year. He studied at the library until late at night every day. He also took online

prep courses and was part of a study group with other mathematics applicants, sharing exam information and tutoring each other.

Yubin also passed the exam of Gyeonggi Province in her senior year on her first try. Referring to the competition rates for the exam in English in Gyeonggi, Yubin said, "I was just so lucky. It was only 10:1. It used to be 16:1[in the last years]" (Interview 1). Just like Minwoo, she studied hard by herself and with a study group. Yubin said, "I was so desperate [when I was preparing for the TRE] because I really wanted to be a teacher" (Interview 1).

In contrast to Minwoo and Yubin who went straight into teaching after college, Jieun and Somi took different paths. Jieun said after coming back from Canada, she had more interest in teaching adults than young students. She was not certain whether secondary teaching was the right job for her, because she did not want to teach English for tests. She still took the exam in her senior year for Jeonbuk Province with other students in her program, but did not pass. Jieun said she "couldn't concentrate on studying" (Interview 1) because she was hesitant about being a secondary teacher. After the first exam, she moved to Seoul from Jeonju to work at a small agency that helped native English speakers find jobs at Korean schools. She liked her job, but her parents, who had never pushed her to do anything, began to push her consistently to take the TRE again. Jieun said, "I was confused [concerning my parents]" and "was stressed out every night [because they pushed me to take the TRE]" (Interview 1). Jieun added:

> I told my parents, 'You guys are hypocrites. You've never pushed me to do this
>
> and that.' My parents said, 'you are mature enough to make an important decision
>
> for your life. But what you can do and what you want to do can be different at

your age.' Now I understand what they meant. All I'd been doing at college was English education [and that's what I can do]. (Interview 1)

Jieun quit the job after a month and came back to her home at Namwon, Jeonbuk. Jieun prepared for the exam while working as a part-time teacher at a small English *hagwon* in her town. The next year, she applied to the Gyeonggi Province and passed it that year.

Somi also took the exam in her last year in college, as did the others, but she did not pass. Somi reflected that she was not anxious about the exam. After graduating from college, she took the exam twice for two years in a row. On her third try, she made it to the final interview, but she was eventually rejected. Somi said after then she felt she did not want to try again for another year:

I couldn't endure the time, the time I was waiting for the final results. It was harder than the whole year I'd been studying [for the exam]. Why I am doing this? I didn't get any financial support from home [while I was preparing for the exam]. I'd been doing mathematics tutoring to support myself. So, I was making my own money while I was studying [for the exam]. If I had been doing other work [instead of studying for the exam and mathematics tutoring], I would have gotten a better job and made more income. Why am I spending my time on this exam, which I'm not sure I will ever pass? (Interview 1)

Somi decided to withdraw from the exam and began her career as a *hagwon* instructor. Her *hagwon* was located in Banpo, a wealthy district in Seoul. There, she taught middle school mathematics for two years. She worked from Monday to Saturday, teaching four to five hours a day. Although she made a good income, Somi said she soon tired of working long hours, until late at night. What discouraged her more was she did not feel

proud of her job. Somi said, "When someone asked, 'What's your job?' I felt ashamed to say, 'I'm a *hagwon* instructor.' At some point, I found I was ashamed of myself. So I said, 'I'm teaching students' [instead of telling them I am working at *hagwon*]" (Interview 1). Somi also stated:

> I thought I quit the exam (TRE) for my own desire and I just made a different choice [to work at *hagwon* instead of becoming a public school teacher]. But I realized I actually ran away [from the TRE] because I couldn't make it. I felt like maybe I needed some time to appreciate myself by doing something else, seeing that I could do this. So I thought, 'OK. I don't want to see myself getting discouraged anymore. I can't live like this forever.' So I quit [the job]. (Interview 1)

After leaving her job at *hagwon*, Somi again prepared to take the exam at Gyeonggi Province for an entire year and finally passed it that year. When she knew she had passed, Somi said, "I was so happy. Really. I thought 'Now I can do anything'" (Interview 1). Such feelings of happiness and confidence were common for all teachers, not just for her.

Confident and Prepared for Teaching Content

In all four instances, all the Korean teachers in this study felt they were prepared for and competent in teaching the content, yet they thought the impact of preservice education was minimal in their preparedness. It was rather through the process of preparing for and taking the Teacher Recruitment Exam that the teachers perceived that their competency and preparedness in teaching the content were established. The teachers were proud of themselves for passing the competitive recruiting process and felt confident rather than nervous about beginning to teach. Their confidence and

preparedness were on teaching the content. This was because their preparation was highly focused on the content knowledge, and they reviewed that knowledge again and again while they were preparing for the recruitment exam. In this respect, the teachers believed that the impact of their preservice education was minimal on their preparedness. Rather, they thought their advanced content knowledge and skills were primarily developed by themselves during the time when they studied hard for the exam through constant reviewing and drilling on the concepts, theories, and methods in their content areas. Passing the recruitment exam was, therefore, understood by the teachers as a proof of their abilities to teach the content in secondary schools. This accounts for the teachers' confidence in teaching the content, and why most of them (except Yubin) were hoping to teach in high schools. The depth and breadth of curriculum are more advanced in high school, and most high-school teachers teach to tests to prepare their students for college admission (Sorensen, 1994). Thus, the teachers thought that high schools would be a better place for them to demonstrate their teaching abilities and prove their competence through the students' performance. In this regard, Minwoo said he was "a bit disappointed" (Interview 1) when he knew he was assigned to a middle school.

Because the teachers highly valued their abilities in teaching the content, it was understandable that all but Yubin held strong beliefs about the importance of "teaching the content well" (Somi, Minwoo, and Jieun, Interview 1). What they meant by this was they wanted to promote students' interests and in-depth learning in the content that would result in the improvement of their academic performance. To put it more explicitly, the teachers wanted to teach well in such a way that would help students better perform on tests. Somi explained:

I thought [initially] I wanted to be a teacher who teaches [mathematics] well—a

teacher who teaches mathematics really well. So the students who used to hate

mathematics would say, 'Ms. Jung, I like mathematics,' and we could make a fun

class together. [I hoped] my students would tell me, 'Ms. Jung is really a good

mathematics teacher.' That was my dream and goal [before I began to teach]. So I

used to consider myself as a teacher who crams as much as knowledge into

students. (Interview 1).

Minwoo's prior goal as a mathematics teacher was almost identical to Somi. Minwoo

said, "[I wanted to be] a teacher who possessed in-depth knowledge and skills [in

mathematics] so the students could get as much [mathematical knowledge and skills] as

possible, even though I would do a bit of teacher-centered teaching…" (Interview 1).

Jieun also expressed her prior belief in the same way as Somi and Minwoo, focusing on

"teaching English well." (Interview 1). She explained, "I was concerned about how I can

make an English class interesting to my students but still prepare them for *suneung*. I kept

thinking about that. So my goal before I started teaching was 'to teach English well.'"

(Interview 1).

Yubin was distinguished from the other teachers as her prior belief was not

related to teaching the content at all. She was centered on students – taking care of

students and supporting their emotional well-being. Yubin said:

I was never happy in high school but I wanted my students to feel happy while

they are in high school. Although they may not make it into a good college, and

for example, may work in a grocery store [in the future], if they feel happy, then

[I think] they are living the best life . . . so I thought 'I want to be a teacher who

can help my students find the meaning of happiness in their life.' Just as my

educational philosophy professor affected me a lot, I wanted to be that kind of

person who can touch the hearts of my students. (Interview 1)

Among the four Korean teachers, Yubin was the only one who had a student-centered

belief. Yubin's belief was greatly affected by reflecting on her unhappy high-school life,

which was carried out through the education courses she took in her preparation program.

Because Yubin double-majored in English education and education studies, she took far

more education courses than other teachers who only fulfilled the minimally required

education courses for licensure. Yubin stated that those education courses had a greater

impact on her than English content and teaching methods courses in terms of deciding to

be a teacher and forming her belief. These education courses offered her many chances to

reflect on herself, especially about who she was as a person and what kind of teacher she

wanted to be. She also had an opportunity to investigate and understand the problems in

the current Korean education system through the readings, discussions, and projects in

those courses. This was not the case for other teachers, whose preservice education

concentrated on the content. This could explain why Yubin's belief was distinguished

from others.'

Korean Teachers as Competent Novices

The Korean teachers in this study shared many commonalities during their

childhoods before they entered preparation programs. Although they received less

pressure from their parents, particularly in their early years of schooling, which

differentiated them from typical Korean students, they were good students who worked

hard toward gaining college admission. In preservice education, the four teachers wanted

to learn practical and applicable knowledge that could prepare them for their future practice, just as the US teachers. Moreover, because they were going to take the teacher recruitment exam, all four teachers expected their coursework to be relevant to the exam. However, the teachers' preparation experiences showed that none of those expectations were met during their preservice education. The lack of practicality of the preservice education and its perceived irrelevance to the teacher recruitment exam have been noted in Korean research as a major problem of secondary preservice education (Kim et al., 2010; Kim, Park, & Kang, 2010; Jung et al., 2010). The literature commonly points out that current secondary preparation programs in Korea are limited in meeting the needs of teacher candidates and schools; not only is the practicum too short, but the coursework is too inclined toward teaching the concept and theories of the content at the expense of courses related to actual teaching practice. As a result, many teacher candidates feel that most of what they learn from preservice education is detached from what they want to know to be capable teachers (Kim et al., 2009). Furthermore, the recruitment exam is limited to examining practical knowledge and skills not developed during preservice education (Choi et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2009). The four Korean teachers' experiences reconfirmed that these problems remain unresolved.

Although all four Korean teachers felt they were well prepared to teach content, it should be noted that their preparedness was the result of their experiences in preparing and passing the competitive teacher recruitment exam, not a consequence of their preservice education. The four teachers also found that their preservice education had a minimal impact on their preparedness, which contradicts the US teachers' perceptions on their preservice education. Moreover, all of the Korean teachers except Yubin stated that

they believed that teaching meant excellence in terms of teaching content—that is, promoting students' in-depth learning and performance in their content area. This view differed significantly from US teachers' student-centered beliefs. Korean teachers' experiences shared three common points, particularly from their preparation experiences, that distinguished them from US teachers. First, the Korean teachers completed preservice education focused mostly on content knowledge and without much practicum. Second, all four teachers believed that their preservice education was not particularly useful in preparing them to teach or to excel on the recruitment exam. Third, all four teachers felt better prepared by completing the process of studying for and passing the exam than by completing their preparation programs, and three of them held strong initial beliefs that encouraged them to prove their competence in teaching content, meaning enhancing students' in-depth learning, interest, and performance on their content areas. These three points, which represent a significant contrast with the experience of US teachers, are revisited and compared in greater detail in the following section.

Comparison of US and Korean Teachers' Experiences Before They Begin to Teach

The past experiences of US and Korean teachers, including their childhoods and their preparation work, show many differences. While US teachers were from various, dissimilar backgrounds and school contexts, the Korean teachers shared many similar aspects of family backgrounds and school experiences. In preparation programs, the Korean teachers had a content-heavy preservice education, while the US teachers had more opportunities for practice through student teaching. All but one US teachers found his or her preservice education helpful, but all the Korean teachers were generally dissatisfied with their preservice education. Despite these differences, there were also

common aspects to all US and Korean teachers' experiences that made up the essence of their past experiences before they began to teach. In the preservice education, all the teacher candidates were anxious about learning practical and applicable knowledge and skills because they wanted their preparation program to prepare them for future practice. After the preservice education (for U.S. teachers) and recruitment exam (for Korean teachers), all teachers felt they were particularly well prepared in teaching content. Derived from these two common aspects of the teachers' preparation experiences, I argue that, despite having different backgrounds and different kinds of preparation that focused on either practice (US teachers) or content knowledge (Korean teachers), teachers in both countries felt prepared to teach content and wanted to improve students' in-depth learning of the content and/or provide emotional support and care before they began to teach.

This argument was established by looking into the essence of all teachers' preparation experiences. The comparison of US and Korean teachers in this section thus focuses on the commonalities and differences found in their preparation experiences and their impact on teachers' preparedness and initial beliefs.

Practice-based versus Content-based Preservice Education

The primary reasons for the differences between US and Korean teachers' preparation experiences were the differing structures, curricula, and focuses of their preparation programs. While most US teachers, except Dana, were satisfied with their preservice educations, all of the Korean teachers found their preservice educations to be not particularly useful. What affected both teacher groups' satisfaction was whether their preparation programs prepared them well for their future practice in schools (Lampert, 2009). Most US teachers, except Dana, felt that they learned knowledge and skills that

were relevant and applicable to their practice. They were referring to and using what they learned from their coursework, although not all courses were fully applicable. Furthermore, all the US teachers had at least a semester-long practicum. Chelsey, Alice, and Dana did their practica in schools where they were eventually hired as full time teachers, so their practica were truly an opportunity for them to "practice" in their future workplace, became familiar with the school system and culture, and develop their beginning repertoire of teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Even Jim, who got a job at a different school, felt he had abundant firsthand experiences and felt that he developed his way of teaching through the four practica he had had at different schools, which all helped him to feel fully competent when he began his job at a new site. Because all of these teachers considered the practicality of preservice education significant and because they were able to have adequate opportunities to practice teaching through their practica, US teachers' preparation experiences can be described as practice-based teacher education.

The Korean teachers' expectations about preservice education were twofold: just like the US teachers, they wanted to prepare for future performance; moreover, they also assumed their preparation programs would be aligned with and responsive to the teacher recruitment exam, so as to prepare them for it throughout the coursework. Unfortunately, the Korean teachers felt their preparation experiences did not meet these expectations. Rather, the teachers all stated that they were taught mostly the content knowledge with a focus on studying only the theories, concepts, and big ideas in their disciplines. The teachers mentioned that the type and level of the content courses they took from their

departments were almost identical to those of the English or mathematics departments. In this respect, the Korean teachers' preparation was highly focused on content.

The differences between US teachers' practice-based preparation and Korean teachers' content-based preparation are more obvious when comparing their preservice education curriculua. The figure below compares the undergraduate preservice education curriculum of an English education major from two universities: Ignatius College of the US, where Jim had his preparation, and Sunwha Women's University of Korea, where Yubin attended.

Table 5

Comparison of the Teacher Education Curriculum between US and Korea

Ignatius College (US)	Sunwha Women′s University (Korea)
• Total 120 credits	• Total 135 credits
• Content courses: At least 8 courses from the English department in the College of Arts and Sciences, including studies in poetry; studies in narrative; general linguistics; introduction to feminisms; one class in Anglophone or ethnic American literature	• Must take content courses, including practical English grammar; English composition; pedagogical English grammar; advanced English conversation; public speech in English; reading practice in English; survey of English and American literature, #1 and #2; introduction to English linguistics; and advanced English composition • Must take teaching method courses, including the theoretical foundation of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL); logical thinking and writing in TEFL; and material development and teaching methods in TEFL
• Secondary education major courses, including child growth and development; family, school, and society; adolescent psychology; working with special needs students; classroom assessment; secondary methods courses;	• Take at least 6 elective education courses, including an introduction to education; curriculum; educational evaluation; educational technology; sociology of education; educational psychology; philosophy and history of

secondary reading instruction; teaching bilingual students; undergraduate inquiry seminars #1, #2, and #3; and a senior inquiry seminar	education; educational administration and management; and counseling and guidance
	• Must take requisite education courses, including educational services; understanding of the teaching profession; theory and practice of school violence prevention; and teaching Aptitude Personality Test I
• Practicum: Pre-practicums #1, #2, and #3; international pre-practicum; and full practicum • Inquiry seminar for each pre- and full practicum	• Practicum: Take 2 credits of practicum in the first semester of the senior year

Note. The curriculum of Ignatius College is adapted from Ignatius College (2015), Secondary Education Requirements; the curriculum of Sunwha Women's university is adapted from Sunwha Women's University (2015), Curriculum Brochure.

This table highlights the different features of the US and Korean preservice education, as indicated by the teachers. From the figure, it is clear that the Korean teacher education curriculum is more highly loaded with content knowledge than that of the US. According to the Sunwha curriculum brochure (2015), the 10 content courses listed above are only the minimum required content courses for teacher licensure; in addition to these, students need to take at least four electives (12 credits) in English content. This is a total of 14 courses, which is significantly more than the required eight courses at Ignatius College. As illustrated by the Korean teachers, it is apparent that Korean preservice teacher education puts a heavy emphasis on mastering the content knowledge.

On the other hand, the length and number of practica are far greater in US preservice education. The table shows that the students at Ignatius College take at least four practica, each of which takes a full semester (the pre-practicum is once a week through the semester). On the other hand, Sunwha offers only one practicum in the senior

year, which is common for many other Korean preparation programs as they all follow

the guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The US teachers had ample

opportunities to try out their practical knowledge and develop an understanding of their

working contexts through intense practica. That was not the case for most Korean

teachers, who barely had a chance to teach a couple of classes during the four-week

practicum.

Because the education systems in these countries are significantly different, it is

hard to conclude which preservice teacher education is stronger or more appropriate in

terms of developing high quality teachers. For many people in the United States,

including President Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Korean teachers

are high-quality educators and often compared to US teachers (Duncan, 2014; Obama,

2011). Such acclaim has been grounded in the assumption that high-quality teachers are

those capable of improving student achievement. The Korean students' successful results

on several international comparison tests indicated to them that Korean teachers are more

competitive than US teachers in that respect. Since US policymakers have felt an urgent

need to improve the quality of US teachers, they have held teacher education programs

more accountable based on the assumption that a strong teacher education program

produces high-quality teachers (Duncan, 2014; Obama, 2011). However, the Korean

teachers' perceptions and accounts of their preparation experiences do not support that

assumption. Because preservice education in Korea is content heavy, they might possess

more content knowledge than US teachers. However, these teachers had significantly

fewer opportunities to put their knowledge into practice and learn from practice in actual

school settings. Although Korean teachers might be specialists in the content after the

preservice education and competitive recruitment process, their preparation significantly lacked opportunities to learn about how to teach the content, in addition to learning the content itself. Shulman (1987) calls this knowledge of how to teach "pedagogical content knowledge" (PCK), defining it as a "blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners and presented for instruction" (p. 8). According to him, this is how a teacher is distinguished from a content specialist. Throughout the preservice education, Korean teachers did not have many opportunities to learn and establish such knowledge, while US teachers did so through their coursework and practica. If the goal and meaning of preservice education is to prepare the candidates for future practice, as all teachers in this study believed it should be and assumed it would be, the content-heavy teacher education and lack of practicum opportunities explain why Korean teachers were far less satisfied with their preparation programs.

Feeling Prepared in Teaching Content

Both US and Korean teachers felt prepared before they began to teach, especially in teaching content. Meanwhile, their experiences illustrated that the preparedness of both US and Korean teachers were affected by different factors. All but one US teacher said their preservice education prepared them to teach. Chelsey, Alice, and Jim agreed that their teaching method courses were useful and the practica helped them understand their future work places and practice the knowledge and skills that they learned throughout their coursework. Even Dana, who was not fond of her preparation program, said she developed many skills and strategies for teaching English during her practicum in her preservice education. For all US teachers, as other major literature revealed, preservice

education had a significant impact on their feelings of preparedness (Darling–Hammond et al., 2012).

On the other hand, Korean teachers stated that the impact of their preservice education was minimal on their preparedness. Looking into their past experiences, what influenced their preparedness more than preservice education was the time they spent preparing for the recruitment exam. As the teachers said, they spent significant amounts of time and effort for this exam. They studied hard until late at night, participated in study groups, and even took online prep courses for the exam. Because this exam asked applicants about in-depth knowledge of the content, the teachers reviewed and drilled themselves on the important theories and concepts in their content. Moreover, with their study groups, they practiced a lot for the teaching demonstration, which is another big part of this exam. The Korean teachers' preparedness in teaching content was established through this process when they were preparing for the exam rather than from their preservice education. Furthermore, the fact that all the teachers finally passed the competitive exam made them feel proud and confident about starting their jobs. While both US and Korean teachers felt well prepared in teaching content, the impact of preservice education on their overall preparedness differed significantly. Aligned to the teachers' satisfaction with their preservice education, US teachers generally perceived it had an impact on their preparedness while Korean teachers did not perceive so.

Differences in Prior Beliefs about Teaching

Although both US and Korean teachers agreed that they felt well prepared in teaching content before they began to teach, there was dissimilarity in their prior beliefs on teaching, which was either centered on supporting students (all US teachers and

Yubin) or excellence in teaching content (all Korean teachers except Yubin). All the US teachers and one Korean teacher, Yubin, held student-centered beliefs. These teachers wanted to be a source of support for their students, not just academically but also emotionally. They wanted to connect with their students and build intimate relationships with them so as to encourage students' participation in learning and their emotional well-being. The other three Korean teachers stated that they wanted to be excellent teachers in terms of teaching content. Although these teachers were also concerned about facilitating students' interests and in-depth learning, their focus was more on demonstrating their competence in teaching through improved student performance and their positive responses to the teachers' practices.

Both US and Korean teachers' prior beliefs showed that they were greatly influenced by their own experiences as students within their education systems. All of the US teachers explained their beliefs by connecting them to their own past school experiences: Jim wanted to become an engaging teacher because he did not like some of his teachers who had not engaged the students in lessons; Alice wanted to be a source of support for her students who struggle with various issues in their lives, like she used to be in high school; Chelsey wanted to teach in a diverse, urban school because she was hoping to become a good, supportive teacher for her students like the teachers she had had when she was a student; Dana wanted to be part of a diverse, urban school because it was where she could connect best with her students since she had attended similar schools as a student.

The Korean teachers also explained their beliefs in relation to their experiences as students in the Korean education system. Since they had all come through the test-

oriented school system and had experience in preparing for the competitive college admission, they knew that as secondary teachers, their most important job was to help their students in those aspects. The Korean teachers' beliefs about the need to be excellent at content teaching (except Yubin) reflected the demands of their working context – test-oriented Korean schools in which college admission is the foremost goal and purpose of schooling – and their perceptions of good teaching in this context, which was improving their students' test scores to help their chances of admission to prestigious universities.

While the teachers' prior beliefs were grounded in the context in which they had grown up as students, it is unclear to what extent preservice education had an impact on forming those teachers' beliefs. It is a widely accepted view that teachers' prior experiences as students in elementary and secondary schools influence their initial, ideal images of teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Lortie & Clement, 1975), which was the case for all teachers. Thus when teacher candidates enter the preparation programs, many of them already had their own perceptions of teaching. However, throughout preservice education, those views may be transformed, changed, or become more solid (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Schultz & Ravitch, 2012), because in preservice education, learning what kind of teacher to be is as important as learning what to do as a teacher (Lampert, 2009). However, both US and Korean teachers' descriptions of their prior beliefs did not particularly reflect any perspectives, ideas, or mindsets that might have been affected by their preservice education.

Among all the US and Korean teachers, Yubin was the only teacher who explicitly stated that her goal as a teacher, which was to support her students' happiness

in life, was significantly influenced by her preparation program at Sunwha Women's University. Her student-centered belief was very strong, even stronger than that of all of the US teachers. A significant difference between Yubin and the other Korean teachers was that she had had many more opportunities in her preparation program to reflect on herself and on the Korean education system through various education courses, such as the philosophy of education and curriculum theories that she took as part of her double major and that she mentioned in her interview. The fact that she had far more opportunities than the other Korean teachers to reflect on herself and contemplate Korean education may explain why she had a more unique belief that was centered on students. Although forming one's belief in teaching is one of the major tasks that needs to be achieved in preservice education (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Lampert, 2009), this implies that there is a lack of influence of preservice education for both US and Korean teachers on establishing beginning teachers' beliefs and mindsets of teaching.

The Meaning of Preservice Teacher Education for Beginning Teachers: Conclusion

Both US and Korean teachers assumed that the meaning of preservice teacher education was to prepare them for their future practice. US teachers found their preparation was generally helpful in that regard, and felt they were well prepared in teaching content. Korean teachers, on the other hand, complained that their preservice education was not practical. Moreover, it did not help them prepare for their recruitment exam either. Yet these teachers also felt well prepared in teaching content through the process of preparing for and passing the recruitment exam. For both US and Korean teachers, the practicality and applicability of preservice education was the most important factor that affected teachers' perceptions of their preparation experiences.

What both US and Korean teachers thought the meaning and purpose of preservice education – preparation for future practice – was, in fact, only one of the multiple tasks that needs to be achieved in preservice education. Feiman-Nemser (2001) suggested many tasks: "examine beliefs critically in relation to a vision of good teaching, develop subject matter knowledge for teaching, develop an understanding of learners, learning, and issues of diversity, develop a beginning repertoire, and develop the tools and dispositions to study teaching" (p. 1050). Yet both US and Korean teachers' preparation experiences highlighted only a few of these tasks. The US teachers' preparation experiences illustrated that teachers could develop their subject matter knowledge, understanding of learners, and beginning repertoire through their coursework and student teaching experiences. Meanwhile, Korean teachers' preparation experiences were mostly about developing subject matter knowledge.

Looking across all the teachers' preparation experiences, I found that the impact of preservice teacher education was limited in both countries, especially in forming teacher identity and beliefs and helping them become well prepared in other important aspects of their jobs, such as understanding the learners, classroom management, and managing relationships with parents, colleagues, and administrators. In addition to preparing them for the content knowledge (US and Korea) and how to teach the content (US), preservice education needs to provide more opportunities to the candidates to learn other important aspects of their jobs, and most of all, to think about what kind of teacher they want to be in the society where they are going to teach.

Chapter 5. Navigating Tension: Beginning Teachers' Lived Experiences within Test-

Based Accountability Systems

Building on Chapter 4 that focuses on beginning teachers' experiences before

they began to teach, this chapter describes their lived experiences working as teachers

within education systems that put pressure on them to teach to the tests. In this chapter, I

focus on the essence of US and Korean beginning teachers' experiences within their test-

based accountability systems based on the teachers' descriptions of their present lives.

The eight teachers I studied described specifically how they carried out test preparation,

what tensions and challenges they encountered, and how they perceived themselves

working within the test-based accountability system. This chapter is constructed in three

major parts that get at teachers' experiences: (a) US teachers' experiences as beginning

within a test-based accountability system; (b) Korean teachers' experiences within a test-

oriented education system; and (c) a comparison between US and Korean teachers' lived

experiences as beginning teachers in their two dissimilar systems where test preparation

is emphasized for very different reasons and purposes.

Navigating Tension: US Teachers' Lived Experiences within a Test-Based

Accountability System

Across the descriptions offered by the four US teachers about their lived

experiences, three common themes emerged: teaching to the test was part of the regular

practice of teaching; the teachers felt pressed by the system as well as by themselves; and

they had ambivalent views about the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

(MCAS), and the necessity of test preparation. Because the four US teachers described

their lived experiences with the test-based accountability in the context of the MCAS,

which at the time of this study was the required state standardized test, I offer a brief

background of this test before looking into the detail of each theme.

MCAS: The State Standardized Test

MCAS was originally developed by the state of Massachusetts to follow the

requirements of the Education Reform Act of 1993. According to the Massachusetts

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2015), MCAS aims to "test all

public school students in Massachusetts, including students with disabilities and English

Language Learner students; measure performance based on the Massachusetts

Curriculum Framework learning standards; and report on the performance of individual

students, schools, and districts" (para 1). Since the No Child Left Behind act set up the

goal for every student to be proficient in Reading and Mathematics by 2014, the state

department also uses MCAS to hold each school and district accountable for that goal by

reporting each school's Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) of their student performance.[2]

MCAS is an annual test that typically takes place during the middle of the second

term of the academic year. All public and charter school students who are in grade 3 to 8

and 10 must take the MCAS. High-school students in 10th grade take three subject areas

of MCAS (English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science/Technology/Engineering)

and must pass the test to be eligible for a high-school diploma. Yet students have multiple

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[2] Since the time data were gathered for this study, there have been significant changes to standardized testing in the state of Massachusetts. During the spring of 2015, about half of the state's school districts switched from the MCAS to PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers), a newly designed test that is based on the Common Core Curriculum, currently implemented in Massachusetts and many other states. PARCC is expected to replace MCAS by fall 2016 (MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2015).

opportunities to retake the tests if they fail the first time. All elementary and middle school students from grade 3 to 8 must take ELA and Mathematics tests. The test results are reported based on the four performance levels of students (advanced, proficient, needs improvement, and warning/failing) and reported to individual students, schools, and districts.

Teaching to the Test: Part of the Regular Practice of Teaching

One focus of the phenomenological interviews I conducted for this study was looking into the details of how teachers carried out test preparation and to what extent they perceived that they were teaching to the test. Across the four teachers, it was common to offer test preparation in varied extents. There were various factors impacting the extent of teaching to the test: whether the teacher was teaching the tested grade and subjects, the pressure from school administrators and accountability system, the students' unmet performance levels, and the teacher's self-pressure and motivation to teach to the test. Depending on these factors, the teachers in this study showed varying extents and ways of test preparation: complete teaching to the test (Jim), partial teaching to the test (Chelsey), teaching to the standards and curriculum of the test (Alice), and separating test preparation from the regular classes (Dana).

A disguised, 100% teaching to the test. Among the four US teachers I studied, Jim was the only one who was teaching in a tested grade only (7th grade). He admitted that test preparation was fully integrated into his daily practice of teaching. The methods he specifically carried out that demonstrated teaching to the test were similar to the practice of other English teachers depicted in previous studies (e.g., Valli & Chambliss, 2007; Watanabe, 2007). These studies revealed that teaching to the test in English classes

involved constant drilling of test-taking skills, reducing the amount of student activities related to the readings, and teaching writing in a way that was less creative and more responsive to test rubrics. These features were all visible in Jim's descriptions of his approach to teaching his English classes, which are illustrated later in this section.

At the time of the interviews, Jim was teaching 7th grade English at Jackson Middle School, located in a suburban area of Boston. He described his school as "a pretty diverse community in terms of socioeconomic status and race" (Interview 2). About half of the students were white, and the rest were mostly African American and Latinos/Latinas. Jim said that about 75 percent of the students in his school received free or reduced lunch, whereas there was a smaller percentage of students from affluent families. The number of bilingual students who spoke Spanish as their first language has also increased annually. Unlike the student population, however, Jim said the teachers were mostly White and many of them were women. In Jim's district, students' MCAS scores were part of teacher evaluation, along with the district-wide student assessment scores, which is another value-added measurement data. The evaluation also involved observations of teaching and assessment of other teaching-related artifacts such as lesson plans, worksheets, and PowerPoint slides. According to Jim, students at his school were performing "right on the state average" (Interview 2) in the MCAS English.

Jim said that his school's English curriculum was generally organized with a list of topics he was expected to teach during the academic year according to a specific timeline, such as "read Tom Sawyer between now and the end of the year" (Interview 2). Yet Jim said he had full freedom to decide how to teach each topic. He taught the same 7th grade English course four times a day, including two inclusion classes, meaning that

some of the students had special needs. His school was also implementing one-to-one

iPad lessons in English, which they had just started during the academic year when the

interviews had been conducted. The teachers in his school were encouraged to use the

iPad lessons more, as a way of engaging students with technology. According to Jim,

there were two ways that he used the iPad in his English lessons: having students create

images or texts about what they had learned after his lecture and interactive presentation

apps for more effective, direct instruction. Jim said he liked to teach these iPad lessons

because they were "a lot more engaging and a lot more interactive" (Interview 2). At least

once a week Jim taught the iPad lessons using various apps with his students.

In terms of lesson planning, Jim said he referred to the curriculum map that

included the list of topics he was supposed to teach during the academic year, the state

standards, and the content that the students would learn in the 8th grade. He said he did

much of the lesson planning "on the fly" (Interview 2), which he described:

> A lot of days it'll be like I'll get to school early, figure out how I'm feeling in
>
> terms of, do I want to talk at them for four hours today? Am I tired or am I
>
> energetic? What do I want to do? (Interview 2)

Jim also had a general routine in his everyday lessons. Lessons typically began with "do-

now" (a short, introductory activity for the lesson) or quick journal writing related to the

day's topic or students' personal experiences. Then he gave a lecture for about 20–30

minutes and executed an "exit ticket," which was another small activity designed to

check students' learning at the end of the lessons. In his class, this was typically carried

out in the form of a quick writing assignment on a post-it note.

Because his students' MCAS scores were part of the teacher evaluation in his

school district, Jim indicated that he was fully teaching for the test. He said the extent of

test preparation integrated into his daily lessons was "a disguised 100%" (Interview 2),

which he explained:

> It [test preparation] is right in with English. It's not… I would never say when
>
> we're doing it, "We're doing MCAS prep." When we were reading Call of the
>
> Wild, and when we read "The Tell-Tale Heart" for Halloween, then we just
>
> happened to write an open response after. It's the same assessment as the MCAS
>
> uses, but on whatever readings I want to do. It's integrated in that way. (Interview
>
> 2)

Jim said when he was teaching writing, any kind of writing activity was reflective of

either the open response or long composition section of the MCAS. He did not explicitly

inform students that he was teaching to the MCAS. However, almost all of the contents

of lessons and activities were designed to build students' knowledge and skills in taking

the MCAS English.

In terms of the open response section, the English teachers in Jim's school used a

special way to teach it, which was called "writing with color" (Interview 2):

> We teach them how to highlight their open response answers so that when they go
>
> through, they should be looking for the same formulaic writing response every
>
> time. They should have their pink topic and conclusion sentences. They should
>
> have their three green quotations. They should have their three transition words in
>
> orange. They should have context and explanation in blue. They get used to

seeing this pattern and they emulate it every time. We definitely do that for the

writing. (Interview 2)

The writing with color, which Jim described above, was an example of how Jim and

other teachers in his school taught test-taking skills in their English classes. In addition to

that, Jim and his colleagues used many exemplars from the MCAS website to practice

such strategies and to show examples of good writing. Moreover, Jim said that he

constantly reminded his students to be aware of writing in a way that was responsive to

MCAS requirements:

Even if we're writing a really low-stage journal entry, I'm like, "Okay, make sure

you have dialogue or make sure you have appropriate... Use an appositive phrase

or use a participle phrase or whatever." (Interview 3)

Jim's reading instruction was also carried out in a way to prepare his students for various

types of MCAS questions. Jim confessed that every lesson was "always gearing towards

the MCAS" (Interview 2). Nevertheless, the way Jim was preparing his students for the

MCAS was not in a form of explicit test preparation, such as specific drilling using test-

geared worksheets or doing practice tests, which were frequently used by the Korean

teachers in this study. In Jim's case, more explicit test preparation was carried out when

the MCAS was getting closer. About 10 days prior to the MCAS being administered, Jim

said he provided complete MCAS prep in every lesson by constantly reviewing the test

rubrics and examples of good answers with his students. Except for those few days,

teaching to MCAS was done in every lesson but in a disguised way, as he said, "Those

things [MCAS prep] aren't like directly, but it's a piece to the puzzle. So almost every

day is a piece to the test puzzle…" (Interview 3). The information and strategies for

taking MCAS were always integrated in his daily lessons, but they were rarely taught as though, "this is how you take the test." It is notable that Jim avoided directly referring to the MCAS test in his daily teaching, but he admitted that he was indeed always focusing his teaching toward the MCAS.

A partial teaching to the test. At the time of the interviews, Chelsey was a second-year mathematics teacher at Durban high school. She was teaching Algebra I, II, and Geometry to all standard-level 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students. Algebra I and Geometry are both included on the MCAS mathematics section of the test. Chelsey described her school as a large, diverse, urban school where they had about two thirds students of color, many of whom were bilingual students from Latin America and Asian countries. The students were also from varied socioeconomic status, yet the majority of them were from lower socioeconomic status. Similar to Jim's school, the teachers in her school were mostly White, but there was a balance in terms of gender.

Chelsey stated that she was teaching to the test, especially with the MCAS-tested subjects. Although there has been lack of studies that examined mathematics teachers' teaching to the test, the way Chelsey described how she was doing test preparation with her 9th and 10th grade students was similar to the features illustrated by the previous studies with teachers of other subjects, such as English and social studies (e.g., Valli & Buese, 2007; Wantanabe, 2007). Similar to those teachers, Chelsey said she was narrowing the content in the curriculum by focusing more on teaching the tested content while displacing other content and skills she thought were more important to her students. Chelsey further elaborated:

Especially with Algebra 1 and Geometry because all of us are trying to get

through as much of the book as possible to prepare them for MCAS. With my

Algebra 1 and Geometry, I'm much more constricted to less and less and less and

less, and I need to literally shove this in your brain. (Interview 2)

As indicated in previous studies about teaching to the test, Chelsey also concerned about

the restrictions of time prevented her from teaching other important and interesting

knowledge and skills because they were not covered on the test (Finnigan & Gross, 2007;

Valli & Chambliss, 2007; Watanabe, 2007). Chelsey especially wanted to use a

discovery-based approach that she had learned during her preservice teacher education

because she believed it would promote students' interests in mathematics and improve

their problem-solving skills. However, the time was very limited for her to even cover all

the required MCAS content. Chelsey felt she was rushed to teach all of the tested content

and that there was no time to use discovery learning for students.

For lesson planning, Chelsey said she always referred to the textbook "because

it's a Common Core textbook, so it's technically what's going to be on the test"

(Interview 2). Using the textbook as her primary resource for teaching, Chelsey also

looked for supplemental resources on the Internet or from other teachers. Chelsey said

she often changed the order of the textbook to make the connection between one topic

and another smoother. When she figured out what she was going to teach for the lesson,

she imported all of the content that she was going to teach for that lesson onto

PowerPoint slides, which included lesson objectives, examples, and homework. She also

gave out many worksheets during the lessons.

Chelsey said she wanted to make her classes "super structured" (Interview 2), so the students had a very clear understanding of what they were expected to accomplish for each class. Every lesson, regardless of the topic, began with a warm-up, which was a kind of review question from the previous class. While students were working on the warm up, Chelsey usually walked around and checked their homework, which typically took the first 10–15 minutes of the class. Then she moved on to the notes for the new lesson, which were typically the examples from the textbook. Chelsey said she always tried in class to cover a sample of each type of problem that appeared on the homework so that the students would know how to solve each problem and complete their homework without many difficulties. In the Geometry class, Chelsey spent time to teach the mathematics terms first before moving on to the examples. Before the end of every class she usually left five to seven minutes to let her students begin their homework and help them with the questions they had. Chelsey explained:

> I like to give them that time because, if I go all the way to the bell, a lot of them won't do any homework. Whereas, if I get them started on it and they know they only have 3 problems left, they're good about doing it. That's something I learned from last year into this year. Shorten your lesson. Make sure that they have some time to get started on it because, if you go all the way to the bell, they're less likely to do it. (Interview 2)

According to Chelsey, leaving time for students to work on their homework was a strategy she learned during her first year, and that it helped many of her students who were struggling with completing mathematics homework. While students were working on the homework, Chelsey could go around and see if anyone needed help. Instead of

doing the homework alone after class, the students were more likely to complete it successfully when they did much of it in class with her support.

Chelsey said she was teaching to the test with Algebra I and Geometry, which are the two subjects of Mathematics sections of the MCAS. Similar to Jim, test preparation was embedded in her daily lessons and it was not carried out explicitly. However, while Jim constantly incorporated specific test-taking strategies and practices for the MCAS open response items in his lessons, Chelsey said, "For the most part, just getting through the book is good test prep for them, so that's how I view it" (Interview 3). Chelsey explained how she was preparing her students for MCAS in her Geometry class, particularly:

> So for my Geometry class, which is the big one we're doing, I try to do it as much as possible in terms of just exposing them to as much stuff that I know is going to be on the test as possible. I don't do as much with "This is how you take a test. These are test taking strategies" because I know they've had those, because I ask them about it. I'm like, "Do you want me to just show you all the mathematics that'll be on the test? Do you want any test taking strategies? How do you want me to help you?" They're like, "Just go over problems…" (Interview 3)

Chelsey's description above showed a difference between mathematics and English lessons in terms of how teaching to the test could occur. Problem solving—independent of whether the problems were likely to be on the MCAS or not—is part of the regular practice of mathematics classes. Covering the problems from the textbook and teaching students how to solve them normally occurs in many mathematics classes, regardless of the test. Thus, it is not always necessary for a mathematics teacher to offer a special kind

of test preparation if he or she sufficiently covered the content on the test, as Chelsey did. This is different in English classes because problem-solving is not typically taught in English. Thus, in English classes, combining skills and strategies for test preparation is additionally necessary and requires careful planning on the part of the teacher, just as Jim did with his English lessons.

When teaching MCAS subject classes, Chelsey spent more time on the chapters in the textbook that were known always to be included on the MCAS. Chelsey also said that when she was absent from school, she handed out MCAS practice questions to her students to work on with their substitute teacher. Moreover, Chelsey said she included MCAS-type questions on the midyear and final exams so that her students could get used to those questions in advance. As Chelsey admitted, test preparation was built into her usual practice at least in MCAS subject classes.

Just as Jim did, Chelsey also provided explicit preparation when the MCAS date was approaching. About ten days to a week before the test, she had her students review and practice for MCAS, which she explained:

> For me, the [explicit] test preparation is getting through geometry, because they need to see everything, as quickly as I can so I can have a week if possible, which happened with one class but not the other, to do practice MCAS tests. Give them a session one, tell them to just go. Do not give them any help, do not give them their calculator, and then go over it. When we go over it, I know the questions that they might not have seen in Algebra I. I focus on those. I usually take a vote about what open response they want to go over, and we go from there. (Interview 3)

At the time of the interviews, Chelsey was also teaching 9th and 11th graders, who were not taking the MCAS. Even for those untested grades, however, Chelsey said the classes were geared toward some sort of tests. For 9th grade students, for example, Chelsey considered the MCAS preparation necessary because these students would be taking the exam when they became 10th graders. Thus she wanted to prepare them in advance for the test. Chelsey explained:

> Yeah, [I am teaching to the MCAS] even in 9th grade. They don't take it until the end of 10th grade, but I'm pushing my class really hard so I can get to factoring so that they can't tell their geometry teachers, "I've never seen this before," because it used to be that in "standard classes" [the lowest-level classes in Chelsey's school], you wouldn't even see factoring, of which there was five questions. Thank goodness I randomly taught them that. (Interview 3)

For 11th graders who were no longer taking the MCAS, Chelsey said she was teaching to prepare them for midyear and final exams:

> I do questions that I know are on the midyear and final [exam] and I make sure I give them an experience with quadratic word problems, which I know there's a big one on the midyear, and simplifying it and I focus more on stuff I know is on the midyear and I know is on the final so that they've at least seen that type of questions. (Interview 2)

When talking about teaching her classes, Chelsey said, "I'm definitely right now teaching to the test," because each of her classes was geared towards some sort of test, either the MCAS or school tests. However, just as Jim's case, Chelsey's method of teaching to the test was not explicit. An explicit test preparation only occurred with the tested grade and

subject right before the MCAS. Most of the time, Chelsey considered covering the content on the textbook sufficient test preparation. Unlike Jim, there was not much incorporation of specific test-taking skills into her everyday lessons. In this respect, Chelsey seemed to teach to the MCAS to a lesser degree than Jim, although she perceived herself differently.

Teaching to the standards and curriculum rather than to the tests. Like Chelsey, Alice was also a second year mathematics teacher, working at the same school as Chelsey. However, unlike Chelsey, who perceived that she was teaching to the test particularly with the MCAS subject classes, Alice perceived that she was teaching to the textbook (curriculum). The ways that both Chelsey and Alice taught mathematics classes were fairly similar, yet they had different perceptions as to whether or not they were teaching to the test. At the time of the interviews, Alice was teaching four 9th grade Algebra I classes (one standard and three honors) and one 10th grade standard-level Geometry class. Alice mentioned that most of the 10th grade students in her Geometry class had failed Algebra I, but they had moved up to this class because they still had to learn Geometry to take the MCAS. Alice described the way she taught mathematics as, "Just totally the lesson from the textbook and then the standards that I have to hit right off everything from textbook (Interview 2)." In this respect, Alice differentiated between teaching to the curriculum and standards, on one hand, and teaching to the test, on the other. Because her focus was teaching the content of the textbook rather than teaching about how to take the test, Alice perceived herself to be more focused on teaching to the standards and curriculum. This was different from Chelsey who perceived that she was teaching to the test by covering the content from the textbook because the content was

eventually going to be on the test. This suggests that there are different perceptions among mathematics teachers about whether covering the content on the curriculum is the same as teaching to the test or not. Alice perceived that she was not teaching to the test, because explicit MCAS preparation did not often occur in her class.

Similar to Chelsey, Alice used the textbook as her primary source for lesson planning. She also used many worksheets from the textbook and from online, sources which included practice questions for the SAT and standardized tests. Just like Chelsey, Alice used PowerPoint slides for every lesson that contained all the content and materials for each lesson. Like other teachers, Alice also had her own structure and routine for lessons. She began every class with introducing the new mathematical terms of the lesson topic. Alice said she put heavy emphasis on learning the terminology, explaining:

> I think vocab is really important in mathematics because the terminologies that we use in mathematics, if they don't know it, they might not understand it. Because even a word, let's say slope, slope in literally, slope is the slant. But to find a slope of a line in mathematics is quite different from what they think what…They have to relate it so it's very similar but it's hard to relate the two definitions with mathematics in real life. I think it's really important to introduce the terms in a mathematical way so that they can understand what they're learning. (Interview 2)

While stressing the importance of teaching concepts and vocabulary, Alice also stated that she tried to expose her students to MCAS-type questions whenever they were relevant to the lesson topic and if she had the time to do so. However, Alice contended that test preparation was "not a major part" (Interview 2) of her everyday teaching, and her focus was more on covering the content of the textbook. In this respect, Alice

perceived herself as teaching to the standards and curriculum rather than to the tests. Nevertheless, the way she taught her classes was similar to Chelsey, who perceived herself as teaching to the tests. Why did the teachers perceive their approaches differently though they taught their classes in similar ways? I assume that it occurred due to the unique nature of mathematics classes, which always involve problem-solving. Whether the MCAS or SAT existed or not, problem-solving would consistently occur in mathematics classes as an application of mathematical concepts. In other words, the way that mathematics teachers teach mathematics classes is not likely to be significantly affected by the existence of a test. Though not a study with mathematics teachers, Neumann (2013) found that regardless of testing mandates, there would not be much difference in methods of teaching social studies. Similarly, for the mathematics teachers in this study, it was a matter of whether they understood the standard way of teaching everyday mathematics classes as a continuum for test preparation or as separate from it. Chelsey considered her teaching as an ongoing process for preparing for the MCAS, but Alice did not because it was not an explicit preparation targeting performance on the test. Either way, it was evident that MCAS preparation played some part in their teaching practice, but did not constitute the whole of it, when compared to Jim's English class. In this respect, both mathematics teachers' practices were deemed to partially teach to the test.

Separating test preparation from the regular classes. In all of Dana's classes, test preparation was carried out as a separate task in addition to her usual English classes. This was because she was not teaching 10th grade and also because most of her students were career-bound. Dana was a first-year English teacher at West Durban High School,

which she also attended as a student. Dana described her school as a "very diverse" (Interview 2) urban school where the Asian population was the largest (about half), followed by the Caucasian, African–American, and Puerto Rican students. Dana said the school was also diverse in terms of students' socioeconomic backgrounds, although most were from working class or middle to lower-class families. According to Dana, the teachers were mostly White and there was a mixture of male and female teachers from older to younger generations. Moreover, the school accepts a large number of Asian immigrant students every year.

At the time of the interviews, Dana was teaching 9th, 11th, and 12th grade English, which were all standard-level classes. Dana said lesson planning was not easy for her because she needed to create everything from the scratch in the beginning:

Our school…we don't have a curriculum map or anything. When I started . . . I was just given a book and they said we just teach around the book. That's basically how I start. I try to align everything with the common core now, but being very new, it's really difficult. First of all, it's a book I've never read before. I have to read and figure out what approach I want to go with, figure out what the main idea is and then break it down into lessons after that. If it's a book that I think we could have a really good writing assignment on, I'll figure out how I'm going to break that down into small chunks. (Interview 2)

As she said, Dana designed her lessons primarily based on the Common Core Standards. She said she tried to address and reflect each aspect of the standards—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—in her everyday classes. Dana also used many informative texts that were relevant to her lessons, such as news articles and song lyrics, mostly obtained

online. Her classes always began with "bell work," during which time she assigned a writing prompt pertaining to the lesson topic. After five to ten minutes for the bell work, she moved on to either a reading or writing activity and then switched to another kind of activity after 15 minutes and finished with the closing activity.

Unlike the other teachers in this study, Dana was not teaching an MCAS-tested grade, which is the 10th grade in high school. Yet Dana said that she did teach to the test to some extent, especially with her 9th grade students. Dana provided these students with MCAS preparation because her school administrators were concerned about students' performance on the MCAS. Moreover, Dana and the teachers in her school were required to set up a goal for the MCAS results for their own teacher evaluation. Her MCAS preparation with 9th grade was carried out during the long block period. Just as in her other classes, it began with the bell work, but afterwards she went over a practice test that included multiple choice or open response items. She showed examples of how to solve the questions and kept track of her students' results. Dana found that her students' performance improved through this constant practice.

With her 11th and 12th grade students, Dana said she still considered preparing them for other standardized tests, such as the SAT and ACT. However, Dana wondered about whether and to what extent she needed to incorporate SAT and ACT preparation in her classes. The majority of her students were career-bound, so they were not interested in preparing for those tests for college. Her school also offered a separate SAT prep course, so Dana did not need to provide extensive preparation for those tests, although she wanted to integrate them more for some of her students who were still taking those tests and wanted get good scores. However, because the majority of her students were not

interested in taking SAT or ACT for college, what she did instead was spend the last

couple of weeks of the school year on SAT preparation, which she described as "a crash

course" (Interview 2). During those classes, Dana provided tips for solving each type of

SAT question and practice for the essay writing portion of the test.

Overall, Dana carried out test preparation by separating it from her regular

English classes. This resembled Valli and Chambliss' (2007) findings in their study of an

English teacher who taught to the test. In this study, the experienced English teacher

showed a contrasting way of teaching depending on whether she was teaching the regular

English classes or the reading intervention classes targeted toward the state standardized

test. While Valli and Chambliss indicated that it made the teacher frustrated to teach two

drastically different classes (one that was student-centered and another that was test and

teacher-centered), Dana did not have much frustration in that respect. Rather, she felt that

at least some kind of test preparation was necessary for every grade student for their

success, whether it was to get good scores on the MCAS or SAT and ACT. Dana

explained:

> High school kind of tailored each grade to their certain focus. Because mine is
>
> key ideas and details for reading comprehension and such a small part, a 10th
>
> grader [has a] focus that is longer. If I had to do everything altogether, I think it
>
> will be stressful but I think I spent a sufficient amount of time for my 9th graders
>
> on MCAS. I don't know. I mean it may have a little bit of a difference in their
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> scores, like the growth that I've been able to measure. It's a little bit of a
>
> difference. Like I said, the test prep that I do, it doesn't come towards that grade,
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> so I don't know how seriously they're taking it either. SAT prep of my 11th grade

class is that . . . I don't know. I feel like I haven't spent enough time on that. Like

I said, they offer out-of-school prep time for that reason. I still didn't get to as

much as ACT as I wanted to, for the SAT and ACT prep. Well, I mean, because

it's offered outside of school, I don't focus on it so much inside my classroom.

(Interview 3)

Because Dana was not teaching the MCAS-tested grade, it was obvious that test

preparation was not considered significantly in her daily English lessons. Yet, she was

teaching to the tests to some extent with her 9th grade students (MCAS) and 11th and 12th

grade students (SAT and ACT) by offering test preparation, separated from her regular

English classes. Her comments above reflected that she was still considering test

preparation for different grades although it was not the major focus of her classes.

Compared to other teachers, Dana was certainly engaging in less teaching to the

test, but this did not mean that she was free from the pressure and frustration of the test-

based accountability system. She was required by her school administrators to set up her

teacher evaluation goal based on MCAS and she felt the pressure to accomplish this goal.

In this respect, she was not so different from the other teachers in this study in that she

was impacted by the test-based accountability system even though she was not in charge

of an MCAS-tested grade.

Pressed by the System as Well as by Myself

The standardized testing and the accountability system based on that testing

influenced the practice of all four US teachers in this study, though to varied extents and

degrees. Depending on the context in which they were working, the teachers in this study

carried out a complete yet disguised teaching to the test (Jim), a partial teaching to the

test (Chelsey and Alice), and a separate test preparation in addition to the regular classes (Dana). The teachers also described the pressure and frustration they felt from the test-based accountability system. Many of their accounts in those areas reflected what has been indicted by the previous literature, including: feeling time constraints to cover all the content in the curriculum before the test (Berryhill et al., 2009); changing teaching to be more teacher directed (Abrams et al., 2003; Berryhill et al., 2009); feeling pressure of taking the sole responsibility of their students' failure (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Vernaza, 2012); and experiencing conflicts to provide test prep not to fail the students although it was not their favored way of teaching (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Agee, 2004). Moreover, the teachers emphasized another aspect of the accountability system– the excessive amount of testing and assessment – as an additional source of their pressure.

Chelsey, Alice, and Jim, who were teaching grades and subjects featured prominently on the MCAS, talked about pressure related to timing. They felt rushed to cover all the content in the curriculum within the limited time of the school year prior to the testing period, which usually occurred in April (English) and May (mathematics). Chelsey was particularly concerned that the restriction of time pushed her to make her classes more teacher-centered, which she did not like. This primarily involved her lecturing to the class while they took notes, a class structure the students referred to as "doing notes." As this quotation indicates, Chelsey and the students found this difficult:

> The fastest way to get through the most material is to have it be teacher-centered, where I am lecturing at them 95% of the time. They come in. I'm teaching them how to do X, Y and Z, they are doing X, Y and Z at home because I need to cover so much material. The MCAS wants us to get through 12 chapters before the

school year is done, which is ridiculous. The advanced classes don't even get

through a whole book. It's impossible. The quickest way to deliver that, so that

they can at least be shown and experience all the mathematics is possibly on the

MCAS, is for me to stand in front of them and talk, which I hate because that's

going to get boring. It's going to get tedious, "Are we doing notes again today,

Ms. P.?" "Of course." (Interview 2)

During her preservice education, Chelsey had been greatly inspired by the discovery-based learning approach she was taught, and teacher-centered classes were not the way she wanted to teach mathematics. However, she said she was rushing to cover the entire textbook as fast as possible in order to have time to review Algebra I before the MCAS. Chelsey lamented that she was "shovel[ing] everything" (Interview 3) into her students' brains, although she knew that she might bore her students and diminish their interest in learning mathematics. Jim also had the same kind of problem with his 7th grade English classes. He complained, "There were so many days doing what I don't want to do" (Interview 3), because the amount of time he needed to dedicate to MCAS preparation prevented him from teaching other meaningful and interesting things for his students:

Yeah, there's not enough time, really. We did a mini little debate thing. Instead of

using a debate style graphic organizer, I used an open-response graphic organizer,

which was fine. It was fun, but we didn't really get to dive into the debate aspect

of it. We were just reading our open responses out loud. I try to do as much as I

can, but I know that I have to keep moving, always. (Interview 2)

Both Chelsey and Jim were also frustrated that their teaching to MCAS made students nervous about the test. They indicated that many of their students actually gave up on the

test, which discouraged the teachers more. Chelsey confessed that seeing the "defeat" (Interview 2) on her students' faces when she was reviewing Algebra I questions for MCAS was extremely frustrating. Chelsey said, "I'm making them nervous, because they're like, 'Oh, I can't do this. I'm going to stop working,' which is what happens a whole heck of a lot with my kids" (Interview 2). Jim said that the most frustrating thing for him in terms of MCAS preparation was that some of his students, who were mostly ESL and special needs, eventually gave up on taking the test. Jim thought this happened "not because they [students] can't do it" (Interview 3), but because the test was too long and asked too many questions that his students were not able to complete within the given time:

> They'll [my students will] write a really good open response and then they'll turn
> the page and there's another one and they will close their book and hand it in.
> That's the most frustrating because I know they can do it and they can score well.
> (Interview 3)

The last part of Jim's comment showed that he believed in his students' abilities and felt they had potential to do well. However, he thought these students were not assessed in an appropriate way within the current format of the test. His frustration came from the fact that he still needed to drill his students for MCAS although he knew that this test had flaws that were detrimental and unfair especially to his marginalized students. For example, grammar and spelling are graded in the long composition section of MCAS, so many students lose points for that. Jim also provided an example of an MCAS question, which asked about the foreword of an article. Because the meaning of foreword was not taught in class, many of his students were not able to find the correct answer. In Jim's

view, the format and content of the MCAS were problematic in properly assessing the abilities of marginalized students.

Similar to Jim, Chelsey said that she felt the most pressure to convince her students not to abandon the test, because she did not want them to fail. Chelsey described that she was putting pressure on herself in this regard, "to make sure they [students] can at least see everything that might be on the test, and if they've seen it, they're less stressed about it, so they'll try something instead of just give up" (Interview 3). For both Jim and Chelsey, one of the most important reasons they were teaching to the test was because of their students. Although both of them held initial beliefs that were centered on promoting their students' in-depth learning and engaging them in meaningful learning process, they needed to suspend their student-centered approaches, because helping students pass the MCAS exam was the priority in their schools. Both Jim and Chelsey wanted their students to do well and not to abandon and fail the test, thus they were teaching to the test in a way that conflicted greatly with their student-centered beliefs. Even Alice, who said that she did not feel pressure in terms of preparing her students for MCAS, indicated that the only pressure she had was her self-pressure to make sure all of her students pass the MCAS:

> I don't personally feel pressured by anybody or anywhere, but just for myself because I work at Durban and because I'm part of Durban High. I want my school to be good and I want my students to do well for themselves. If you can't pass MCAS, they can't graduate. Again, the students that I teach this year, they already failed algebra 1 last year. There is a chance that they will not pass MCAS. If that's the case, they have to retake the MCAS. I don't want that to happen for

them because that's too much. They have to take that 2-part exam again next year

with the sophomores. I don't feel pressured by anybody, but I do feel pressured by

myself that I want my students to do well. (Interview 3)

Alice and Chelsey, who were both teaching mathematics at the same high school, were

well aware that MCAS scores highly affected their students' future lives. The high-school

students needed to pass the exam to get a diploma. They also needed to get good scores

on the test to get scholarships at local colleges. For those reasons, MCAS preparation was

necessary, although Chelsey particularly did not like to do it. To the question of why she

was teaching to the test despite the fact that she did not like it, Chelsey said:

I feel like so many people will judge my students based on their MCAS scores

that I'd rather teach to the test so that the people later on can't judge them, if that

makes sense. That's what I'm going for at this moment. It drives me insane.

(Interview 2)

The three teachers, Chelsey, Jim, and Alice, who were teaching the MCAS-tested

subjects and grades felt the pressure of teaching to the MCAS, although from varied

degrees and extent. They commonly stated that they had less time to cover the entire

curriculum before the MCAS. Moreover, Chelsey and Jim were particularly concerned

about their students who gave up on the test because it was too difficult and had too many

problems for them to complete. Most of all, all three teachers felt that they put pressure

on themselves to make sure their students passed and did well on the MCAS. Although

they did not like or want to teach to the test, they felt they needed to because of the

students. It should be noted that all of them had strong student-centered beliefs from the

beginning. The teachers aspired to support their students in various ways, not just

academically, but in their lives in general. Although teaching to the test was not their favored approach, if it were a way to help the students' current and future lives (i.e., getting high-school diplomas and scholarships in college), they felt obliged to do it. This self-pressure was more intense than the external pressure they had from the administrators or districts.

Dana was the only teacher who described herself as feeling less pressure about testing, because she was not teaching the 10th grade at the time of the interviews. However, it did not mean that she was completely free from the pressure of teaching to the MCAS. Dana indicated that the excessive amount of testing caused much pressure on her and her students. She said, "The fact that there's like an aptitude test and an achievement test…I think that's confusing [for teachers and students because they need to prepare for all of them]. That's another inconsistency that colleges take either the SAT or the ACT and they are completely different tests" (Interview 3). She also stated that while 9th and 10th grades were focused on MCAS, 11th and 12th grades were more concerned with preparing for the SAT or ACT in her school. According to Dana, it was a challenge for a high-school teacher to prepare his or her students for several kinds of standardized tests. Dana pointed out, "If it's a standardized test, [there] should be one standardized test" (Interview 3).

Jim, who was teaching English at a middle school, also agreed with Dana that there were too many tests that were daunting for both teachers and students:

> I'm not that averse to the MCAS as a thing, but the amount of testing outside of
> that is becoming… Teachers, we talk about that more. It's not necessarily the
> MCAS or the DDMs or the, I have to do testing for my goal. It's not any one

thing, it's that all of those things are expected to be done. In English alone, we

took two tests for my goal, two DDMS, first time, second time, midterm, a final,

and three days of MCAS. That's English. (Interview 2)

Regarding the MCAS, Jim also pointed out that during the MCAS testing period his

students wrote for 12 hours over three days, which he thought was unnecessary and

excessive for 7th grade students. His view was similar to Dana's that there needed to be

less testing for students and teachers.

All four US teachers in this study expressed concerns about being evaluated

according to their student performance on MCAS. Although Dana was not teaching 10th

grade, she said she felt the pressure from the teacher evaluation system in her school

because teachers were required to set up a goal that enabled them to keep track of their

progress on improving the students' MCAS scores. Her principal emphasized that even

9th grade students needed to be prepared in advance for the reading comprehension part

of the MCAS. Therefore, Dana set up one of her evaluation goals as: "my students [will]

show a 20% growth on reading comprehension based on key ideas and details between

September and May when the evaluation ends" (Interview 2). In response to this goal, her

MCAS preparation with 9th graders was carried out under block scheduling when the

class was longer than its normal length.

The other three teachers were also concerned that the teacher evaluation system,

which included their students' test scores, put the blame for the students' poor

performance entirely upon teachers. Chelsey asserted that she was frustrated by the

current accountability system, which made teachers the source of problem of students'

low achievement:

I feel like they [administrators and policy makers] just want the numbers, and the best way for them to get numbers is just to continually test so they can look at third grade numbers and they can look at eighth grade numbers. "This is a low failing school." Maybe this low failing school is in a poverty area where we can't get our students to sleep on time. We can't feed our students enough, or a student's father was just incarcerated the night before. They won't look at the issues that cause students to not do well on these tests. They just look at the numbers and then blame us, versus, "Let's fix poverty in America," which we can't do, because fixing poverty will fix education. It's just such a crazy cycle, but I feel like they must have pressure from someone, and they just want the numbers because numbers are easy. We can look at numbers and say, "You're failing, you're not." It's cut and dry. It's black and white. The whole education system is not black and white in any way. (Interview 3)

Alice, who later insisted on the necessity of MCAS and argued that it was valid to assess students and overall school performance, also indicated that it was inappropriate to evaluate a teacher's performance on the basis of students' test scores:

There are many other factors and there are other teachers that taught them in the previous years and especially the sophomore MCAS, it includes Algebra I and Geometry. Algebra I, they learned it in middle school. They've been learning Algebra ever since elementary school so if they worked well in elementary school and middle school, they will do well on their MCAS, especially on their Algebra I. How would you evaluate your Algebra I teacher by looking at the MCAS, maybe if their Algebra I teacher was terrible but they had a really good teacher in

their middle school that helped them get a good score. Same thing with Geometry,

maybe they're just … Who knows? They're just geniuses that they know all the

geometry factors. I don't see how the MCAS score can be a good method for

evaluating teachers. (Interview 2)

Among the four teachers, Jim was the one who felt the most pressure from the evaluation

system. It was because his school district had a strict evaluation policy that included

students' MCAS scores as one of the primary data sources to assess teachers. Jim said he

felt a lot of pressure because MCAS scores were "directly tied" (Interview 2) to his

evaluation. According to Jim, the students' MCAS scores and students' performance on

the district-wide assessments were averaged, which he called the "student growth

percentile" (SGP). Every year, the new cohort's scores on MCAS is compared to the last

year's cohort. If the new cohort showed a higher performance than 90% of the students

from the last year, then their SGP became 90%. Jim said all of his students' SGP was

averaged. If a teacher scored below 50%, he or she was identified as "needs

improvement," which required the teacher to provide additional materials or do extra

work to show his or her capability for promotion and tenure. Jim indicated that this

evaluation system had only negative reinforcement that punished the teacher if he or she

performed poorly, without any incentives.

Jim was especially worried that although he had seen his students making

improvement throughout the year, their improvement was not always reflected in their

MCAS scores. Moreover, no matter whether the students did well or not, their combined

SGP was deemed to be reflective of his teaching abilities according to the evaluation

system. Jim said:

I'm more confident in what I can do and how my students can achieve. It makes

me nervous that they might not achieve as well as I know that they can. If that

makes sense. I know that they're this good and that I've gotten them to be this

level. (Interview 3)

Jim concluded that his source of pressure comes from two places: from himself and the

evaluation system. He explained:

I have always put a lot of pressure on myself to achieve well. I think, when you

look at it, this is the only test that I take all year. I know it's my 75 kids taking the

test, but my SGP score feels like it's a grade to me. If I get a 70, it's supposed to

be good, but I think it should be better. I think I've done a better job than what

shows. I guess that kind of bothers me a little bit. (Interview 2)

Although the teachers were affected by the evaluation system to varying degrees and in

different ways, they all shared feelings of pressure, frustration, and concern, particularly

about their own teacher quality being assessed on the basis of their students' MCAS

scores. This is consistent with the findings from the previous studies that reveal teachers'

pressure and concern in similar ways (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Vernaza, 2012). The

pressure was greater for teachers working in high-stakes contexts, like Jim's, in which his

quality was evaluated based on his students' performance (Finnigan & Gross, 2007).

Moreover, all four American teachers in this study had concerns about taking the full

responsibility for their students' performance because there were many other

uncontrollable student-related factors that could impact their performance on the tests,

such as the students' academic backgrounds and their home environments (Vernaza,

2012).

Ambivalent Views about the MCAS and the Necessity of Test Preparation

Although all four US teachers in this study felt the pressure and frustration of preparing their students for MCAS, the teachers stated that they were not totally opposed to standardized testing. This differs from the findings from many other previous studies, which emphasize teachers' negative attitudes and perceptions towards standardized testing (Abrams et al., 2003; Berryhill et al., 2009; Cruz & Brown, 2010). In fact, all of the US teachers in this study agreed that there were some good aspects of standardized testing such as MCAS. For example, Chelsey, Alice, and Jim agreed that certain parts of MCAS assessed knowledge and skills that were necessary for students to know. Jim and Alice particularly mentioned that the open response items on MCAS were well designed to examine students' critical thinking skills (English) and problem-solving skills (mathematics). For that reason, Jim said that he focused more on teaching the open response section than the long composition part, because in his opinion, the open response section included more valid items to evaluate students' important skill set in English.

Dana and Alice also indicated that the MCAS provided necessary information to understand their student performance and improve their teaching. Dana said:

> When I do the long block period, I based their results on how they break it down by standards, so luckily for me, the answer key in the MCAS, it tells you which answer aligns with what standard. In that regard, teaching to the test isn't that detrimental because I'm able to then analyze, say, "Okay, everybody got number six wrong." Number six is standard reading five so then I'll go to standard reading five and say, "Okay, we need to work on this standard then" and then I could

apply that to other aspects of the classroom and try to reteach that standard and

holding on that. (Interview 3)

Dana thought if the test items were well aligned to the standards, then the test helped her

to figure out which standard she needed to address and incorporate more in her classes.

Alice stated more strongly that she believed MCAS was necessary, because it not only

showed each student's performance, but it also offered good data for each school to

review how they were doing in terms of improving their students' academic achievement:

MCAS is a test. It can't be perfect, but it is a standardized testing that will give

some kind of a picture of what the school is like. Maybe not what the teacher is

like, but what the school is like. I truly believe that rankings of the MCAS, like

the rankings of the school based on their MCAS scores because that's how the

students are. If there are more students that failed MCAS, then apparently you

know that there are students that are not learning well or behaving well or getting

what they need. I think MCAS is necessary to see how the schools are doing. I

think that it does give a good evaluation or valid evaluation of the school, not

individual teachers, but the school as a whole. (Interview 3)

Alice added that she thought there needed to be some kind of data that allowed

administrators to compare the students' performance between different schools. Jim did

not agree with Alice in that regard, and said he believed individual data were more

important:

I think I take it more on an individual level because looking at the large scale data

is never satisfying. Large scale is they do whatever fine. I'll be happy about it, but

looking more individually. An ESL kid last year who had not scored a 4/4 on

open response all year got two 4s on his open responses. I was super excited and

proud of him and I told him and he didn't really care. That makes me more proud;

the individual kids scoring well on things that they struggle with is more

important to me than the large scale data. (Interview 3)

For Jim, individual data were more valuable because they provided him information that

kept track of students' improvement. Although Dana, Alice, and Jim had conflicting

views about what aspects of MCAS data were more meaningful, they thought it provided

at least some kind of information that was useful for them.

Most of the teachers in this study, except Alice, did not like to teach to the test but

they did so as a part of their regular practice. This was because in the current education

system, the students needed to know how to take tests and show good performance on

them if they wanted to go to college. The four US teachers in this study had all attended

schools themselves where they were taught how to be prepared for and do well on

standardized tests. In fact, that was how they all had completed their higher education

successfully and eventually were accepted into college. Because the teachers knew from

their own experiences the impact that testing and college have on one's life, they could

hardly refuse teaching to the test. Chelsey said:

I know they're always big at the beginning of the year, get them ready for MCAS.

That's how I was brought up. Like, "Get ready for the SATs. Get ready for the

APs." I feel like it's a cultural thing in America that we just teach to the test,

which I don't want to do, but then our book teaches to the common core test, to

take the MCAS. Yeah, I mean, I feel like it's a cultural thing. (Interview 2)

Jim had a similar view about teaching:

> In our society, you need to be able to do well on standardized testing. You can't get into college if . . . [you do not demonstrate good achievement on tests]. For some kids, it doesn't matter. College isn't necessarily the best choice for them. For some kids, you got to get used to sitting down, taking a test. That's unfortunate, I think, but that's how it is. (Interview 2)

Because students needed to achieve well on tests in order to get admitted to good colleges, Jim thought practicing for taking those tests was needed for them. From his point of view, it was how teaching to the test was justified, even though he did not like it and wanted it to be much less of what he was doing. Dana also agreed that teaching students how to take tests was necessary in this current system. Chelsey, Jim, and Dana were certainly critical about standardized testing and teaching to the test, yet they carried it out reluctantly to varying extents because it was how they were expected to teach within this system. Alice, who firmly believed in the necessity of standardized testing and teaching to the test, was distinguished from the other teachers in this regard. Alice said:

> The teachers that complain, sometimes I wonder, what if there is no standardized testing? Then what are you going to teach too? I feel like it is so hard to measure. If there is nothing like the standardized testing, what would teachers teach to? I don't think they're going to do anything. I feel like they're just complaining because there is another restriction to what they are doing. (Interview 3)

Alice added if there were no test, it would be difficult for teachers to find a goal and purpose of their teaching. Although standardized testing put some restrictions on them, she thought that with no test, "Teachers might feel lazy or feel too relaxed on what they teach" (Interview 3). This was a completely opposite view from the other teachers.

Alice's viewpoint could have been influenced by her own childhood experience in Korea, where she studied hard for long hours during the day and engaged in shadow education such as *hagwon* and private tutoring to get good scores in tests. Compared to her experience in Korea, Alice found that the pressure in the US for students to do well on the tests was much less. As a teacher, she also felt less pressure and restrictions of teaching in the US than in Korea, which was the reason why she favored teaching in the US:

> Just like the parent involvement in Korea and the school environment in Korea [makes me not want to teach there]. They are stricter and they really teach up to the standardized testing. The whole goal for the student is to take the college entrance exam ever since elementary school. That's all they study for. They need to get into a good college. That's why they are in high school. That's why they are in middle school. That's why they are in elementary school. That's the reason to live in Korea as a student. I don't want to be in that position where that's too much pressure. That is too much pressure. MCAS is nothing because that doesn't affect me yet. I don't know how it's going to affect me, maybe later, I don't know. As of right now, that doesn't affect me. (Interview 3)

US Teachers' Navigating Tension within the Test-Based Accountability System

The four US teachers' lived experiences regarding preparing their students for standardized tests suggests several points that are either aligned with or conflicting with the major findings from previous research. First of all, the way the four teachers carried out test preparation showed that teaching to the test occurred in various ways and to different extents based on several factors. The previous studies primarily indicated that

the high or low stakes of the accountability systems (Abrams et al., 2003) and the school context that included school culture and the principal's leadership (Rinke & Valli, 2010; Stillman, 2011) affected teachers' degree of pressure and the extent of practicing teaching to the test. The four teachers studied here illustrate that there are other influential factors that have not been specifically addressed in the previous literature, such as whether teachers were teaching tested grades and subjects, the students' current performance levels, and the teachers' self-pressure and motivation for providing test preparation to prevent their students' failure. Besides the school and district accountability policies, those factors influenced the way and extent to which they integrated test preparation into their regular practice of teaching.

The teachers pointed out that they felt pressure and frustration due to the standardized test, yet in varied degrees, depending on whether they were teaching the tested grades and subjects. Aligned with the major literature, the three teachers, Jim, Chelsey, and Alice, who were teaching the tested grades and subjects, felt that the limited time until the test constrained them to focus on the tested content while skipping or deemphasizing other parts that students should learn (Berryhill et al., 2009). These three teachers were also common in that they felt self-pressure to prepare their students for the test and make sure they got good scores because they did not want their students to give up or fail on the test. Jim and Chelsey particularly felt conflicts between their student-centered beliefs about teaching and the fact that they needed to teach to the test (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Agee, 2004). Dana, the only teacher who was not teaching the tested grade, said her pressure was not as intense as the other teachers, but she still felt pressure from the school accountability system, which pressed her to provide MCAS

prep for her 9th grade students. Including Dana, all four teachers in this study had great concerns about the accountability system that tied students' test performance to their own evaluation as teachers, since there were many other factors such as students' prior learning and home-related factors that had an impact on students' performance on tests (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Vernaza, 2012).

The three teachers, Jim, Chelsey, and Dana, expressed their ambivalent views about standardized testing and teaching to the test. While they did not favor teaching to the test, they thought it was necessary, because within the current system, the students needed to do well on the test to prove their academic ability for college. This point was also addressed by a study about the experiences of beginning teachers of color with teaching to the test (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012), and the three White beginning teachers' views in this study were well aligned to that. Alice, the only teacher of color in this study as a Korean American, expressed a distinctive point of view that was significantly different from the other teachers. She perceived that standardized testing was necessary to examine the student and the school performance, and that it also helped teachers provide more focused instruction towards a specific goal for their students. Her positive view about standardized testing and the lesser pressure she felt compared to the other teachers might have been influenced by her childhood experience in Korea, as she perceived the pressure on students to do well on tests and the tendency of teaching to the test as considerably more severe in Korean schools.

Navigating Tension: Korean Teachers' Lived Experiences within Korea's Test-Oriented System

Across the four Korean teachers' lived experiences within their unique test-oriented system, three themes emerged: teaching according to a fully test-oriented system; dealing with unhappy students in an unhappy system; and feeling constrained by the school system. Before describing the details of their lived experiences by theme, I first offer a brief introduction to the kind of tests administered in the Korean secondary school system, which involves middle and high schools, to help readers understand the system.

Secondary Education in Korea: A Ladder to College

Many Korean parents and students understand that secondary education is very important because of the belief that a student's performance in middle and high schools is highly correlated with college admission (Sorensen, 1994). Even in middle school, where the pressure for college admission and *suneung* is less intense, the students' performance on the regular school tests, such as midterm and final exams in each semester, is still important. Getting accepted to a special-purpose high school (e.g., foreign language high school or science high school) or a self-governing private high school depends on the students' performance on these exams. These high schools are favored among many Korean parents and students because they accept primarily high performing students and have reputations for sending these students to prestigious colleges (Kim, 2002; Kim & Song, 2009; Sorensen, 1994). Among the US and Korean teachers in this study, Alice, the Korean American teacher, and Yubin, the Korean English teacher who was in charge of a high-school senior homeroom, had themselves attended foreign language high

schools because both of them had strong academic records in their middle schools and were very good at English.

The time in high school is the most critical period for many Korean students who are planning to go to college, and most of them dedicate the entire three years in high school to preparing for college admission (Sorensen, 1994). There are two major factors related to college admission in Korea: "*naesin*," which involves a student's performance in regular school assessments and extracurricular activities, such as volunteer experiences, awards, and club activities, and a person's score on "*suneung*," which is the term for the Korean scholastic aptitude test for college admission.

Suneung takes place once a year in mid-November. This date is noted by everyone in Korea because many workplaces start later in order to prevent heavy traffic that might cause students to arrive at the testing place too late.[3] Even flight departures and landings are prohibited during the period when students take the listening section of the English test. It is obviously the most important test among so many tests Koreans take during their lives in school. This test is run by the Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE), one of the subordinate agencies of the Ministry of Education (MOE). Anyone who has completed high school or is a senior in high school and desires to apply for college is eligible to take *suneung*. There are five subjects in this test: Korean, mathematics, English, social studies/science/vocational studies (students choose one subject among these three depending on which major they are applying for), and foreign

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[3] As a way to provide fair conditions to everyone, students who take suneung are randomly assigned to different schools in the local school district to take the test.

language. The scope of *suneung* encompasses all of the national high-school curricula on these subjects. Each student's standardized score and percentile are reported with a numerical grade (1 as the highest and 9 as the lowest) based on his or her percentile ranking in each subject.

Naesin is particularly important if the student is applying for early admission. In most cases, a student who gets accepted during the early admission period still takes *suneung*, but only needs to achieve the minimum grade level in some subjects as required by the college. Those who do not apply for the early admission process should take *suneung*, which is the prerequisite for the regular admission process. To apply and get accepted to high-ranking colleges through the regular admission process, it is necessary to score in the highest percentile and grade possible in every *suneung* subject. The MOE offers a variety of *suneung* prep courses through the Educational Broadcasting System (EBS), an educational media channel funded by the government. Most of these courses are inexpensive or free of charge. Some of the content in those prep courses is included in the actual *suneung* test to encourage students and parents to use this service instead of paying expensive fees for shadow education to prepare for this exam.

Teaching According to a Fully Test-Oriented System

The four Korean teachers' descriptions of their day-to-day work as teachers indicated that they were operating within a fully test-oriented system, as has been well-documented in the literature about Korean schooling (e.g., Kim, Y., 2013; Sorensen, 1994; Um, 2013). Unsurprisingly, the lived experiences of the four teachers I interviewed in Korea revealed that teaching to the tests was the normal practice in Korean schools. The two English teachers, Yubin and Jieun, taught primarily to prepare the students for

the *suneung*, while the two mathematics teachers, Minwoo and Somi, concentrated their teaching on preparation for the regular school tests, such as the midterm and final exams. This difference was not due to their different subject areas but rather to the different school levels (middle and high schools) and the school contexts, which involved the school's location, students' socioeconomic status, and parental pressure. These differences influenced the degree of competition among students and what kind of tests shaped the instruction of the teachers in this study. In this section, I begin by illustrating the *suneung*-oriented teaching of the two high-school English teachers, Yubin and Jieun, and then I describe the way the two mathematics teachers, Minwoo and Somi, taught toward the school tests. Compared to the US teachers, all of the Korean teachers commonly showed more explicit forms of teaching to the test, which involved repeated drilling on test problems, practicing test-taking skills, and emphasizing tested content. More detailed descriptions of their teaching methods are provided in this section.

Suneung-**oriented English teaching.** The two English teachers, Yubin and Jieun, were similar in that they were both high-school senior homeroom teachers and were teaching only senior English at the time of the interviews. The lived experiences of both teachers showed typical *suneung*-oriented English classes in which teachers provide a lot of drilling on problems from *suneung* workbooks and there is heavy emphasis on test-taking strategies.

The two English teachers worked in slightly different school contexts. Yubin described her school—Jangmi High School in Gimpo— as an average-performing school compared to other schools in the city. The students were from varied socioeconomic backgrounds, with most of them from middle- to lower-middle-class families. Yubin said

that what she liked most about her school was that there was less parental pressure (because of the students' varied socioeconomic backgrounds) and interference with teachers' work. Yubin also said that, compared to the students in other school districts, her students were better behaved and more respectful to the teachers. Yubin explained that it was because of the regional characteristics of Gimpo, which was known as an average-performing school district in the Geyonggi Province. Compared to other schools in high-performing districts, there was less competition among students and less parental pressure on them and the teachers, which she perceived to be influential on student behavior.

Jieun worked at Hansung High School at Ansan, a big school of more than 1,000 students, which consisted of 14 to 16 homerooms in each grade. According to Jieun, her school used to be one of the highest performing schools in Ansan and was popular among many high-performing middle school students in the area. However, when she began her first year at this school, the local education office changed its high-school admission policy to relieve the competition among middle school students to get admitted to high-performing local high schools. Since then, the school was required to accept students who performed at various levels, from lowest to highest. Furthermore, Jieun said in our interviews that since more special high schools and self-governing private schools had been built around this area, her school was facing challenges in maintaining its reputation as a high-performance school with a good record in college admissions.

The senior year in high school is a critical time for most Korean students because they need to take *suneung* and prepare for college admission (H. J. Kim, 2013; Sorensen, 1994). For many Korean high-school teachers, being in charge of a senior homeroom

means that they need to be very committed, and they work hard to prepare the students for college admission exams (Um, 2013). As expected, then, both Yubin and Jieun had much longer working hours than Korean teachers who were not in charge of a senior homeroom or who were not working at high schools. Both of them came to school at about 7:30 a.m. and stayed with their students until 10 p.m. almost every weekday. Before beginning classes at 9 a.m., these teachers stayed at their homerooms to oversee the students during their self-study hours. Then from 9 a.m. until 5 to 6 p.m. (depending on their school's class schedule), the teachers were busy teaching regular and afterschool classes and dealing with a lot of administrative work related to homeroom management and students' college applications. After dinner, the teachers stayed in the homeroom to oversee their students during the evening self-study hours or had meetings with the students in the teachers' room to advise the students about their applications. Both teachers were teaching regular and afterschool classes for 20 to 22 hours a week. However, this was the time just devoted to teaching classes. In addition to teaching, their schedules were full every day with tasks related to managing the homeroom, preparing lessons, supervising students, and guiding students' college applications.

Both Yubin and Jieun mentioned that their senior English classes, including regular and afterschool classes, were entirely concentrated on practicing *suneung*-type problems in the workbooks. According to Yubin, the senior English classes were different from the freshman (10th grade) and junior (11th grade) English classes. In those two grades, the teacher usually focused on the textbook to cover the national curriculum. However, the senior classes were "100%, fully oriented to *suneung*" (Yubin, Interview 3). The teachers did not use textbooks anymore. Rather, they used *suneung* workbooks

published by EBS because the content in these workbooks was included in the actual *suneung*. These workbooks contained *suneung*-type English problems, which were in the form of long and short reading texts accompanied by one or more multiple-choice questions for each text. A typical kind of *suneung* problem asked the test-taker to ascertain the topic of the reading or identify correct and incorrect information from the text. Yubin explained how she conducted her *suneung*-oriented English classes using these workbooks:

> I would enter the classroom and greet the students. Right after then we would begin with the first reading passage [for example, which is about American football]. [I would say,] "Folks, I will give you 90 seconds to finish this text. Let's get started. [I time it and after 90 seconds I say,] OK, we're done. So what is the correct answer?" [Then the students would respond,] "The answer is number three." [Then I would ask them,] "Why is it number three?" If no one responds, I would begin my lecture from there. I would write down all the new words [on the board], read and interpret the sentence line by line, saying, "This word here looks like the keyword of the text because it appears again in the next sentence. OK, it looks important so let's circle this word. Next, now it's clear that this word is indeed the keyword of the text. Then what does this text talk about in terms of American football?" Then the students would say, "It's about this and that." Then I would write down the answer, saying, "OK, so this is the topic of the text." And then we would read it again to understand the author's intention and find out the main idea [of the text]. From this process, I would explain [why] "The correct answer is number two." And then I would explain why number three is wrong.

"Are we good now? OK, next passage." Then we would move on to the next

problem. Drilling on the problems, that's all [I do in my senior English classes].

(Interview 3)

Yubin added that unlike the typical lesson structure that had warm-ups and concluding

activities (e.g., exit ticket), there was no such flow and order during *suneung*-oriented

lessons. Jieun agreed, stating that every day all of her classes were similar in the different

homerooms in which she taught. All of the senior English classes she was teaching

normally covered two to three reading passages from the workbooks in each class period,

and the way she taught was very similar to the way Yubin taught. Jieun said, "High-

school English classes are like, keep practicing on various types of *suneung* problems so

as to increase the chance to hit the right answer in the shortest time" (Interview 2). Jieun

said that even though she and her students did not like this teaching approach, she kept

teaching this way because more test prep meant more opportunity for students to improve

their performance on *suneung*. Moreover, this was the method of teaching that every

other high-school English teacher used in Korea, especially when they taught senior

classes (Sorensen, 1994). In this regard, Yubin indicated that there was not much

difference in high-school English classes because all the teachers were teaching to

suneung, especially in senior classes. Every English teacher's classes would follow a

similar structure, which was to practice *suneung* problems as much as possible until the

test was over.

Teaching mathematics to the school tests. Unlike the two English teachers,

Yubin and Jieun, who taught *suneung*-oriented classes with their high-school senior

students, the two mathematics teachers, Minwoo and Somi, did not need to focus on

suneung much since they were not teaching the senior grade level. Yet teaching to the tests was still their main practice because they needed to cover the curriculum for midterm and final exams.

The two mathematics teachers in this study worked in very different school contexts. At the time of the interviews, Minwoo was a second-year mathematics teacher at Bora Middle School in Incheon and was also in charge of a freshmen (7th grade) homeroom class. His school was located in a newly developed, affluent area in Incheon where students had plenty of access to good *hagwon*. Most students were from middle- to upper middle-class families, and their parents were passionate about sending their children to good high schools, such as specialized high schools or self-governing private high schools around the local area. Minwoo said, therefore, that there was some parental pressure on teachers in his school. Most of the parents were greatly concerned about their children's academic performance, so almost every student in his school was receiving some form of shadow education after school, such as *hagwon* or private tutoring. Minwoo also mentioned that there was a "study group culture" around his school area. These study groups were conducted by some mothers who were stay-at-home moms. They put their children together with some of their friends and provided a space at home to study after school. According to Minwoo, the competition among the students in his school to get high scores and rankings on regular school tests (midterm and final) was quite intense because a strong academic record was necessary to get accepted to elite local high schools.

Somi's school, Muhan High School in Shiheung, was also located in a newly developed area in the city. However, her school was known as one of the lowest

performing high schools in this area. According to Somi, many of the students were from middle- to lower middle-class families. Somi said that in her first year teaching at this school, 15 out of 33 students in her homeroom came from single-parent homes. Some students in her school also had behavioral issues, such as smoking, violence, and attendance problems. Because most of the students were below average in every subject of *suneung*, Somi said her school put more emphasis on preparing students for early admission, which was primarily based on a student's performance on the school tests and in extracurricular activities. Because of this unique situation, *suneung* preparation was not considered so important in her school, unlike in many other Korean high schools. Moreover, Somi was in charge of a junior (11th grade) homeroom at the time of the interviews, so she did not have the kind of pressure that Yubin and Jieun had in terms of improving students' *suneung* scores by pushing them to practice suenung problems as much as possible.

Although Minwoo and Somi were working in quite dissimilar school contexts, both of them were teaching their mathematics classes to the regular school tests— midterms and finals—rather than to *suneung*. Both of them designed their lessons using the textbook as their primary resource because the school tests were based on the content in the textbook. They also used worksheets that they created on their own. Minwoo said that to make his own worksheets, he referred to the textbook, teacher resource book, and other mathematics workbooks from various publishers. He explained:

> I use my own worksheets in my class, which I made by the flow of a lesson. I put the content in order [on the worksheet] from the beginning to the end and make some blanks [on the worksheet] to have students fill in. (Interview 2)

Minwoo said that his worksheets were constructed of several parts, including an explanation of the concepts, examples, basic-level problems, intermediate-level problems, and advanced-level problems. When teaching classes, Minwoo said he put a great deal of emphasis on motivating students by explaining to them why a certain concept was important to learn. Minwoo provided an example:

> What I do often to motivate my students is to teach them the actual meaning of the vocab. For example, when we learn quadrant, I focus on why we call it "quadrant," why it is necessary to know...Like in a function graph, it is constructed by x-axis and y-axis, and we need to differentiate each area. How can we do that? If you see the graph, it is divided into four areas. A different way to call "four" is using the prefix, "quad," so this is why we call it "quadrant" (Interview 2).

After explaining the concepts, Minwoo usually demonstrated some examples on the worksheets and then had his students solve the other problems. He also said he tried to teach his classes in a way that even students who are not receiving any shadow education can achieve good results on the school tests if they pay attention to his lessons. In this respect, Minwoo's classes were highly associated with the school tests. He added that he created many test problems from the content he taught.

Somi used a similar approach in teaching her mathematics classes. She also designed and taught her classes based on the textbook, and she used her own worksheets, which were similar in format and structure to Minwoo's. In their use of many worksheets, these two mathematics teachers taught in a similar manner to a Singaporean beginning elementary school teacher's way of teaching English classes (Loh & Hu, 2014). The

researchers of the study in Singapore found that teachers' reliance on worksheets was pervasive in Singapore's schools because worksheets were useful tools for reinforcing content and were an effective test-preparation strategy given that the problems on the worksheets were examples of the test problems. The two Korean mathematics teachers in this study crafted and used their worksheets in similar ways to prepare their students for school tests. A difference between Somi's and Minwoo's mathematics classes was that Somi spent more time explaining concepts than in solving problems because most of her students were low performing in mathematics. Somi said, "There are four levels of problems in the mathematics textbook. My students, they could only solve less than half of the level-three problems" (Interview 2). Most of her students were struggling with mathematics, so preparing them for *suneung* was very difficult. The *suneung* mathematics test includes more applied problems and advanced-level problems than the school test. Therefore, many students in Somi's school aimed to enter college through the early admission process, which is based on their performance on the school tests and their extra-curricular activities. Because her students were anxious about getting good results on school tests for early admission, Somi said she focused on two things in her classes. One was to explain the concept that they were learning for the day by associating it with the related concept that they had learned in middle school. Somi thought that by building on previous knowledge, it would be easier for students to understand and accept the new knowledge. Another thing she considered important was to explain new information using simple and understandable language. Somi said, "For example, when we learn about 'increase' and 'decrease' in function, I draw a graph first, and explain like, 'increase' means 'going up' and 'decrease' means 'going down.' So I reword them [to

make them easier to understand]" (Interview 2). Somi also mentioned that she tried not to cover too much content in a single lesson. "Teach one concept, and then repeat similar kind of problems using that concept again and again. That's all I did [in my class]," Somi said.

The mathematics tests in Somi's school were based entirely on the textbook from which she was teaching. Her approach was slightly different from that of Minwoo who also referred to other resources, such as workbooks from various publishers. Somi said, "No applied problems, because my students just can't solve them" (Interview 2). In her school, some students were taking afterschool classes to prepare for school tests. While afterschool classes in many Korean high schools are typically offered to practice *suneung* problems, Somi said the afterschool classes in her school were focused on supplementing the regular classes because the low-performing students could hardly solve *suneung*-type problems. In the afterschool mathematics classes, Somi reviewed the problems from the textbook using the worksheets she had made in order to help her students get used to the school test problems. It was not that Somi was the sole teacher in her school who had low expectations of students. Rather, such expectations were given to the students in her school because it was known as one of the lowest-performing schools in the town based on the achievement level of accepted students and the school's outcomes in college admissions. From the description of their classes, we can see that Somi and Minwoo were obviously tailoring their mathematics classes to the school tests.

Dealing with Unhappy Students in an Unhappy System

My analysis of the four Korean teachers' lived experiences of teaching indicated that all of them oriented their lessons to some kind of tests, either *suneung* or school tests.

Regardless of the subject area and grade levels, every lesson the teachers taught was to prepare students for a certain test. Teaching how to solve the problems that would appear on tests and having students practice those problems as much as possible occurred in all four of the Korean teachers' classes.

The four Korean teachers in this study also explained that they had many difficulties in dealing with students who lacked motivation and interest in their classes. Furthermore, the teachers were concerned that many of the students were unhappy about their lives, were not very confident, and had low self-esteem. All four of the Korean teachers I studied perceived that this was due to the test-oriented school system that put too much pressure on students to study hard for college admission. It put students in extreme competition with each other to get better scores and rankings. All four teachers indicated that test-oriented schooling was the fundamental problem of Korean education, which made many students and teachers suffer. This perception is consistent with the views of other teachers and experts on Korean schooling who agree that the test-oriented education system is the cause of nearly every educational and social problem in Korean society, such as the increasing suicide rates of students due to the study pressure, teachers' depression, and parents' increased spending on shadow education (Goo, 2014; Kim, Y., 2013; Lee, 2006; Um, 2013). This view is, in fact, supported by many Koreans and has been minimally criticized. The four teachers' views confirmed that they were no different from other Koreans in this matter.

All four teachers in this study reported that many of their students did not pay attention in their classes and were uninterested and lacked the motivation to learn, which has also been indicated in the previous literature (H. J. Kim, 2013; Y. T. Kim, 2013; Um,

2013). The teachers recognized that the cause of such poor attitudes was that many of the students already learned the content taught in school from *hagwon* or private tutoring. Somi, who had taught middle school mathematics at a *hagwon* before she became a teacher, described in detail how *hagwon* instruction was typically carried out. Her *hagwon* was specialized in mathematics and targeted middle school students. It was run by a homeroom system, and each homeroom consisted of up to eight students who were all on the same grade level. Somi said the *hagwon* lessons were conducted in two ways: they covered all the content taught in the students' current grade as much as possible and previewed the next grade's content in the same way. According to Somi, such review of the students' current grade content and the preview of the next grade occurred at the same time under a block schedule every day except Sunday (e.g., block 1 for reviewing the current grade content and block 2 for previewing the next grade's content). Under this schedule, the students in her *hagwon* took two mathematics classes every day, one, a review of their current mathematics, and one, a preview of the next grade's mathematics. For example, a junior middle school student (8th grade) took an 8th grade review class along with a 9th grade preview class. If a student was on an advanced level in mathematics, he or she could take the preview class for the 10th grade, which was two years above his or her current grade level. Somi said that such review and preview of mathematics content in *hagwon* were carried out several times throughout the academic year. Summer and winter breaks were critical because during this time every *hagwon* offered special courses that allowed students to preview the entire content of the next academic year. If a student previewed the next grade's content during each break as well as during the school semester, it meant that he or she had already covered the next

grade's content at least three times. This repetition of review and preview was common in many *hagwon* lessons (Kim & Kim, 2012). However, Somi pointed out that it was problematic because many students came to understand mathematics as a "memorizable" subject. (Interview 1) Somi said:

> They [*hagwon* lessons] do not promote students' thinking skills. They rather focus on memorizing [the mathematics problems] by exposing students to as many problems as possible. They just teach students to get used to those mathematics problems. But then the students can't handle a different type of problem [that they did not practice at *hagwon*]. (Interview 1)

Somi indicated that even though many students were very good at solving the problems in the *hagwon* workbooks, they struggled if they were faced with different types of problems or problems that apply the mathematics to everyday life. One of the middle school students was able to solve high-school level problems because he had learned them at *hagwon*, but he could not solve much easier problems if they were not taught in *hagwon*. Minwoo also agreed with Somi, indicating that many of his students were good at memorizing and solving similar types of mathematics problems, but they had insufficient understanding of the underlying mathematics principles and concepts of each problem:

> What I regret about my students is, whereas they are skillful at solving many problems as fast as possible [from *hagwon*], many of them do not actually understand the concepts [underlying the problems]. They just think "I got the right answer of this problem, so I'm all right," but that's not true. For example, the meaning of "x" is different in function and equation. In equation, the value of

x comes later, and this is why we call it an "unknown quantity." But in function, the value of *x* is in flux. *x* can be one, two, or three, so this is why it's called "variable." If I ask my students in class "Is the *x* here an unknown quantity or a variable?" they can't answer this question. Even the highest performing students can't. Why does that happen? It's because they are drilled in solving problems [in *hagwon* and other shadow education services], but they are not interested in the concept of an unknown quantity and variable. (Interview 2)

As indicated by Somi and Minwoo, *hagwon* instruction had serious limitations for improving students' in-depth learning. Despite limitations, all the teachers in this study stated that most of their students took such shadow education programs after school. The most popular subjects for shadow education were mathematics and English, which are this study's content areas. Yubin was concerned that many of the students in her school paid more attention to their *hagwon* lessons than to those in the school English classes because many of them believed *hagwon* provided more drilling and effective preparation for *suneung*-type English problems. This tendency was also depicted in a qualitative study of *hagwon* and the students who attended *hagwon* (Kim & Kim, 2012). The middle and high-school students in this study perceived that their *hagwon* instructors were academically stronger and taught more effectively than their school teachers. The researchers found the reason within the structure of the *hagwon* lessons. Many *hagwon* lessons ran as small-group classes according to students' achievement levels. As there were a small number of students in each class who performed at a similar level, it was easier for *hagwon* instructors to provide instruction specialized to each student than in a school in which teachers needed to teach a larger group of students performing at varied

levels. Moreover, the students in this study even felt that the *hagwon* instructors were more approachable and caring, and they provided more practical advice on their subjects. It was also plausible given the organization of *hagwon*. The researchers in this study provided an explanation of why many students were less motivated to learn and less cooperative in the teachers' classes in school. Yubin confirmed this tendency, saying that many students slept during her English classes because they had studied at *hagwon* late into the night and were tired at school during the day. Yubin felt troubled that those students considered their *hagwon* lessons more important than the lessons in their school classes, just as illustrated in the above study. She said:

> If I were a student, I would pay more attention at school classes and have free time or get relaxed after school [instead of going to *hagwon*]. [If I go to *hagwon* after school], I am studying double amount of time. But these students are like sleeping at school and studying at *hagwon*…And then complaining to me that they have so much study and homework to do at *hagwon*…. (Interview 3)

Somi and Minwoo agreed with Yubin, stating that many students were not interested in school classes because they already covered most of the content several times at *hagwon*. The students felt that school classes were boring for that reason. They were also tired because of the long hours of study at school and at *hagwon* after school. The teachers felt discouraged by seeing many of the students who lacked motivation and interest in their classes.

Although there were many students who did not participate well in the teachers' classes but did more so at *hagwon*, the teachers did not blame the students and *hagwon* very much. Rather, they thought what caused this situation was the test-oriented school

system that puts so much emphasis on tests and pressure on students to get good scores and rankings in order to get accepted to better schools. All four teachers in this study felt that their students were unhappy in this test-oriented school system. The three high-school teachers, Yubin, Jieun, and Somi, particularly mentioned that they felt frustrated when they saw students giving up on study. According to these teachers, there were various reasons why the students gave up and did not study hard anymore. Some of these students were not taking *suneung* because they were not applying for college. Also, there were some students who wanted to major in arts, music, or sports in college, and *suneung* is considered less significant for getting admitted to those programs. Yet, these students were few in comparison to other students who gave up on study and fell asleep in class. Jieun talked about how this situation was serious in her classes:

> There are so many students [in my homeroom] who just give up on study, so many more than I expected. They come to school for no reason. They don't find any meaning of study. I talked to them a lot about why you need to come to school and so on. But it never got better (Interview 2).

Yubin also indicated that within the test-oriented school system, schools only emphasize studying hard for college admission. Students are not encouraged to pursue any other goals besides getting accepted to elite colleges. This is the sole purpose and meaning of public education in Korea, particularly in secondary education, as indicated in several literature (H. J. Kim, 2013; Y. T. Kim, 2013; Um, 2013). Because of the emphasis on college admission, other important and necessary roles of public schooling are neglected, such as cultivating students' interests and providing guidance for their future careers (Y.

T. Kim, 2013). In this respect, Yubin compared the lives of many Korean students whom she observed to those of American students:

> In Korea, we do not prepare students for diverse pathways because we just emphasize drilling hard on test problems. Everyone says, "Let's go to college and get a job." But it's not like "I want to get a job, [for example,] in the marketing department and be an expert in this field." Everyone is rather like, "Let's get a job at any place that accepts me and hopefully it has a good reputation like Samsung." [After they get a job], they just live their lives, do work, and retire. But in the United States, there are many people who succeed in various fields, like Steve Jobs who made an innovative smartphone with his creative thinking. Or there are many entertainers like musicians, rappers, and guitarists who make big money and appear on CNN. Also sports stars and professors who received the Nobel Prize. There are so many people in the US who make a huge accomplishment in various fields and get credit for that. But what about in Korea? I think this test-oriented schooling prevents cultivating students' abilities in diverse areas and that's why many students are unhappy, less confident, and less passionate about their lives. But I don't think this system would change, which makes me really worried. (Interview 3)

Somi agreed with Yubin, stating that cultivating students' various interests and talents is not encouraged within the current system whose aim for schooling is only college admission. This point was also indicated by Yongtaek Kim (2013), a retired Korean language arts teacher who stated that this system "deprived" (p. 155) students of opportunities to seek other types of learning and pursue various interests.

Minwoo, who was the only middle school teacher among the teachers, pointed out another concern. He said that many students in his school were subjected to their parents' desire for them to go to elite high schools. Many parents aimed to send their children to elite high schools because they believed it would increase their children's chances for getting accepted to higher-ranked colleges. Minwoo's concern was that his students' aspirations to study hard for good high schools were predominantly influenced by their parents rather than being rooted in their own motivation. He said, "When I ask my students why they want to go to those schools [elite high schools such as special-purpose high schools and self-governing private schools], they say because my parents want it. It's not that they want it. It's rather their parents push them to go for it" (Interview 3). This statement again showed that many students did not find meaning or a purpose for study other than going to good schools. Many of them rarely had a chance to reflect on goals or purposes for their study, what they most liked to do, and what they truly wanted to be, not what their parents wanted them to be. While the students were pushed at school, at *hagwon*, and at home to study hard for college, they lost opportunities to shape their own lives. The teachers in this study thought it was problematic, but felt helpless as teachers belonging to this strict system to make a change.

As the teachers stated, this test-oriented system made many students and parents believe that the primary meaning and purpose of public schooling was to prepare for students' college admission. The value of teaching, in this sense, was only for test preparation, which involved a lot of drilling on test problems (either school tests or *suneung*) for long hours. In this respect, Jieun called the current state of Korean schooling "abnormal." (Interview 2) She added:

[In this system] English becomes a subject to memorize. The students just need to

memorize the EBS workbooks because the workbook problems are included in

suneung. I am telling them to do so, because I know college is so important to

them. Even though I want to develop their communication skills [in English] and I

hate telling them to memorize the workbooks, I am doing so, because they need to

get good scores in *suneung*. I think this is a kind of *contradiction* [emphasis

added] I have…. (Interview 3)

Jieun's mention of "contradiction" signified the frustration that the Korean teachers in

this study shared. The way that the teachers were teaching their classes was not the kind

of teaching they had expected to do before they began to teach. When the four Korean

teachers in this study began teaching, they aspired to teach their content well (Jieun,

Somi, and Minwoo) or support students to live a happy life (Yubin). However, after

beginning their jobs, all of them came to realize that those aspirations were hard to

achieve when they were forced to teach to the tests. The two high-school senior English

teachers, Jieun and Yubin, were providing intensive preparation for *suneung* in their

classes. The two mathematics teachers, Somi and Minwoo, were also teaching lessons

that targeted the school tests. Although the teachers did not want their teaching to be

simplified as test preparation, they had all adopted this practice because it was expected

in this education system. The teachers felt significant conflict between their earlier beliefs

about teaching and the system that drove them to teach to the test. Moreover, the teachers

were frustrated that many of their students were suffering in this system, but there was

nothing that they could do to help their students and improve the current state of public

schooling.

Constrained by the School System

The Korean teachers in this study felt troubled by the reality that forced them to teach to the tests, and the students were also unhappy about it. While dealing with this tension, the teachers also struggled to survive within the hierarchical school system that put too many responsibilities on them without much support. All the teachers in this study worked overtime frequently to complete several administrative tasks assigned to them. A particular concern that the teachers had was that such a heavy workload, in addition to teaching, took away from much of their time for lesson planning and teaching improvement away, which they initially thought would be their primary tasks as a teacher.

At the time of the interviews, all four Korean teachers in this study were working as homeroom teachers in addition to teaching their subjects. Many Korean secondary teachers do not want the responsibilities of a homeroom teacher because there is a significant amount of extra work they need to do for their homeroom students (Um, 2013). Somi pointed out that because many teachers did not wish to take that job, new teachers were often assigned to be homeroom teachers even though they were inexperienced and not adept in classroom management:

> So it's really problematic. It is a problem that no one wants to take the job of a homeroom teacher. Because nobody wants them, they [the school administrators] fill in those positions with new teachers. The new teachers take this job without any information about the students, without knowing anything about how to deal with the students. (Interview 2)

From Somi's comment we learn that taking on the job of a homeroom teacher is very

challenging for many beginning teachers because they are new to the school and have

insufficient knowledge and experience with the school culture and system as well as

managing students (Kim, Park, & Kang, 2010). Yubin talked about that point specifically

based on her first year experience at the school:

> [I was assigned to] The second homeroom of the junior classes. [After taking this
>
> job,] I needed to decorate the classroom, assign my students to their cleaning
>
> duties[4] and assign their seats in the classroom. Everything was extremely difficult
>
> because I knew nothing. I didn't know how to make a timetable, how to instruct
>
> my students to clean the classroom, like wiping the window, emptying the trash,
>
> and tidying up the teacher's desk. I knew nothing. How could I assign my
>
> students to those different cleaning tasks? The teacher also needs to attend the
>
> homeroom for 10 minutes each at the beginning and at the end of a school day.
>
> What I should do during that 10 minutes? I just knew nothing about all of them
>
> and was so unprepared, so I really had a difficult time [at the beginning].
>
> (Interview 2)

Yubin particularly mentioned that she had many difficulties carrying out her

responsibilities and did not have much support from colleagues, especially the

experienced teachers in her school. Yubin said she was disappointed with her colleagues

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[4] In Korea, it is common that students clean their homerooms. The homeroom teacher assigns various
cleaning tasks to his or her homeroom students. During the cleaning time, which is usually after regular
school hours and before the after-school classes begin, students are responsible for cleaning their assigned
sites.

at the beginning because nobody approached her to offer help. She later realized then that the school culture and the system did not encourage collaboration among teachers. Yubin felt that the teachers in her school were used to working individually to complete their own assigned tasks:

> Everyone is just so busy, especially at the beginning of the new semester. Nobody has time to take care of the others. And I think the school culture in Korea is less collaborative, which is like a teacher has the complete control in teaching his or her own classes. Instead of supporting each other, each teacher takes care of his or her own tasks. Planning, teaching, and managing homeroom on your own. So it's not quite a supportive culture. (Interview 2)

Yubin added that this kind of school culture was different from her earlier expectation. Before she began to teach, Yubin anticipated that she would be encouraged to work with other teachers in various tasks, such as restructuring the school curriculum and improving lessons to enhance student learning. However, the school culture and system, which does not cultivate cooperation and teamwork, prevented the teachers in her school from making an effort to collaborate.

Somi's experience was similar to that of Yubin's in terms of how she felt about her school culture and system. Although Somi felt she had good relationships with her colleagues and had a supportive head teacher who gave her a lot of advice during her first year, she indicated that many teachers in her school were reluctant to provide help to each other. According to Somi, this problem resulted from the school system, which held each individual teacher accountable for his or her own task:

For example, if a homeroom teacher made a decision based on someone's advice, and if it turned out that it was wrong and caused some bad results, the whole blame is on the homeroom teacher, because she's the one who's accountable for her decision. The person who gave her advice might be really embarrassed… [but the burden of responsibility is on the homeroom teacher anyway]. (Interview 3)

Somi said many teachers in her school were afraid of these situations, so they preferred to complete their tasks individually rather than make an attempt to collaborate with others. In her opinion, this burden of responsibility was why many Korean schools had unsupportive school cultures that discouraged collaboration and communication among the teachers. This problem was also addressed by Um (2013), who used the metaphor of a "deserted island" (p. 195) to describe the detached and uncommunicative teachers in many Korean schools. Somi said that, in her first year, she only got along with a small group of teachers in her school. Most of them were also new teachers whom she called "friends" (Interview 2). Somi said she had a great deal of emotional support from these teachers. Whenever they faced problems, they all comforted each other. Somi said, "[After having a tough day], we often used to hang out after school and have a drink, a glass of beer…." (Interview 2) However, this was not the kind of practical support that Somi needed to resolve her problems. Because the supportive head teacher from her first year had left the school at the time of the interviews, Somi was feeling the need to find a teacher learning community to get more practical support in improving her teaching and managing students.

Minwoo's school had a similar culture. He worked at a big middle school that had about 60 teachers. Minwoo thought it was difficult to work with other teachers. Yet, there

was a head teacher in his department who had been very approachable and supportive since Minwoo's first year. Minwoo said he always talked to the head teacher when he faced problems. Unlike Yubin and Somi, who sought more support and collaboration within and outside of the school, Minwoo felt he did not want to interact with the other teachers in his school very much. His attitude was the result of the experienced, supportive head teacher whom he could approach at any time. Minwoo wanted to focus on building stronger relationships with his students rather than with his colleagues.

Among the four Korean teachers in this study, Jieun was the only one who said she had a great relationship with her colleagues in the senior department. Similar to Somi's situation, the relationship was a form of friendship, but Jieun also had much practical support from the experienced teachers in her department. Jieun said that her head teacher, whom she had worked with for three years in a row (from the time she began teaching until the time of the interviews), was an excellent leader who was very supportive to new teachers and managed smooth relationships among teachers, parents, and administrators. Jieun said she learned a lot from the experienced teachers in her department, including the head teacher, and she was satisfied with her relationships with the colleagues in her department. Jieun worked at a big school like the other three teachers in this study, but having a great leader and belonging to a supportive department seemed to help her feel less isolated.

Although all four teachers worked in slightly different school contexts, they all complained that much of the administrative work assigned to them was unnecessary and time-consuming. Yubin provided examples of the redundant work she was required to do as a homeroom teacher. One of the tasks was counting and reporting the number of

students who were going to buy school uniforms. She also had to make a student roster of those who did late night self-study at school. The school had to provide a space for self-study and assign teachers to oversee the students until 10 p.m. Yubin said:

> This was really unnecessary work, I think. If it's a "self-study," then we just need to provide a space and let students come and study wherever, whenever they want. Why do I need to report the number of students in my homeroom who are doing self-study each day to the assistant principal, like five students on Mondays and 19 students on Tuesdays? I reported the number and the assistant principal said, "Why does your homeroom have a smaller number of students than other homerooms?" This stressed me out. I needed to make a phone call to their parents and ask, "Ms. X, your son did not enroll for the self-study. How is he doing at home?" (Interview 3)

Yubin said that there were many chores she needed to do every day related to her homeroom. The other three teachers agreed that the amount of work outside of teaching was excessive. Except for the time when they actually taught classes, the teachers spent much of the school day dealing with administrative tasks that involved a lot of paperwork and long reporting processes due to the bureaucratic school system. Sometimes the teachers had to work overtime to complete those tasks. Minwoo said that although the regular school day in middle school ended at 4:30 p.m., he stayed at the school until 8 or 9 p.m. three to four times a week during his first year to finish the administrative tasks assigned to him. He was in his second year at the time of the interviews, but he said he still needed to stay at school late at least once or twice a week. Working overtime was normal for the other three high-school teachers, Yubin, Jieun, and Somi, since high

school had a longer school day than middle school. Jieun described what her daily schedule as a high-school senior homeroom teacher was like: arriving at school at 7:30 a.m., overseeing morning self-study hour until 9 a.m., teaching classes, doing homeroom work (e.g., counting the number of students who were buying school uniforms), planning lessons, overseeing students during the cleaning hour, teaching afterschool classes, eating dinner, and overseeing evening self-study hours or having one-on-one student meetings until school ended at 10 p.m. "I have no personal life" (Interview 2), Jieun said. Somi's situation was no different even though she was in charge of a junior homeroom. She taught afterschool classes every weekday except Wednesday until 9 p.m. Then she did not leave school until 9:30 p.m. Just like other teachers, Somi was extremely busy teaching classes and dealing with her homeroom work during the long school day.

All four Korean teachers complained that the huge amount of homeroom work and other administrative work took much time that they could have used for planning lessons and improving their teaching. For example, Minwoo said he had so much administrative work to do in his first year that he often did not have enough time for lesson planning. "After finishing all the work, I went back home and opened the textbook but then I fell asleep soon [because I was so tired from the work]" (Interview 3). When he began to teach, he thought he just needed to concentrate on teaching his classes well. However, Minwoo soon realized that besides teaching mathematics, there were many other important responsibilities that he had to fulfill, especially the administrative tasks. "That administrative work takes charge of 60% to 70% of my workload" (Interview 3), Minwoo complained. He added:

When I am at school, I spend about 60% to 70% of my time doing administrative work. And then about 20% on lesson planning and the rest of 20% on classroom management. Instead, what I really want is 30% of administrative work, 40% of classroom management, and 30% of teaching. I think that's desirable. But I heard middle schools tend to have more administrative work [than high schools]. Even so, it's just too much. (Interview 3)

When the teachers began to teach, they thought that their primary responsibility as a teacher would be to teach classes. In this respect, Minwoo, Somi, and Jieun stated that they initially wanted to be good at teaching their content, improve student achievement, and promote their interests in learning the content. Even Yubin, who began with a student-centered belief, understood that her primary responsibility as a teacher was teaching English classes. In reality, however, all of them were spending more time on dealing with administrative work than planning, teaching, and improving their lessons. They all suffered from the huge amount of extra work and were greatly concerned about spending less time preparing for classes and taking care of their students.

Korean Teachers' Navigating Tension within the Test-Oriented Education System

The four Korean teachers in this study faced challenges in three areas. First, their prior beliefs and expectations about the work of teaching contrasted a great deal with the actual requirements they faced. Second many of their students were unhappy, uninterested, and unmotivated to learn in their classes due to extreme pressure and long study hours. Third the school culture and the general educational system was unsupportive to beginning teachers. The teachers perceived these difficulties they struggled with as rooted in the unique test-oriented system in Korea.

My interviews about the lived experiences of these four Korean teachers revealed that they were undoubtedly and continuously teaching to the tests. In fact, within the Korean test-oriented education system, the meaning of teaching was essentially reduced to the preparation of students for tests, which involved a lot of memorization and repetitive drilling on test problems. Obviously, none of the teachers in this study had anticipated that teaching to the tests would be their core practice. However, the teachers came to realize that they could not avoid it because, as teachers, they were responsible for improving their students' achievement and helping them get accepted to schools where they wished to go. The four Korean teachers shared a common conflict in that they had to teach to the tests, even though it was not their preferred way of teaching. For example, Minwoo, the middle school mathematics teacher, had earlier developed a belief about teaching that involved teaching mathematics effectively. What he meant by that was integrating advanced, in-depth content from college mathematics into relevant content from the school mathematics curriculum when teaching lessons and using a variety of teaching strategies to improve students' achievement and learning in mathematics. However, it was hard to achieve in his current school where he was supposed to teach students in a way that would help them gain good scores on school tests. All four teachers realized that their prior beliefs about teaching were hard to enact within this education system that suppressed other approaches toward teaching because teachers had to teach to the tests.

For most Korean students, parents, and teachers, the primary purpose and goal of public schooling, especially in secondary schools, was preparation for college admission. There have been several attempts to understand how college admission became the sole

purpose of Korean public schooling when it puts many students in extreme competition with each other and stresses them out. Scholars have commonly held that higher education in Korean society has been valued by its people as a means to acquire higher social positions and greater economic benefits (Lee, 2006; Sorensen, 1994). Sorensen (1994) particularly stated that, "Upward mobility through schooling dominates the lives of South Korean parents and children from middle school (7th grade) on" (p. 34). Belonging to a society that values education as a primary means for acquiring higher socioeconomic status, Korean students experience great social pressure that pushes them to study hard and do better than their competitors. The problem is that their rivals for college admission are, in fact, their friends in school. In this respect, some of the literature has indicated that it is no wonder that many students are unhappy and have low self-esteem when they are educated in such a brutal system (Goo, 2014; Kim, Y., 2013; Sorensen, 1994). The four Korean teachers' descriptions of their students clearly supported this viewpoint. All four teachers worried greatly about the Korean education system that made the lives of many of their students miserable.

What made the four Korean teachers in this study more frustrated was that, although they witnessed the cruelty of a test-oriented system, they felt helpless to improve this situation. As beginners, these teachers had many other responsibilities such as a number of administrative tasks and homeroom work that often demanded that they work overtime. Moreover, some teachers like Yubin and Somi pointed out that the bureaucratic school system and the school culture, which focused on individual work rather than teamwork, were unsupportive to beginning teachers, and this aggravated their difficulties and struggles. Um (2014) echoed such concerns, indicating that it is

challenging for teachers to have fruitful conversations and discussions with colleagues about various issues in and outside of schools because of the detached culture and the hierarchical structure of the schools. He also asserted that, instead of talking with colleagues and exchanging ideas, many Korean teachers keep silent and are reluctant to talk about serious issues in schools. Due to the constraints they had from this kind of school system and culture, the teachers in this study felt extreme challenges in their efforts to enhance their teaching, build closer relationships with their students, and work with other teachers to resolve the tensions they were facing within a test-oriented system.

Comparison of US and Korean Teachers' Present Experiences

in the Test-Based Accountability System

Comparing the lived experiences of US and Korean teachers reveals that despite their significantly different education systems and school contexts, all the teachers in this study taught to the tests to varying degrees and extents. When the education system demands that testing be used to demonstrate that teachers have been accountable for their obligations, then teaching to the tests becomes a common practice of teaching. For both US and Korean teachers, working within such a system caused significant conflicts and challenges for the teachers. It was because none of them truly anticipated test preparation would be an important part of their job. Moreover, their teacher preparation had not much to do with teaching to the test, which caused many difficulties to both US and Korean teachers in terms of how they managed it with their students who were not so passionate about the tests. Looking across the experiences of all eight teachers in this study, I argue that both US and Korean teachers faced conflicts between their beliefs about teaching and the system that forced them to teach to the tests. All teachers in this study were frustrated,

though to varying degrees, with the fact that they needed to teach to the tests although it was not their preferred approach to teaching.

Besides the conflicts that US and Korean teachers shared, there were many differences regarding the degree and extent of such practices, the methods by which the teachers taught to the tests, and the kinds and sources of pressure and frustration they confronted most in each system. This section compares those aspects and explains how I developed the above argument based on analysis of the teachers' experiences as well as a review of relevant literature.

Various Extents and Ways of Teaching to the Test versus Fully Test-Oriented Teaching

Despite the fact that teaching to the tests was a common practice of both US and Korean teachers, there were many differences in terms of the extent and degree to which they carried out such practices. While the US teachers demonstrated many variations in their methods of teaching to the tests, Korean teachers had more commonalities among their practices.

The four US teachers in this study had dissimilar ways of carrying out test preparation. The reasons for such variations included various factors that were specific to the US context that affected the degree to which the teachers experienced the pressure of teaching to the test. Consistent with previous studies, the teachers in this study felt greater pressure when they were working in high-stakes accountability contexts (Abrams et al. 2003; Cruz & Brown, 2010). As was evident in Jim's case, for example, he was teaching in an MCAS-tested grade at a school in a district that included students' test scores as part of the teacher evaluation system. Jim said he felt significant pressure from the

evaluation system that assessed his effectiveness on the basis of his students' progress on the standardized test (MCAS). This seemed to be the primary reason why Jim and the teachers in his school were fully teaching to the test, compared to the other US teachers in this study who placed less emphasis on doing so.

If the teacher was working in a high-stakes accountability system like Jim, the school context seemed to mediate the degree of teacher pressure and the extent of teaching to the test, as revealed by previous research (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Lasky, 2005). According to the literature, school context mainly consists of the principal's leadership, school culture, and resources in the school (Rinke & Valli, 2010; Stillman, 2011). Jim's lived experience confirms this idea. He was working in a particular school context where teaching to MCAS was inevitable because of the district's strict teacher evaluation system. The pressure and frustrations related to teaching to the MCAS were common among the teachers in his school. Thus Jim and the other English teachers in his school were enacting a common practice they developed together (e.g. "writing with colors") as a means to prepare their students better for the MCAS. Jim did not specifically mention whether the administrators in his school pushed the teachers to offer MCAS prep, but it was evident that he worked in a school culture where teaching to the MCAS was strongly encouraged.

There were other factors that caused differences between Jim's and other teachers' practice of teaching to the MCAS. Besides the stakes of the accountability system and school context, whether the teacher was teaching the tested grade and subjects and the students' performance level also affected on the extent of the US teachers' test preparation. This explains why Dana, who was not teaching an MCAS-tested grade at the

time of the interviews, had comparatively less pressure than other teachers, and provided

MCAS preparation separately during longer classes. The two mathematics teachers,

Chelsey and Alice, considered MCAS significantly in their 9th and 10th grade Algebra I

and Geometry classes, but not much in the other grades and subjects that were not subject

to the MCAS. Both of them paid particular attention to their Geometry class, because

many students took this class after they had failed Algebra I when they needed to master

both Algebra I and Geometry for the MCAS.

The teachers' self-motivation and self-pressure also greatly affected the extent of

teaching to the test and their perceptions of the importance of teaching to it. Although all

the US teachers integrated test preparation into their classes to varied extents, they all felt

it was necessary for their students. The teachers did not want their students to fail the test,

retake it, and get discouraged. Moreover, the high-school teachers particularly perceived

that getting good MCAS scores offered many advantages for students, and that was why

they taught to it. The students could learn and practice test-taking strategies, which are

important skills required for college. If they demonstrated good performance on the

MCAS, they could also get accepted in state colleges and receive scholarships. Because

of those advantages, the three high-school teachers—Chelsey, Alice, and Dana—felt the

need to help students do well on this test as well as on other standardized tests (e.g., SAT

and ACT). Therefore, though not as much as Jim, they all considered integrating test

preparation into their classes to varied extents.

Jim, who was working in a high-stakes accountability context in which MCAS

scores were included in teacher evaluation, felt self-pressure and motivation to teach to

the test from two sources: the desire to help his students not to fail and get discouraged

by the test results; and, the desire to prove his effectiveness as a teacher through his students' good performance on the MCAS. The latter, which was not evident in other teachers, reflected that he certainly felt the impact of the strict teacher accountability system in his district that was based on the students' performance on the test. For Jim, his students' MCAS scores were an "inscription device" (Loh & Hu, 2014, p. 19), and represented visible proof of his performance as well. He perceived that his students' performance on the test clearly affected the construction of his self and public image as a teacher (Loh & Hu, 2014). Because he wanted to be seen as a competent teacher, Jim expected his students to do well on the MCAS. He was putting pressure on himself for that reason, and it was another driver of his teaching to the test.

While the US teachers experienced various factors that caused the variations in their teaching to the test, all of the Korean teachers in this study engaged in fully test-oriented teaching. There were significantly fewer variations than among the US teachers regarding their methods of teaching to the tests, because every Korean teacher in this study oriented his or her classes to tests, either *suneung* or school tests. It was thus almost unnecessary to determine whether or not the Korean teachers were teaching to the test and to what extent, because this is the primary practice of teachers in many Korean secondary schools (Y. Kim, 2013; Sorensen, 1994). Previous research is very clear that test-oriented teaching has become the standard in Korean schooling because of Korea's long tradition of appreciating academic success and many Koreans' understanding of education as a means of acquiring higher socioeconomic status (Kang, 2009; Lee, 2006; Oh, 1996; Sorensen, 1994).

Educational success and the attainment of higher socioeconomic status seem to be more correlated in Korea than in the US (Sorensen, 1994). Many Koreans perceive educational success as the predictor of a person's socioeconomic status (Kang, 2009; H. J. Kim, 2013; Lee, 2006). This is because in modern Korean society, after independence from Japan, the leaders have a few social elites who graduated from the nation's prestigious colleges (Kang, 2009). Since these elite groups have obtained the power and authority and have dominated a variety of social sectors, including the political, legal, and economic spheres, they have become role models to many Koreans (Kang, 2009; Sorensen, 1994). People have come to believe that they could gain the same socioeconomic status by attaining higher education at the prestigious colleges the elites had attended (Kang, 2009). Completing higher education at those colleges has been, therefore, a prerequisite for acquiring a higher social status in Korea (Kang, 2009, H. Kim, 2013).

Colleges in Korea are strictly ranked by the reputation of their graduates since the economic development of the 1970s (Kang, 2009). As more students competed to go to elite colleges, a fair way of sorting them out was to accept students based on their academic records, which involved their rankings and scores on school tests as well as the college entrance exam.[5] Because of this social structure and admission system, schooling in Korea became highly centered on tests. Such a tendency is particularly evident in secondary schools (Sorensen, 1994), where the purpose of high-school education is to prepare for college admissions and the purpose of middle school is to prepare for high-

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[5] This test later changed to *suneung* in 1994.

school admission, especially to the high-performing high schools. In these admission processes, one's rankings and scores on tests are the most significant indicators. Thus, it is not a surprise that teaching to the tests is a common way of teaching in most Korean schools.

Comparing the extent and degree to which teaching to the tests occurs by country suggests that the Korean teachers in this study were completely teaching to the tests, while the US teachers showed many variations depending on various factors. Among the US teachers, there was only one teacher, Jim, who perceived himself as fully teaching to the test. It was because he was teaching the tested grade and subject and felt a great pressure from the district accountability system and from himself to prove his effectiveness through his students' test scores. Jim's and the Korean teachers' cases imply that the system to which the teachers belong creates the context that drives them to fully teach to the tests.

Comparing the Practice of Teaching to the Test

Because there were significant differences regarding the extent of teaching to the tests by country, the means by which the teachers carried it out were also different. The practice of US teachers' teaching to the test is consistent with factors revealed by previous research. Regardless of the content areas and grade levels, when teaching focused on test preparation: classes were more teacher-centered, and the teachers lectured most of the time, while there were fewer student activities (Berryhill et al., 2009; Watanabe, 2007); the teachers put more emphasis on teaching the content included in the test (Abrams et al., 2003; Watanabe, 2007); and, they offered practice tests during classes and included MCAS-type problems in the school tests (Abrams et al., 2003).

Although such features of teaching to the test were found in all the US teachers'

practices, it should be noted that teaching to the tests only occurred if the teacher was

teaching the tested grade and subject (e.g., Jim, Chelsey, and Alice) or in a separate prep

class (Dana). Unless the teacher was working in a context that pushed him or her to fully

teach to the test, as in Jim's case, those features were most evident in test-related classes.

Moreover, teaching to the tests was less explicit among the US teachers than among the

Korean teachers. Even Jim, who provided the most intense test preparation in his classes,

stated that explicit test preparation involving review of test rubrics and exemplary

answers only happened when an MCAS date was approaching. Although many studies

have indicated that stricter accountability control since the No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Act has influenced US teachers to alter their classroom instruction (Abrams et al., 2003;

Berryhill et al., 2009; Valli & Buese, 2007; Watanabe, 2007), teaching to the tests was

most visible on certain occasions and in specific contexts for the US teachers, such as in

Jim's school district. For the other three teachers, teaching to the test rather seemed to be

an option that they took when they were teaching test-related grades and subjects and/or

the test date was approaching.

Compared to the US teachers, the Korean teachers in this study explicitly taught

to the tests nearly all of the time. There were several features that the Korean teachers

shared in common across the content areas and grade levels: every class was geared

toward a specific test (e.g., *suneung* or school tests); most of the classes were

predominantly teacher-centered; and, teachers used workbooks and worksheets in

addition to textbooks to practice test problems.

The Korean teachers' approach to teaching to the tests was distinguished from that of the US teachers in several aspects. First, it was a practice of teaching that was taken for granted, not an option that teachers could flexibly use depending on the grade levels, subject areas and test schedules. As indicated by several studies, the meaning of teaching in the Korean context was mainly understood as test preparation (Y. T. Kim, 2013; Oh, 1996; Sorensen, 1994). The teachers were expected and demanded to teach to the tests within this test-oriented education system, and they could hardly adopt any alternative approach.

Second, while some of the US teachers in this study (Alice and Dana) and some previous studies (e.g., Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Valli & Chambliss, 2008) differentiated teaching to the tests from teaching to the curriculum/standards, these meant the same thing to the Korean teachers in this study. All of the tests (school tests and *suneung*) in Korea are based on textbooks that follow the national curriculum. Additionally, the workbooks and worksheets reflect the textbook content. Thus, covering the content in the textbook means preparation for tests, because the content is likely to be on the tests. This is different from some of the US teachers (Alice and Dana), who differentiated their regular classes, which they perceived as teaching to the curriculum/standards, from test preparation. For these teachers, teaching to the test meant an explicit form of test preparation that involved reviewing the content, drilling on the test problems, and practicing test-taking skills. Such practice was not usual in their classes, but it was predominant in the Korean teachers' classes. The Korean teachers in this study had their students memorize important content and practice the test problems in their classes, a common practice among secondary teachers in Korea (Sorensen, 1994).

The Source of Teacher Pressure and Frustration: The Teacher Evaluation System versus Unhappy Students

The experiences of US and Korean teachers within their own education systems showed that the teachers were struggling with different kinds of frustrations that pressed them to teach to the tests. All the US teachers expressed concern about the use of their students' standardized test scores to evaluate their performance. At the time of the interviews, such test scores were only used for the teacher evaluation in Jim's district. Yet the other three teachers were worried about the possibility that it could be included in their evaluations since many states and school districts in the US have been using this data for teacher evaluation, particularly after the announcement of the federal government's Race to the Top program in 2009 (Konstantopoulos, 2014; Plecki et al., 2012; Ro, 2014).

Although the US teachers in this study generally agreed about the necessity of standardized tests, they were negative about using the standardized test scores for evaluating their own performance. This perception echoed the findings of previous studies that revealed teachers' frustration of being evaluated based on student performance (Abrams et al., 2003; Berryhill et al., 2009). Even Alice, who thought standardized tests were necessary for assessment of student and school performance, doubted whether it was fair and valid to use for assessment of teachers. Chelsey, who was working at the same school as Alice, agreed with her point. Although MCAS scores were not used for their evaluations at the time of the interviews, seeing other school districts using them made the teachers worried about being evaluated by that criterion in the future. Both Chelsey and Alice indicated that there were many other factors besides a

teacher factor impacting student performance on the standardized test, and emphasized the significance of student-related factors. The students' academic backgrounds prior to taking their classes and their home environments were cited as examples of such factors. Although these student-related factors were perceived to have significant impact on student performance on the test, they were out of the teacher control (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Vernaza, 2012). From this perspective, Chelsey and Alice perceived it was unfair and invalid to use test scores to evaluate teacher performance.

Jim and Dana expressed fear and frustration at being evaluated based on their students' test scores. It was a more intense feeling than Chelsey and Alice had. Both Jim and Dana worked in a school context that put significant emphasis on teachers improving students' MCAS scores. Dana felt the pressure from her administrators, even though she was not teaching in a MCAS-tested grade at the time of the study. In Jim's district, MCAS scores were already used for teacher evaluation. Working in higher-stakes contexts than Chelsey and Alice, both Jim and Dana were afraid of being the targets of blame for their students' low achievement (Abrams et al., 2003; Finnigan & Gross, 2007). Jim, who was teaching in an MCAS-tested grade, was especially worried about whether his effort to improve his students' achievement was reflected on their test scores.

Unlike the US teachers whose pressure and frustration originated from the federal government and the state creating a stricter teacher accountability system based on testing, the Korean teachers in this study were greatly frustrated by seeing their students unhappy and giving up on their studies due to the pressure and stress. The teachers reported that many students were stressed due to heavy study loads and extreme competition to get good scores and rankings on tests. Moreover, there were many

students who were unmotivated and uninterested to learn in the teachers' classes. Some of the students fell asleep and did not participate in their classes either. It was because they had learned much of the content from *hagwon* and were tired of long study hours. Such a tendency is referred to as "the collapse of the classroom," a common term used by Koreans to describe the challenges that many Korean teachers face in their classrooms (Lee, 2003). It was particularly apparent in the three high-school teachers' (Yubin, Jieun, and Somi) classes because students experience more intense pressure in high school due to the college admissions process. A more frustrating thing is, despite the significance of this problem, none of the reform movement policies have been successful in resolving it (Lee, 2003).

Many educators and researchers have pointed out that the cause of this type of classroom disruption is the test-oriented educational system that has persisted for decades and is still ruling the lives of Korean students (Y. T. Kim, 2013; Lee, 2003; Um, 2013). For many Koreans, education is a family business (H. J. Kim, 2013; Sorensen, 1994). Whether a child has good academic performance and is accepted to a higher-ranked college is the foremost concern to many Korean parents, because they believe that college is the predictor of one's socioeconomic success (H. J. Kim, 2013). Due to the tightly cohesive family culture rooted in Confucianism, many Korean parents perceive their children's academic success as the family's success (H. J. Kim, 2013; Sorensen, 1994). That is why many parents are greatly concerned about their children's performance and put much pressure on them to study hard and do well on tests. These parents are also willing to do anything to support their children's academic success, which is why various shadow education services, such as *hagwon* and private tutoring, evolved and have

prospered in Korea (Sorensen, 1994). Currently, shadow education is considered essential for many Korean parents. Some parents even use this service to teach Korean, English, and mathematics to their infant children, believing that if they start to learn these subjects earlier, then they will later excel over their peers (Woo, Baek, & Kim, 2005). In this aspect, Hyunju Kim (2013) asserted that it is a common phenomenon in Korea that parents "mobilize" (p. 104) all of their monetary and cultural capital to support their children's admission to prestigious colleges.

There is no doubt that many Korean students are unhappy because they are pushed by their parents to study hard. Many of them realize from very early on that academic failure on their part would also mean the failure of their entire family (H. J. Kim, 2013; Sorensen, 1994). They also realize that college is a must and schooling has no other meaning than as a tool for college admission (H. J. Kim, 2013). Hyunju Kim (2013) argued:

> [For many Korean students] college admission is a stepping-stone to earn much income and live a good life. They study for college, and college is for money and success…Although their parents did not talk straight to them that studying hard is to make a lot of money, the children somehow get the message that "money is all-important." They also get the fear of living a lower class life when they do not go to college. (p. 105)

Although the pressure on students comes directly from their parents, it originates from the unique social structure in which one's socioeconomic status is marked by his or her academic performance and the education system that supports it. In this respect, the students' pressure is not just a personal matter, but also a social problem. The social

structure and education system drives many Korean students to compete for better results. Because the teachers in this study all recognized that it was a social problem, they rather blamed the test-oriented system than their students and parents. However, this recognition also made them feel helpless, because they knew that this situation could not be resolved by one individual teacher's efforts. Even their own attempts to make an improvement were constrained by the unsupportive and hierarchical school culture and system, and that aggravated the teachers' frustration.

Conclusion: Shared Tension

There were many differences between US and Korean teachers in terms of the extent and degree of teaching to the tests, the means of carrying it out, and the primary source of pressure and frustration. What teachers from both countries had in common was that they were compelled to teach to the test – though to varying degrees and extents – although none of them favored this approach very much. This conflict exists because both systems created contexts in which test preparation is an essential part of the teachers' practices (Imig & Imig, 2006).

In the US, the federal government has extended its control over public education through the two major policy initiatives, NCLB and RttT (Gatti & Catalano, 2015; Valli & Buese, 2007). This has caused many states and school districts to increase accountability demands and implement stricter accountability policies to use standardized test scores as the primary data for assessing district, school, and teacher accountability (Abrams et al., 2003; Berryhill et al., 2009). Although the federal government, with its recent announcement of the Every Student Succeeds Act, asserts that it will allow each state more flexibility and control in determining measures of student performance and

how to use them (Executive Office of the President, 2015), such was not in effect when the teachers were interviewed. There were many variations in terms of the extent of how teachers were affected by the high-stakes accountability system, depending on their work contexts, though all US teachers in this study were clearly subjected to accountability controls. The three teachers, Jim, Chelsey, and Alice, who were teaching tested grades and subjects, felt that the enforcement of test-based accountability constrained their teaching to some extent. Jim and Chelsey particularly felt that they were carrying out practices that contradicted their prior beliefs about teaching. The test-based accountability system also affected Dana, who was concerned about preparing her students for standardized tests even though she was not teaching in a tested grade. Although the US teachers in this study were affected by the accountability system in various ways, it was true that it caused tension that disrupted the teachers' autonomy to teach in their favored and anticipated ways.

The Korean teachers in this study shared similar tensions between the test-oriented system and the practices they had initially hoped to carry out. The three teachers, Jieun, Somi, and Minwoo, who wanted to teach their content well in a way that would stimulate students' interests, promote their in-depth learning, and improve their mastery of content, realized this could not be achieved well enough in a test-oriented education system. Yubin, who had a student-centered belief, was frustrated that she needed to teach to *suneung* although many students were bored and stressed out because of such classes. However, similar to but much worse than in the US, teaching to the tests was an expected and taken-for-granted practice for the Korean teachers who all belonged to the test-oriented education system. Moreover, the Korean system emphasized more intense test

preparation than the US system, while the school culture and system in Korea were generally unsupportive to beginning teachers. This greatly constrained the teachers from pursuing their favored practices.

Both US and Korean teachers shared the tension of working within their constrained education systems. Imig and Imig (2006) asserted that test-based accountability systems are an "unjust path" (p. 286) that forces beginning teachers to deliver the content and conform to the requirement of testing, instead of teaching engaging and educational lessons (Imig & Imig, 2006). Because those systems remain firm and wield great power and control over teachers, the teachers in this study felt it was challenging to navigate the tension on their own.

Chapter 6. What It Means to be "A Good Teacher" in a Test-Based Accountability

System

This chapter focuses on beginning teachers' learning and growth within contexts of test-based accountability. In addition to talking about their childhoods, preparation, and present experiences as teachers, the teachers in this study also talked about what they had learned about teaching and themselves as teachers over time. The teachers also identified their future goals and plans for continued growth. The purpose of this chapter is to probe the teachers' understandings about how their learning occurred and what they felt they most needed to learn in the intense test-based accountability contexts in which they worked. Aligned with the structure of the previous chapters, this chapter is constructed in three parts that capture the essence of teacher learning and growth within test-based accountability systems: (a) US teachers' experiences of learning and growth within a test-based accountability system; (b) Korean teachers' experiences of learning and growth; and (c) a comparison between the US and Korean teachers' experiences.

Unlike the previous two chapters, which revealed many differences by country in the teachers' lived experiences, there were more commonalities here than differences regarding the teachers' learning experiences in the context of intense test-based accountability. As is illustrated in the following sections, both US and Korean teachers came to learn about their students and about how to manage them well. All the teachers in this study hung on to their student-centered beliefs and strove to practice in ways that were consistent with their beliefs while still meeting the demands for accountability. During the first two years in their profession, these teachers struggled to create a balance between their teaching goals and the testing mandates, but they continued to hope to be

able to integrate more student-centered practices. The following sections describe the essence of these teachers' learning experiences in greater detail.

US Teachers' Lived Experiences of Learning and Growth

There were three common themes in the four US teachers' experiences of learning and growth: learning to deal with student-related issues, pursuit of student-centered teaching, and developing confidence and hope about becoming better teachers for the sake of the students. The teachers' experiences are grouped together by theme.

Learning to Deal with Student-Related Issues

All four US teachers in this study expressed that they had many difficulties managing students in the classroom. This is not particularly surprising, given the number of studies that have noted classroom management and student discipline as significant challenges faced by many beginning teachers (Clark, 2012; Meager & Brantlinger, 2011; Schaefer, 2013). All the teachers in this study had difficulties in this area, especially when beginning their jobs. However, this was also the aspect of teaching in which they made significant improvement over the course of their work experiences. Moreover, the teachers in this study did not care only about disciplining students or managing them. Rather they were also greatly interested in building good relationships with students as well as understanding and supporting them in multiple ways in keeping with their student-centered beliefs and their efforts to develop teaching practices consistent with those beliefs. The teachers said that their interactions with students and the students' reactions to them were, in fact, the most influential factor in their job satisfaction and were what kept them motivated to continue their work as teachers, despite the challenges they faced within the strict accountability system based on testing.

As expected, classroom management was a particularly difficult task for the teachers at the beginning of their teaching careers. For example, Chelsey said that she had many difficulties controlling students at the beginning of her first year of teaching mathematics at Durban High School:

> It's just kind of herding cats and you don't know how to do it yet. It was mostly that they would just talk back. They would just like be goofy to get the class off task. That's kind of what they like to do most is "how many buttons of Ms. P.'s can I push until she breaks" or "let me just keep disrupting the class so we don't actually have to do mathematics." It was more than being disruptive. (Interview 2)

Chelsey explained the reason she had struggled with her students was because she wanted her students to like her so that they would better participate in her classes. In that way, Chelsey described herself as a "marshmallow" (Interview 2) in her first year. Because she was not skillful in controlling students who continually behaved poorly in class, she had often cried after class. To Chelsey, teaching mathematics was never an issue, but classroom management was. This problem was also depicted in a recent case study of a novice middle school mathematics teacher (Meager & Brantlinger, 2011). In this study, the mathematics teacher, Kelly, began to teach in a high-needs urban school in New York City with a strong sense of preparedness in teaching mathematics, just as the US teachers in this study did. However, as soon as she began to teach, she realized that her primary task as a teacher was to have control over her students rather than to teach them mathematics. The first-year experience of Chelsey was very much akin to the experience of this teacher. Student discipline was a huge problem for Chelsey, and one that she hardly expected to encounter at the beginning.

After having a "crazy" "hot mess" (Interview 2) during first semester, Chelsey said the situation got better as she became stricter and more consistent. She also tried various strategies based on the suggestions of her supportive colleagues. She found that although a particular strategy might work at first, it did not last long. She also found that a strategy that worked for one class did not necessarily work for another class because every class had different students. Thus Chelsey needed to make constant modifications and switch between different strategies. After all the trials and errors she had made since her first year, at the time of the interview, which was during the Spring semester of Chelsey's second year, she indicated she was taking better control of her classes. She said:

> I feel like I found where that line is between last year, when they could walk all over me and I wasn't an authority figure, to this year. I'm still working on it. We still have days when they do walk on me a little more than I would like them to, but it's been much better this year because they understand where my boundaries are. They're very clear. (Interview 2)

Alice, who was also a second-year mathematics teacher at the same school with Chelsey, agreed that classroom management was the most difficult thing she had faced in her first year. Alice mentioned, "It was, reality hit me right at the moment" (Interview 2). For both Chelsey and Alice, their fundamental concern was not that the students behaved poorly toward them. Rather their concern was that when a teacher had to spend so many of the class hours controlling students instead of teaching them, the students missed the time and opportunities to learn more. This perception implied that these teachers understood classroom management as the precondition to engaging students in learning

(Lasky, 2005). It was in this way that Alice talked about her difficulty in classroom management:

> Well, balancing out between students that are ambitious or the students that want to learn and the other students that are just here at school because they have to be at school. The balance between those two groups w[as] hard and the other part is making students do their homework. Because they don't do their homework, we can't go on if they don't learn. But to learn, they have to go home and practice and do their homework, but if they don't do the homework and if they don't do the work by themselves, then they won't learn. So it was hard to move on, especially with my junior classes. (Interview 2)

Although Alice felt that she was close to her students and had very good relationships with them, she did say, "Classroom management is always the hardest part" (Interview 2), even at the time of the interviews, when she was close to completing her second year. Both Chelsey and Alice felt that classroom management required constant vigilance on the part of the teacher to be consistent and fair to every student. Although both of them felt they were improving in classroom management, they said this was an area that continued to need more work than their actual teaching of content, because they had new students every year and every class had different groups of students with different characteristics.

Dana also struggled a lot with student behavioral problems in her first year as a substitute teacher at West Durban High School. However, she seemed to be more comfortable in dealing with her students than Chelsey and Alice were. In fact, Dana said

she did not struggle with classroom management after realizing that her students' poor behaviors and attitudes toward her were attempts to draw the class's attention away from the teacher. She said, "I think the big mistake that I learned last year is not to take them [behavioral issues] personally and not to react to [students'] emotions" (Interview 2). She continued to say how she came to resolve these issues over time:

> That's how I learned how to really manage behavior, is by taking a step back and analyzing the situation, being like, "They are projecting some sort of emotion at me. But that's something going on in their own life," and I redirect their anger before I even have to kick them out of the classroom. I had a huge student behavioral management last year, but I definitely don't have it [now]. Even with a more difficult group of kids, I don't have it as much this year. (Interview 2)

Dana thought her improvement in dealing with students was possible because she was "intuitive" (Interview 2) about her students' feelings. Dana saw that many of her students had problems in anger management. She came to understand that their offensive behaviors were not necessarily directed at the teacher, but arose because they had difficulties controlling their emotions. Thus, whenever she encountered these types of situations, Dana tried to stay calm and defuse the students instead of getting angry and yelling at them. Moreover, since she herself had attended her school as a student and had grown up in its neighborhood, Dana shared many things in common with her students and was understanding of their conditions and family environments. Thus it seemed to be easier for her to connect with her students than it was for the other teachers in this study. She said, "I just try to relate and tell them that I was once one of them. I have the same

problems. I know where they are coming from, and I feel that totally earns more respect"
(Interview 2).

Just like the other teachers, Jim had difficulties with student behavior during his
first year of teaching English at Jackson Middle School. Jim said he struggled because he
had not had many opportunities to practice classroom management in his preparation
program and his school had confusing policies in terms of disciplining students. He also
had had a tough group of kids in his first year. Jim said, "Last year, I was trying things
for the first time, like what happens if I call this kid out in front of the class and he talks
back again? Maybe should I do it again, or should I kick him out of the class?" (Interview
3). Even though Jim was confident about his preparedness to teach English after
completing four practica in his preparation program at Ignatius College, he still struggled
with student behavior during much of his first year. As indicated by the other teachers, it
was because classroom management depended on the student population that the teacher
had, which was different every year in every class.

After a year of experience, Jim said he had become "stricter" and "better at
predicting student behavior" (Interview 3), a change that was similar to changes
described by the other teachers. Although Jim did not share as much in common with his
students as Dana did, he felt he had become more comfortable in communicating with
and sharing his life with them. Jim said:

I think I'm a lot more myself in terms of joking around and having fun, but also in

terms of feeling more comfortable telling students about my own life. Not

necessarily in class in front of all the kids, but when someone comes to me with a

problem, instead of me being like, "Okay, this is how you might handle it," I might be like, "When I was a freshman in high school, this is what happened to me. This is what happened." Whereas last year I shied away from giving them any sort of insight into that, I think this year I'm much more comfortable just doing what I would do. (Interview 2)

Because he was dealing with middle school students who were generally less mature than high school students, Jim also felt that taking care of their social and emotional development was his primary task as a teacher, which was, in his viewpoint, even more important than preparing them for the MCAS. According to Imig and Imig (2006), promoting students' social and emotional development is a central task for a beginning teacher who is committed to social justice. Jim's comments were consistent with this viewpoint:

> I think I work a lot more with the social side of kids, too. I think if there's . . . Obviously, I can't do this with the MCAS, but if we're taking a big essay test or something and the kid has some sort of problem going on, I'd much rather pull them aside and talk to them in the hallway about what's going on in their life. They can make up the test, or whatever needs to be done can be done. I think that's more important. (Interview 3)

Jim talked about the importance of caring for students as something specific to middle school, but the high school teachers in this study also shared that perspective. Besides controlling their students' behaviors, all the US teachers in this study considered understanding, supporting, and managing good relationships with students to be

important and necessary. For the teachers in this study, the primary reason was to promote students' participation and learning in their classes. Chelsey addressed that point specifically:

> You [the teacher] need to walk the line of, "You need to respect me so you do the work," but you also need the students to like you because they don't do work for people they don't like. They're like, "I don't like her. Why should I do any work?" They don't realize it's hurting themselves and no one else. (Interview 3)

As Chelsey stated, if students liked their teacher, they would listen to her or him, work hard in class, and seek out the teacher after school to ask questions. If the students were more engaged in classes, they would have more opportunities for learning. Trusting and respectful relationships between a teacher and students were a precondition for learning. In this regard, Chelsey added, "Even if they're not necessarily a hard worker, if you're like, 'Do it for me,' they're like, 'Okay, Ms. P. We'll work it that way'" (Interview 2). Building an intimate, yet respectful relationship with students was important to Chelsey because it was necessary to help students learn in her class.

Although all the US teachers in this study admitted that dealing with students was the most difficult part of their jobs, they all felt that they were motivated by the intrinsic rewards of their interactions with students. For example, Jim said the best part of being a teacher was when he helped students with various problems inside and outside of the school. This was possible because he developed much closer relationships with his students over time and was dedicated to caring about them. Dana also agreed that her students were the source of her high level of job satisfaction, despite all the challenges

such as teaching the MCAS to 9th grade students and completing all the requirements for teacher evaluation, which she had faced as a beginning teacher:

> The kids [are the best part of being a teacher]. They're just all so different. You could have the worst day in the world and they are so real and they're so appreciative. Even on their worst day, they are so . . . I don't know. They respond so well to what you say to them. They really do. They listen. You watch to learn. Just watching them figure things out and learn on their own. They don't even have… Maybe it's a skill that you talked to them but they could do it on their own and it's just so fulfilling. (Interview 3)

Although classroom management was still a challenge for Alice, she also said she liked her job because of her students. Alice said she felt sympathy with many of her students who were struggling with various issues in their lives, as she had in high school. Supporting students in need was in fact why she had become a teacher and why she was hoping to continue this work:

> I think teaching fits me very well so far even though it's only my second year. I like teaching students. I like interacting with students. I like young students. I like young people. They are so full of energy. They are so full of hope. They don't know that. They don't know that they are full of hope and energy because they think that their life is miserable because they are in school. I've been through it. I never like[d] my high school years because all of the cultural issue[s] I [was] having, a family issue and all that. I feel my memories of high school can be cured by them, by looking at them, "Oh, yeah. The school was like this." "Oh,

yeah. I ha[ve] good memor[ies]." Even though I had a hard time, I do have good

memories o[f] high school and that brings me back to where I was in high school

and all that. I like being with these little ones. (Interview 3)

As the above response make very clear, the teachers in this study experienced the

challenges of controlling student behavior as their most difficult task, especially at the

beginning. However, all of the teachers also reported that they were making steady

progress over time. The teachers in this study also put significant emphasis on building

strong relationships and caring about their students to promote their engagement in

learning and support their social and emotional development. For the teachers in this

study, the students were the source of the greatest challenges they faced as beginning

teachers, but the students were also the source of the teachers' greatest rewards and

continuing motivation to teach.

Pursuit of Student-Centered Teaching

Despite having difficulties controlling student behaviors, the comments of the

four US teachers in this study reflected constant affection and care for students, which

was consistent with their prior student-centered beliefs. This was also reflected in their

teaching practices because all four were striving to teach to the students while also having

to teach to the test. In other words, the teachers' efforts to accomplish a balance between

teaching to the test and their own methods of student-centered teaching were evident in

all their teaching practices. These findings are consistent with some previous studies

suggesting that teaching to the test can be compatible in certain ways with student-

centered teaching (Neumann, 2013; Palmer & Rangel, 2011). The section below explores

how the teachers worked to engage in student-centered teaching under the pressures and demands of teaching to the test in the content areas of mathematics and English.

Mathematics teachers' student-centered teaching. The two high school mathematics teachers, Chelsey and Alice, made constant efforts to encourage student participation in class and to support the students' learning of mathematics. Both teachers integrated various student-centered approaches into their teaching while also placing significant attention on MCAS preparation because they wanted their students to pass the test.

A common strategy that Chelsey and Alice both used in teaching mathematics was showing as many examples as possible. Many of their students in Durban High School were underperforming in mathematics. They often missed homework because they did not know how to approach and solve each problem. For this reason, Alice said that she always provided many examples to her students before handing out any worksheets or assignments. Likewise, Chelsey said that she made sure to demonstrate multiple examples of each type of homework problem. By repeating the process of solving problems using similar examples, these two teachers believed that students would be able to understand the patterns of solving each type of problem and complete their homework easier.

Alice also mentioned that she had her students go to the board and solve each homework problem instead of providing them with all the answers. Moreover, she used cold calling—a method of calling on students randomly and asking them questions.

Using this method, Alice addressed many different students in her class and asked them questions to be sure that everyone understood what she was teaching. Alice said:

> I like to use [the] cold calling technique so I actually call on them a lot, whether they know the answer or not, I just call [on] them. If they say I didn't do the question or I don't know, I still have an answer till the end. If they say that they didn't do it, I say do it now then I will go back to it . . . I would go to a different student and ask them a different question. I'll come back, are you done? Then I'll have them answer. Or if they were having difficulties, then I will go step-by-step and teach them what we're doing as a class because I know that it's not just one person that is not understanding. It's good to review over and over again so I tell them it's okay to say [I] don't know because it's not only you that don't know, everybody doesn't know. (Interview 2)

Alice's statement above showed that she was greatly concerned about whether every student in her class was participating and learning. Posing different questions to students, waiting for the answers, and going over the problems in small steps could be burdensome to the teacher sometimes, yet Alice reported that she consistently used these practices and exercised patience with her students. What made this possible for her were her high expectations for her students even though they were struggling and her belief that all of them would be able to do well if they had her encouragement and support. This idea was well represented in her following statement:

> The struggling class [a Geometry class she was teaching at the time of the interviews], it's not that they are not intelligent. They are totally capable and they

have the potentials to do well in mathematics, but there was never that one person

or guidance to help them improve or encourage them to do better. That's one thing

that I always think about when I teach that class. I don't expect them to be perfect.

I don't expect them to be genius[es]. I don't expect them to be excellent, but I

wanted [them] to know for themselves that they can do it. They didn't fail Algebra

I because they are not intelligent. They failed Algebra I because maybe they didn't

come to school often; maybe they didn't do their homework. There are other

factors why they failed Algebra I, but they are totally capable and they are

intelligent enough to do what I ask them to do. (Interview 2)

Alice maintained her high expectations and strong belief in students' potential. The way

she taught mathematics and her primary focus on teaching were consistent with her

expectations and belief. For Alice, as she herself commented in the previous chapter, the

impact of the MCAS on her practice seemed to be minimal. This echoed the argument

suggested by Palmer and Rangel (2011) that despite the accountability demands that

imposed on teaching to the test, a teacher who is committed to students would seek ways

to teach in a way that is still responsive and authentic to students. Instead of completely

surrendering herself to the accountability system, Alice was pursuing her own way of

teaching that was suitable and considerate of her students. When she herself had

struggled with cultural and family issues in high school, Alice felt she did not receive

much support or encouragement from her teachers. When she decided to pursue a

teaching career, Alice aspired to be the kind of teacher who would help students in need.

Her aspiration stemmed from her own struggles in high school and seemed to have had

an influence on her constant efforts to teach for her students' personal benefit rather than simply to comply with the requirements of the test.

Similar to Alice, Chelsey had never given up her wish to use the discovery learning approach in her class. Ever since she learned and was attracted to this approach during her preparation program, she had always wanted to use it with students. Chelsey provided an example of this approach that she was eager to use:

> [Instead of a teacher-centered class] What I [would] rather do is, when we're [doing] surface area and volume, just give them a whole bunch of shapes and be like, "Figure out how to find the volume of this and scuffle [with] it in some way." Whereas, I'm sitting and like answering little questions, but they're creating their own learning. (Interview 2)

Despite her strong wish to use the discovery learning approach, Chelsey felt the MCAS highly affected her teaching and constrained her practice so that it was mostly teacher-centered. Chelsey's situation is consistent with the major findings of previous studies, which have indicated that beginning teachers get easily discouraged about trying out their own methods of student-centered teaching due do the restrictions imposed by the accountability system (Agee, 2004; Gatti & Catalano, 2015; Loh & Hu, 2014; van Hover et al. 2007). Chelsey felt more intense pressure and restriction from MCAS than Alice, who was teaching at the same school but felt less constrained by it. These two teachers' different backgrounds could partially explain why they felt differently about the MCAS's impact on their practices. At the time of the interviews, Chelsey was teaching Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry to 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students, and all of her classes were

standard (or basic) levels. Alice was teaching Algebra I to 9th grade students and

Geometry to 10th grade students, but three of her four Algebra I classes were for honors-

level students. Chelsey taught more students who were struggling with mathematics than

Alice taught and thus had difficulty teaching them all the content that would appear on

the test and having them master it before the test.

Chelsey said the biggest barrier to her use of discovery learning approaches was

the limited time to teach all the content before the MCAS exam. Although she was just

barely able to cover all the content necessary before the test, she needed to spend any

spare time having her students review and practice for the test. Time constraints were

among the key factors that seemed to force beginning teachers to give up their student-

centered approaches and turn to teacher-centered instruction instead. Using discovery

learning activities was, thus, especially hard for the 10th grade classes whose students

were going to take the MCAS exam in the spring. For 10th grade students this test is

extremely important because if they fail it, they are not eligible to receive their high

school diploma. Although there are multiple opportunities for students to retake the test,

failing the test the first time during the 10th grade creates a huge amount of pressure for

the student. Neither Chelsey nor Alice wanted to put their students into such a situation,

and thus MCAS preparation took up a large portion of their lessons for their MCAS-

tested classes. However, Chelsey said although she did not engage in the discover

approach as often as she wanted to, she did not give up her desire to use it because she

firmly believed in its effect on student learning. She explained why:

> I do one example with this [discovery learning] with the triangle and equality
>
> theorem, where, if you have two sides of a triangle, those two, when you add the

lengths together, have to be bigger than the third side, so we literally play with spaghetti sticks and figure it out, and they always memorize it. They always have it down. They had it down last year. Even when they forgot everything else, they remember[ed] that activity. It's ingrained in them. Whereas, they didn't remember the activity when I just told them what the theorem was. It's left their brain because it's less important to them. (Interview 2)

Chelsey added, "If they can figure it out and touch it and see it in front of them, they get it. It sticks, but when I'm just talking at them, which is what they get all day, it doesn't stick as much" (Interview 2). Since preparing for the MCAS was a priority to her, what Chelsey did was to try to use the discovery learning approach as much as possible whenever she found time to do so. At the time of the interviews, she said she was using this approach more with her Algebra II class, which was an untested class. This resembled the practice of an elementary school literacy teacher who engaged in two contrasting ways of teaching—student-centered versus teacher-centered—depending on whether she was teaching a regular class or an intervention class focused on the state test (Valli & Chambliss, 2007). Just like the teacher in Valli and Chambliss's (2007) study, Chelsey said that she felt happier when she was teaching Algebra II, which was not included in the MCAS, because she did not need to push herself and her students in this class to master all class content before the test. She said:

I like teaching them in terms of, "I'm not feeling the stress of the test," which I very much feel in Algebra I and Geometry, so in that sense, I like teaching them better because if they don't understand 4.1, I can take three more days on it and then they'll get it. We're only going to get through about five chapters in our book,

which in a year, I should be able to get through eight, two a semester, with a

standard class, but because we don't have that prep time, we're willing to slow

down and make sure they learn it. Whereas, if you don't get 4.1 in Geometry, too

bad, I have to move on. In that sense, yes, I like it much more because I can really

nitpick. If I didn't explain something right that day, I can fix it the next day. We

can fix how we learn it. We can try a new technique, whereas in Algebra I and

Geometry I can't. (Interview 2)

As this statement indicates, Chelsey felt less pressure in the Algebra II class because she

did not feel rushed to cover all the content for the test. She could control the pace and

have space to try out new strategies for the students. For this class, Chelsey had designed

a lesson based on the discovery learning approach, which asked students to determine

different graphs of polynomials. Although she had not yet tried the activity out at the time

of the interviews, Chelsey was excited about teaching it:

If we do that through graphing lines, so that my students then know how to graph

lines and read a graph, excellent. Not only have they learned that knowledge,

they've learned, "I can deal with any problem you put in front of me and I'll figure

it out even if I make 100 mistakes before I get the right answer," which is

wonderful. (Interview 2)

Through this kind of activity, Chelsey believed that students not only learn mathematics

but also develop problem-solving skills and self-confidence. Her belief about the effect of

discovery learning stayed firm for that reason, even though she felt constrained by the

MCAS and admitted that she was teaching more to the test than to the students. Chelsey

said "I don't think that [my desire to use more discovery learning approaches in class]
will ever fade, even with the reality being what it is" (Interview 3). Although Chelsey's
experience was similar to those of other beginning teachers in the previous research in
that she felt constrained and frustrated by testing (Agee, 2004; Gatti & Catalano, 2015;
Loh & Hu, 2014; van Hover et al. 2007), she did not abandon her wish to practice
discovery learning and she did not completely conform to the accountability demands as
they did. (Jim, who also felt huge pressure to teach to the MCAS, showed a similar
attitude to Chelsey's, to which I return later.) Chelsey said it was her dream and goal to
constantly use discovery-based learning approaches. Although she felt she could only
teach in this way a little bit at the time of the interviews, Chelsey was positive that she
would learn from her use of this approach and be able to integrate it more as she became
more experienced.

      English teachers' student-centered teaching. The two English teachers, Dana
and Jim, worked in very different contexts at the time of the interviews. As described in
the previous chapter, none of Dana's English classes were taking the MCAS, although
she provided MCAS preparation occasionally for her 9th grade students. In contrast, Jim,
who was teaching only 7th grade English classes, was under an intense pressure to teach
to the MCAS. Therefore, besides their different grade levels, there were other differences
between these two teachers, such as the pressure to teach to the test and the extent of
integrating test preparation into lessons, which may have caused significant differences in
their ways of teaching their subject. Despite these differences, Dana and Jim were similar
in that they both emphasized engaging students in learning. Just like the two mathematics

teachers in this study, they indicated that they were working hard to make their classes student-centered.

Both Dana and Jim made constant changes in learning activities during their lessons to keep their students engaged. Within a single lesson, for example, they incorporated different types of activities (e.g., having 15 minutes of reading activity and then moving on to a writing activity for another 15 minutes) and used various types of resources, such as articles, lyrics, and iPad apps, in addition to the main course readings. They also differentiated activities related to a single reading depending on students' interests. For example, Dana did two different lessons with her junior classes using the book, Catcher in the Rye, the American classic about 16-year-old Holden who struggled with many psychological issues. Dana thought his story would be relevant and interesting for her students and designed an activity to have them explore his psychological issues more deeply. However, one of her classes did not like the character Holden, so instead of focusing on his psychological issues as she had planned, Dana held a debate in this class. The students debated whether violence could be influenced by the ferocious scenes on movies, TV, or video games, because in the book, Holden wanted to take revenge on a movie character. For another class whose students really liked the book, Dana did the activity she had initially planned. The students in this class explored Holden's psychological issues by playing the role of psychiatrists and diagnosing Holden's symptoms to identify his problems. Dana said, "It's the same book, but you have to switch it up so it's relevant for each class or you'll lose them completely" (Interview 2). She also explained why she made constant switches for every lesson:

Keeping them engaged and interested. For my kids, the content, just being able to get the content into their heads is really difficult for a lot of them. If they're not engaged, I can lose them and I can lose them in five minutes if I'm doing a dance in front of them. I have to really make sure that I'm switching things up all the time and I'm keeping things fresh and relevant to their lives because obviously, when you're a high school student, you're the most egotistical person. You want it all to be relevant to you. I try to keep things fresh, relevant, and entertaining. (Interview 2)

Since Dana was teaching all standard (i.e., basic-level) English classes at the time of the interviews, she had many students who struggled with reading and writing. Thus, in addition to offering relevant and interesting activities, Dana paid particular attention to provide positive comments on her students' work in order to encourage them. She said, "I try to do one positive, if there's one negative" (Interview 2) and added, "I know the quality of the feedback, granted I know that my standard kids don't even end up reading it, but I still like to give it in case the one kid who does" (Interview 2). She also emphasized the importance of being patient with struggling students. According to Dana, patience was important because, "If you kind of just cut a kid off and don't let them take a kind of process that you are asking or expecting, then you are going to completely discourage them forever" (Interview 2). Dana especially made sure to provide enough time for her students who had special needs to let them finish a task. Although it could delay completing the lesson, Dana thought she could still continue it the next day. This kind of flexibility was possible because she had the full freedom to design her own English lessons and had fewer constraints to prepare for the MCAS. When there was less

pressure to teach to the test, teachers had more flexibility and opportunities to practice their own ways of student-centered teaching, as previous research has suggested (Valli & Chambliss, 2007).

Compared to Dana, Jim clearly had more restrictions preventing him from carrying out student-centered teaching as he had wished to do. Similar to Chelsey, Jim said the restriction of time resulting from MCAS preparation prevented him from integrating many interesting and creative activities into his lessons. This echoed major findings from previous studies that have documented teachers' changes of practice from student-centered to teacher-centered approaches due to the stricter accountability demands on them since the No Child Left Behind Act (Abrams et al., 2003; Berryhill et al., 2009; Cruz & Brown, 2010; Valli & Buese, 2007; Watanabe, 2007). These studies pointed out that once NCLB took effect, many teachers altered their teaching in ways that diminish students' engagement in learning, which is consistent with Jim's situation. He felt teaching engaging English lessons was challenging due to the pressure on him to teach to the MCAS.

As noted in the previous chapter, Jim stated that he was doing "a disguised, 100%" (Interview 2) teaching to the MCAS, which would seem to suggest that many of his lessons could not avoid being teacher-centered. Yet Jim recently had been trying a new approach, which he called a "guided lecture" (Interview 2). He explained it as:

I ask questions to get the answers I want to get to lead them to the end. Today we read the preface of Mark Twain's book. It's telling the reader that everything that happens in Tom Sawyer is true, make sure you believe it. Instead of just standing

up there like, "The reason Mark Twain wrote all this—," I'm like, "Why did he write this? What's going on?" We talk through it. It's like a lecture, but hopefully they're engaging. They're [the guided lectures] helping get to the understanding. (Interview 2)

His description about the guided lecture shows a way of integrating student-centered approaches into test preparation. By asking many questions, Jim tried to encourage students' participation while still preparing them for the MCAS. In fact, a combination of student-centered teaching with MCAS preparation occurred often in Jim's classes. Instead of completely surrendering himself to the MCAS, Jim talked about making a constant effort to find a balance between his preference for engaging lessons and the required MCAS preparation. His agency enabled him to find some space during his test-centered lessons to integrate student-centered activities. His initial desire to make English classes fun and engaging stayed firm despite his two years of experience in a high-stakes accountability context. Consistent with his belief, Jim tried to squeeze in student-centered methods as much as possible during and between his MCAS-oriented lessons.

Both Chelsey and Jim adhered to their student-centered beliefs while at the same time feeling the pressure of test preparation. Compared to Chelsey, Jim was able to integrate student-centered activities into his lessons more often, because the English curriculum was not as fixed as mathematics was. In this respect, Jim said, "I also think English is cool because you can kind of go off topic" (Interview 2). For example, Jim had his students read "The Tell-Tale Heart" near Halloween. Although it was not on the curriculum, Jim thought his students would like this story so he included it in the lesson. At the time of the interviews, he was also going to have a discussion activity about race

and racism after his students read Tom Sawyer because he found they were interested in talking about this issue. Jim said he was excited about teaching this lesson, adding:

> They want to talk about race and racism because of Ferguson and all this stuff that's been happening in the world. The version of Tom Sawyer, the way we're going to read it this year is very different than the way we were going to read it last year, because I feel like they can handle these sorts of conversations on race, which is cool. It totally changes my plans, which is fine. It'll be more interesting. (Interview 2)

Jim was also keen on his students' response to his lessons. He used Google forms to get constant feedback from his students and tried to modify his lessons based on their suggestions. For example, he changed the graphic organizer because his students did not like its structure. Although Jim was worried about his teacher evaluation, which used students' MCAS scores as its primary indicator, what truly mattered most for him was his students' responses to his teaching, not the evaluation results. Jim said, "The kids are, to me, the most important. I don't care what anyone else really says" (Interview 3).

Despite the pressure on him to teach to the MCAS, Jim was resolute in applying student-centered approaches as much as possible in his classes. Just like Chelsey, he felt he had many constraints on his practice due to the MCAS. However, he believed in the importance of developing students' thinking skills through his lessons, even though these skills were not typically assessed on the test. Jim said:

> I think there is [a] difference [between student-centered and MCAS-oriented lessons]. When I stray from the "curriculum," for example, talking about racism is

not in any sort of standard. That is teaching more toward their thinking skills and less towards something that would show up on the MCAS. When we read [The] Call of the Wild, we talked about having strength over adversity, because it's a big theme in the book. That, again, is more towards thinking skills, less towards MCAS-based. I think it's split. If I'm sticking to curriculum-based learning, like writing skills, that's almost always geared towards MCAS. I have not taught a writing skill that's not found on the MCAS, which is kind of annoying [emphasis added] because there's lot of other . . . I guess, poetry. We've done a little bit of poetry, which is not . . . You might read poetry on the MCAS, but you'd never have to write a poem on the MCAS. (Interview 2)

To my question of why he felt annoyed for not teaching any other writing skills that were not on the test, Jim responded:

I don't know. There are so many cool types of writing. I was on mock trial when I was in middle school. I would love to teach them how to write different questions and use different thinking skills. There's just no time. (Interview 2)

The analysis of interview data from Chelsey and Jim particularly showed that the MCAS put many restrictions on them that constrained their pursuit of their own ways of student-centered teaching. This finding is aligned with the findings of many previous studies (Abrams et al., 2003; Berryhill et al., 2009). However, unlike most previous studies, which indicated the tendency of beginning teachers to surrender to the accountability mandates (Agee, 2004; Gatti & Catalano, 2015; Loh & Hu, 2014), both Chelsey and Jim were committed to their student-centered approaches. Most of the time, they conformed

to the system by putting more emphasis on preparing for the test, but whenever they could, they strove to integrate student-centered lessons into their predominantly test-centered classes. If there had not been pressures from the MCAS, both Jim and Chelsey indicated that they were very positive they would be offering more student-centered teaching.

Confidence and Hope About Being a Better Teacher for the Sake of Students

During their first few years on the job, the teachers came to develop confidence in their practice. The early years of teaching experience are, indeed, a critical period for new teachers when significant learning occurs (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; 2003). Although the teachers in this study continued to struggle with some issues related to classroom management and MCAS preparation, all of them felt that they had improved since the beginning and were positive about continued growth in the future. For example, Chelsey said that she became more confident during the second year at just about the same time as the interviews. To my question asking her to rate herself on a 10-point scale, Chelsey rated herself three to four in the first year and a six in the second year:

> Right now, a six would be my guess, a high six, and I guess it depends on . . . if we're thinking overall, that's what I would do because I think in terms of lesson planning, I'm really great. In terms of classroom management, I'm OK, but I'm getting better. In terms of interesting forms of teaching, I'm not totally there. (Interview 3)

Her self-rating showed that although there were some areas such as classroom management and student-centered teaching that required further development, she

believed she had made improvements in all the areas of the job she thought important. Chelsey added, "First year I would've rated myself a three or four, so already I feel like I've made a big jump just because you learn so much your first year" (Interview 3). The other three teachers in this study rated themselves similarly. When they talked about their self-ratings, it was obvious that all the teachers had clear ideas about the areas where they had made improvement and where they needed to work more. Chelsey talked about what she felt she needed to learn more about:

> I'm not sure I'll move up to that seven or eight yet until year five, six, or seven, because I still have a lot to learn, what's the best way to introduce this. I still have to work on my parent contact issues. I need to work on bringing in something other than me standing in the front talking at them. I need to maybe bring in more projects, like how am I grading my students, is that fair? Should I think of another way to grade them? There're just so many things I feel like I could improve on . . . (Interview 3)

In this statement, Chelsey pointed out several areas in which she wanted to make further improvement, including communication with parents, teaching in a more student-centered way, and fair grading. Communication with parents and more student-centered teaching were the areas in which the other three teachers also felt the need for improvement.

While Chelsey perceived that her content knowledge, lesson planning, and teaching skills in mathematics were strong, some of the teachers in my study wanted to improve these aspects further. For example, Alice said her goal for the next year was to

make the Geometry lessons stronger to better prepare her students for the MCAS. For that purpose, Alice felt the need to know more about the mathematics content, saying:

> To teach somebody algebra, to teach somebody mathematics, I need to know more so that I can actually make it easy for them to understand. If I know the concept behind these numbers, I can actually explain it more thoroughly so that the students can absorb it more easily. (Interview 3)

Yet Alice emphasized that the reason she wanted to provide better MCAS preparation was because she wanted all students to pass. Her plan for growth was still consistent with her initial belief, which was to care about and support students.

Jim was similar to Alice in that he wanted to build stronger English lessons, yet he was interested in integrating more student-centered approaches than he was in offering more effective MCAS preparation. In this respect, he had a different purpose from Alice, but they were alike in that they both wanted to improve their practice in teaching content to provide better instruction that helps their students. Jim said:

> I just think there's a lot more that I need to learn in terms of lesson planning and effective instruction. I think I'm a little bit inconsistent on a day-to-day basis, just in terms of lesson plans and having time to create the best lessons. (Interview 3)

Jim's goal was to carry out his own way of student-centered teaching consistently in his day-to-day practice. For that purpose, he felt the need to improve his knowledge and skills in teaching English.

Just like the other teachers had, Dana felt she became a stronger and better teacher throughout her on-the-job experience. In terms of her next step, Dana said she was planning to get a special education licensure because she had many special needs students in her standard-level English classes. Dana thought she needed to have more knowledge and skills about special needs students because she wanted to help them better. She said, "How awesome would that be that not only do I have my English background but I have my special [education background]. That would be an ideal inclusive classroom" (Interview 3).

As seen in the teachers' statements, their suggestions for their own professional improvement were consistent with their initial student-centered beliefs, because all of them discussed their plans for growth in relation to how they could better support their students. This implies that their student-centered beliefs stayed firm throughout a couple of years of experience, despite all the difficulties they faced as beginning teachers working within a strict accountability system determined by standardized testing.

Unlike the general tendency in the US, where one third of the beginning teachers leave their jobs in three years (Clark, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), all the US teachers in this study planned to continue their careers as educators. Despite the challenges from their working contexts, the teachers seemed to receive motivation to work as well as satisfaction in their jobs from their interactions with students and from seeing their change and improvement. This is well illustrated in Alice's following statement:

Even though I'm tired physically, I like what I'm doing. Whenever I prepare a lesson, I'm very excited to go and teach them what I have prepared. When I

correct their tests, I am very excited to give them the results if they are good. I like to see their reactions. I like to see their changes like some people that were not doing well, but they improved. I like seeing that improvement. I like to encourage somebody and when I see that person being encouraged and feeling that hope from what I tell them. I feel like I'm doing a good job. I think I feel that motivation from each of those moments. (Interview 3)

Unlike the findings of some previous studies (e.g., Agee, 2004; Gatti & Catalano, 2015; Loh & Hu, 2014), the teachers in this study did not seem to be completely surrendering themselves to the demands of the accountability system based on testing. Rather, animated by constant motivation and rewards from students, the teachers in this study maintained their student-centered beliefs and continued to pursue practices aligned to those beliefs. For example, Dana stated her aspiration to continuously support diverse students in need, which was identical to her initial belief before she began to teach.

My teaching philosophy? It's that every single student is an individual and to give every single individual student the best education that he or she can attain, give them as many . . . To express themselves and to the best they can. Also make sure . . . So the kids come first no matter what. Their special needs, their language. (Interview 3)

As seen in Dana's statement, the teachers' test-centered working contexts based on strict test-based accountability did not alter their beliefs and practices centered on students. From the confidence they gained from their work experiences and the constant

motivation they received from students, the teachers in this study were eager to continue to practice their own ways of student-centered teaching in the future.

Pursuit of Balance between Student-Centered Teaching and Teaching to the Test: US Teachers' Lived Experiences of Learning to Teach

Among the US teachers I studied, it was evident that none of the teachers completely relinquished their student-centered beliefs about teaching and none of them fully complied with demands that they teach to the test. This contrasts to a certain extent with a number of domestic and international studies indicating that beginning teachers are particularly vulnerable to accountability mandates and eventually conform to the accountability system while displacing their student-centered, reform-oriented, or constructivist approaches (Agee, 2004; Gatti & Catalano, 2015; Loh & Hu, 2014). In contrast my study suggests that teachers' beliefs and practices centering on students may persist and still matter even within the intense testing-based accountability system, which is consistent with a small number of studies in the literature (e.g., Neumann, 2013; Palmer & Rangel, 2011).

Part of what likely explains why and how the teachers in this study were able to maintain some of their student-centered beliefs and continue to enact some student-centered practices is the nature of the school context. In previous studies, a commonality of the beginning teachers who eventually relinquished their beliefs about the importance of student-centered teaching is that they were all working in unfavorable school contexts where they had unsupportive colleagues who were apathetic to them and authoritative administrators who constantly monitored their classroom teaching (Agee, 2004; Gatti & Catalano, 2015; Loh & Hu, 2014). This was not the case for the teachers in this study.

Chelsey and Alice, who worked in the same school, described their colleagues as very kind and supportive. Although Jim was worried about the teacher evaluation system based on MCAS that his school district had implemented, he did not express complaints about his administrators and colleagues in the interviews I conducted with him. Dana was at a school whose school administrators emphasized MCAS performance and put great stock in it. However, she reported that she felt relatively less pressure than some other teachers in her school did because she was not teaching the MCAS-tested grade. Dana also liked her principal and thought he was a great leader. Unlike the beginning teachers from the previous studies, none of the teachers in this study were working under constant surveillance from any external authorities and directed by them to teach to the test. The teachers were expected to offer test preparation, but not compelled or watched by any authoritative figures. Individual teachers' school contexts, which involved the school culture and leadership, thus seemed to be an important factor in their maintenance of student-centered beliefs and practices. This conclusion aligns with previous studies that suggest the school context mediates teachers' experience with high-stakes accountability (Stillman, 2011; Rinke & Valli, 2010; Valli, Croninger & Walters, 2007).

Although the teachers in this study recognized the impact of accountability mandates on their practice, their initial student-centered beliefs stayed firm. Furthermore, they implemented various kinds of student-centered teaching whenever they could find the time to do so. Even Chelsey and Jim, who felt considerably more constrained by the MCAS than Alice and Dana did, continued to pursue their own approaches to student-centered teaching and were willing to practice it more. As revealed by a few studies, these teachers were striving to find a balance between their student-centered approaches

and the testing mandates (Neumann, 2013; Palmer & Rangel, 2011). This suggests that although accountability demands do have a major impact on teaching, teachers are also able to negotiate their student-centered approach with teaching to the test. Yet a precondition of such reconciliation is that the teacher has a firm belief in student-centered teaching and cares about their learning.

The question then follows of how teachers could maintain their beliefs and pursuits of student-centered teaching despite the pressures on them to teach to the test. This has hardly explored in the previous studies, yet the lived experiences of the teachers in this study suggest that their greatest motivator was their students. All the US teachers in this study gained intrinsic rewards and job satisfaction through their interactions, relationships, and accomplishments with students. This idea is tested and confirmed again when looking into Korean teachers' experiences in the following section.

Korean Teachers' Lived Experiences of Learning and Growth
Within a Test-Based Accountability System

Three common themes were found across my analysis of the four Korean teachers' lived experiences related to their own learning and growth within a test-oriented education system: developing greater interests in students, taking student-centered approaches while teaching to the test, and hopes about becoming better teachers for the sake of students. These themes are in fact similar to those gleaned from the US teachers' lived experiences of learning and growth, which is surprising given the many dissimilarities in the two systems and the teachers' lived experiences compared in previous chapters. In this section I illustrate what learning occurred among the Korean teachers and how they perceived their growth. In this area, I show that the Korean

teachers had more similarities to US teachers than differences. Because there were also many commonalities across the Korean teachers, I describe the four teachers' experiences together according to each theme.

Developing Greater Interest in Students

A common tendency across all four Korean teachers was that over time they developed greater interests in knowing about and understanding their students' lives and the issues they struggled with. The teachers also developed a desire to have good relationships with their students. This was a noticeable change given that the Korean teachers I studied (except Yubin) did not consider caring about students as one of their primary job responsibilities when they began to teach. Rather, as I described in the previous chapter, three of the four Korean teachers in this study— Minwoo, Somi, and Jieun— associated good teaching with being good at teaching content rather than with caring about students and supporting their lives. For example, Minwoo explained that being a good teacher was "[being the] best teacher in teaching mathematics" (Interview 3) and "a teacher whose students like [him] very much because he helps students get better scores in mathematics" (Interview 3). Somi's belief was very similar to Minwoo's, which she stated as, "teaching mathematics very well, because many students think it's difficult . . ." (Interview 2) and "I wanted the students who used to hate mathematics come to like it after taking my class. I wanted to make a fun mathematics class for students. That was my dream, my goal." (Interview 3). Regarding her initial belief as a teacher, Somi added, "I used to perceive myself as a teacher who implants as much knowledge as possible" (Interview 3). Somi believed that a precondition of making a fun mathematics class was the teacher's advanced content knowledge, which meant having

an in-depth understanding of the concepts, principles, and structures of the subject area. Minwoo totally agreed with her. Both of them believed that if a teacher possessed advanced knowledge in mathematics, only then could he or she handle the content and make it appropriate and interesting for students to learn, which would eventually lead to students' enhanced learning and achievement in the subject. Thus these teachers' beliefs about teaching mathematics well were highly correlated with their abilities to help their students get better scores in mathematics. Jieun, who was a high school English teacher, had similar goals to Minwoo and Somi. She also said she wanted to teach English well and explained it as, ″how to teach English in an interesting way for students, make English class fun – that is also attached to *Suneung* [the national exam for college application]″ (Interview 1). Just like Minwoo and Somi, Jieun's initial belief implied that she anticipated her students do well on *Suneung* as a result of her good teaching.

The three teachers also preferred to teach in high school because they believed that it was a better place than middle school to utilize their in-depth content knowledge for teaching because the level of content was more advanced in high school than middle school. Moreover, teachers could easily identify the effect of their teaching by reviewing students' test results, including their performance on *Suneung*. Minwoo and Jieun also said that they were not interested in younger middle school students or confident about dealing with them. This was another reason for their preference for high school level teaching. Unlike these teachers, Yubin, who held a strong student-centered belief that distinguished her from the other Korean teachers, did not indicate any preference for teaching in high school or in middle school. After passing the teacher recruitment exam, Yubin was assigned to high school, and so were Somi and Jieun, as they wished, whereas

Minwoo was assigned to middle school. Minwoo was a little disappointed by his placement in the beginning, but he was optimistic that he would still be able to use his in-depth content knowledge in mathematics to teach middle school students. At the beginning of their first year, all four teachers were optimistic that they could achieve their initial teaching goals, whether the goals were centered on teaching content or on supporting students. What they did not realize at that time was the huge impact that the students would have on their teaching beliefs and practices. After starting their jobs, the teachers faced significant challenges in teaching students who lacked motivation and interest in learning and who behaved poorly in class because they were tired of studying long hours for exams. While struggling to deal with those students, the teachers experienced a change in their initial beliefs and practices. The change was most evident for Minwoo, Somi, and Jieun, whose initial definitions of good teaching had had to do explicitly with teaching content.

Just as the US teachers had done, all the Korean teachers in this study had a difficult time dealing with students' behavioral issues initially. This seemed to be more challenging for Korean teachers because they were all homeroom teachers, which meant they spent long periods of time (a whole academic year) with their homeroom students, had more chances than those without homeroom responsibilities to meet students in class and in person, and were responsible for any problems caused by students. Somi had an especially hard time in her first year managing her freshman homeroom students. According to Somi, her school was known as a low-performing school in the local area. The high schools in this area were ranked by their college admission records as well as by the performance of accepted students. Somi's school had not been very successful at

getting students admitted to college, so many of its students did not do well in their middle school studies. She said that some of her homeroom students had attendance problems even when they had been in middle school. "The children went out [during school hours] and never came back [to class]" (Interview 2), Somi said. Many of them did not adjust to school well because they were not interested in studying. In addition, they struggled with the requirements of a longer school day than they had had in middle school in order to take after-school classes and engage in self-study. Somi reported that some students felt stressed about school and their lives in general so they often skipped classes and had smoking problems. Somi said she felt overwhelmed because she had not expected high school students to behave in such a manner. Somi talked about the difficulty she had in her first year:

> As a teacher, I needed to control my emotions when I disciplined students. I needed to focus on the kid's behavior, and not get angry at the person. But since I was very new, I felt I was acting emotionally. I was so disappointed with the kid causing trouble. "Don't you see that I am taking so much care of you? How come you keep acting like this?" I felt so troubled, so I just talked straight to them. Not disciplining them, but directly expressing how I feel. It didn't help. (Interview 2)

Somi said the most difficult problem at the beginning was controlling students, not teaching mathematics. In this regard, she was very similar to Chelsey, who struggled with similar problems and said teaching mathematics was much easier than controlling students. Both US and Korean teachers in this study initially understood teaching content and managing students as completely different tasks. It was common across all the teachers in this study to struggle with student behaviors most especially in the first year

of teaching, while they felt capable of teaching content. According to the teachers, a primary reason for their struggle with student behavior was that they did not anticipate that it would be such a significant problem, and furthermore, they did not know how to manage the misbehaviors. This finding is consistent with some previous research (Kim et al., 2010; Meagher & Brantlinger, 2011; Ulvik, Smith, & Helleve, 2009). Yubin was no exception when it came to difficulties with student behavior. Yubin who had strong student-centered beliefs about teaching. Just like the other teachers, she suffered in her first year from students who talked back to her, broke the school rules (e.g., to wear the school uniform properly and not put on heavy makeup), and skipped classes. What made Yubin feel even more troubled was that she felt conflicted between her student-centered beliefs and the necessity of controlling students as demanded by the school's policy. Yubin explained:

> I did my practicum at an alternative school and developed my teaching philosophy as helping students live a happy life and supporting them to lead their own lives. So I did not really want to scold my students, only because they put on heavy makeup or wear short skirts. They can wear as they want. If that's what they really want to do, then it could be a way for them to live a happy life in high school. So I never thought of punishing them because they did not wear a proper uniform. And I did not want to tell them to study hard either, because I was so stressed about it when I was in high school. I did not want to push my kids. I just wanted them to have various experiences in high school and be happy. But the kids got uncontrollable because I knew nothing [about classroom management] but my own philosophy. . . (Interview 2)

Yubin wanted to be nice to her students and did not want them to feel stressed in school. She also thought most of the rules imposed on students were useless. However, her lenient attitude did not improve her students' poor behaviors. Yubin felt extremely stressed out because the students did not listen to her—even though she was nice to them—and she needed to scold and punish them, which she did not really want to do. Yubin said:

> If [I] held my belief firm and stayed strong with it, then I'd have been able to do [things] my own way [consistent with my belief]. I wouldn't have needed to care much about what the administrators and head teacher told me to do. But I was very new. I felt like I must do as I was told by them, even though I did not like it. It was a huge stress. (Interview 2)

The sources of Yubin's struggle with her students' behaviors was the conflict she felt between her student-centered beliefs and the strict school policy to control students. In her first year, it was difficult for her to reconcile them and find balance. She did not know how to manage her students wisely in a way that was consistent with her belief while still being able to regulate their behavior. Just like the US teachers, the Korean teachers in this study had many difficulties managing students at the beginning of their teaching careers, no matter whether they considered these difficulties significant or not.

An interesting change that occurred among all of the Korean teachers in this study was that through their struggles to manage their students, they came to realize the importance of caring about their students. That is, the teachers' interests in and attention to students increased over time as they made efforts to manage the students within the

high-stakes accountability context with heavy focus on performativity measures. The teachers realized many students were suffering within the test-oriented system. The teachers found that many behavioral issues occurred because students were generally unhappy about their lives in the test-oriented schools. All the teachers agreed that many students did not like to be at school and study for long hours. Just like Yubin and Minwoo mentioned in the previous chapter, the students understood that they must study hard for college, but many of them were uncertain about whether college was truly what they wanted or whether they just aimed for it because everyone else did. Since many students did not have a strong sense of meaning and purpose related to study, they had a lack of motivation. It was not a surprise that they behaved poorly in school. These students were not interested in learning because in most cases learning in Korean schools meant lots of memorizing and drilling for tests (Sorensen, 1994), and the students were tired of that. As a result, skipping classes, sleeping during classes, and not paying attention to teachers often occurred in the teachers' classes, which made the Korean teachers in this study really suffer.

Because the teachers realized that students' poor behaviors and their lack of interest in and motivation for learning were a systemic problem, rather than an individual problem, they did not put full blame on the students. Instead, the teachers in this study understood things in a different way. They came to consider various ways of not just of controlling behaviors, but of ultimately enhancing their students' lives at school. A common tendency across all the Korean teachers I studied was that they took much time and effort to build stronger relationships with their students. The teachers wanted to know more about their students, understand them better, and become closer with them. To the

teachers (Minwoo, Somi, and Jieun) who initially put emphasis on teaching content well, this involved a significant change in their beliefs about and attitudes toward students and a real change in what it meant to them to be good teachers. For example, Jieun compared herself in the first and second years and indicated that there had been a significant change in her teaching philosophy. When she began to teach, her primary concern was teaching daily lessons successfully rather than caring about her students, although she was in charge of a freshmen homeroom. Jieun explained that the reason she was somewhat apathetic to her students at that time was:

> To be honest, I didn't feel attached to students. The kids won't behave as I control. I knew that. So I wasn't really interested in developing their personalities. I thought I'm not even a kind of mature adult, so talking to them [about their behaviors] was just me being a hypocrite. Also, a human being has sympathy [for] other person, so I thought I couldn't really enforce my values on my students, telling them this is right and this is wrong. I thought high school kids were mature enough, so instead of focusing on their personality development, I'd rather have cared about their study, so I didn't touch upon that [student personality and behavior issues]. But that prevented me from establishing a rapport with my kids. Later the kids told me that I was like a businessman to them. They were right. At that time, I thought school was just a workplace to me. I was teaching and doing only the essential homeroom work. I didn't think it was necessary to build personal relationships with my students. (Interview 2)

Jieun added that her students told her that she was not very friendly, but rather was strict and outspoken, although they liked her English classes very much. Despite such

feedback, Jieun was not eager to change her attitude. However, an event happened in her second year that completely changed her. In 2014, in her second year of teaching, a Korean ferry sank off the southwest coast of the Korean Peninsula with hundreds of passengers on board. This was widely reported in the international news. The majority of passengers were high school students and teachers who were going on a field trip to Jeju Island. Only a few of them were rescued, and more than 200 students and teachers died. They were from Jieun's neighborhood high school, so many of her students were friends with those who died from this accident. Jieun said, "[After it happened] every day in school was like attending a funeral. The kids cried and fainted. It was so tragic . . ." (Interview 2) While everyone else was mourning, there was one student who was laughing out and making a joke in class. "I [talked to] him in person and asked, 'Please stay with your friends. Don't you see how much your friends are in deep sorrow?'" Yet Jieun was totally shocked by his response. "He said, 'But my friends didn't die.'" (Interview 2). Jieun said that in that moment, she realized that many students were rather selfish and apathetic toward others, and that she herself had been a similar kind of person when she was their age and perhaps still was to a certain extent. Before this incident, Jieun thought of herself as a teacher who only cared about completing the required homeroom work and teaching, and who was uninterested in intervening in students' lives. "I realized there were more important things [to me] than teaching English well" (Interview 2), Jieun said and added, "I wanted them to be human beings" who are "kind" and "sympathetic to others" (Interview 2). From that time onward, Jieun indicated that she began to prioritize understanding her students and building close relationships with them. At the time of the interviews, she was also deliberating about how she could have a

positive impact on her students' personality development and happiness. She said, "I came to put more value on [my students'] happiness than their academic achievement" (Interview 2).

A similar change in beliefs and attitudes occurred with all three Korean teachers in this study who initially thought their primary duty was teaching content well. Minwoo also mentioned that his prior belief and present belief about teaching were "totally different" from one another (Interview 3). He said that he had become more student-centered since he began working in the middle school. According to him, middle school students needed more caring and attention from the teacher because they were still immature. He also came to understand that time in middle school was important for students' emotional and social development. Thus he felt that he needed to help his students in that area more than just concentrating on teaching mathematics. In terms of this change, Minwoo's beliefs and practice became somewhat similar to Jim's, who was also working at a middle school while trying to maintain his initial student-centered belief. Minwoo also developed the wish, "to be a teacher whose students respect and feel attached to" (Interview 3). It was indeed a significant change from his prior aspiration, which had been centered only on teaching mathematics.

Aside from Yubin, who maintained her student-centered belief, the other three teachers in this study shifted their beliefs about good teaching from content-centered to student-centered. Before they began teaching, these teachers did not expect that taking care of students would be a significant part of their jobs or that it could be even more important than their teaching of content. After they began to teach, they observed that many students were suffering from study pressures and causing troubles in school

because they were unhappy about being there, studying all day for tests. After struggling to manage various student-related issues, all four teachers came to acknowledge the necessity of caring for and supporting their students as they sought to make their lives happier within what might be considered a brutal education system in which students are pressured to sit and study all day in order to outperform their peers on tests. Accordingly, the teachers came up with and tried various strategies, which are described in the following section, to help their students.

Taking a Student-Centered Approach While Teaching to the Tests

As all four Korean teachers came to recognize the need to support and care for their students, they made multiple efforts to integrate student-centered approaches into their teaching practices. In this respect, they were similar to the US teachers who also integrated student-centered approaches as much as possible into their classes. Yet Korean teachers had more restrictions because they were part of an education system wherein all the teachers were explicitly expected to solely teach to the tests (Lee, 2003; Sorensen, 1994). For the most part, this mean that the Korean teachers' adoption of student-centered approaches was minimal, although they all indicated that they wished to do more of this. The majority of their classes were oriented around test preparation, as required by their schools. However, even though they continued to teach to the tests, as required, the Korean teachers also reported that they tried to incorporate various student-centered strategies such as provoking questions (Yubin), collaborative learning (Minwoo, Somi, Jieun), and engaging interesting resources even when drilling on test problems (Jieun). Moreover, the three high school teachers (Yubin, Somi, and Jieun) also offered rewards, such as extra points or candies, to enhance students' participation in class. Since

the Korean teachers in this study were all homeroom teachers, another distinctive feature of their attempts at student-centered practice was increased communication with students and use of various strategies for managing them, such as "*doorae,*" or student-initiated group projects, to improve their homeroom experience. In the discussion below, I focus on how the four Korean teachers carried out student-centered practices in two areas: teaching classes and managing students.

As illustrated in the previous chapter, the Korean teachers in this study felt frustrated with students who had a complete lack of interest in participating and learning in their classes. Many of them fell asleep and did not pay attention in class because they were exhausted from the long hours of repetitive test preparation at school and *hagwon*. This phenomenon, called "the collapse of the classroom," is a common tendency in many Korean schools (Lee, 2003), and the teachers in this study were no exception. For example, Yubin talked about her frustration with students who kept sleeping in her classes:

> Because I had insufficient teaching experience [before I began to teach], I wasn't skillful enough to interact with my students and engage them in class. So many of them fell asleep during my class, and I was so stressed about that. I felt depressed all day. (Interview 2)

Although Yubin wanted to make her lessons more interesting for her students, she thought this was challenging to accomplish in high school because most classes were teacher-centered for test preparation (Sorensen, 1994). However, in the second semester of her first year, Yubin had a chance to take a professional development course for

English teachers to improve instruction. Yubin said she learned from the other experienced teachers whom she met there about various strategies to enhance students' participation in class. Provoking questions was one that she used in teaching her senior English classes. As described in the previous chapter, the major part of the senior English classes was practicing *suneung* problems, with teachers expected to lecture the whole time about how to approach and resolve the problem, interpret the text, and remember important words and idioms. However, instead of lecturing the whole time, Yubin asked her students to write down questions about a text on a post-it note, which she was going to cover in the next class. Yubin said she was surprised when she reviewed the questions that students raised:

> I categorized the questions they brought. Some students had questions about grammar, like, "I think the subject in this sentence is plural, but the verb is 'is,' not 'are.'" And there were some questions, like, "Who is the author of this text?" Actually the text was about American football, so some students had a question about, "Why does this problem use a text about American football? Koreans are not familiar with this sport, so it would have been better to use a text related to soccer." I think it was great. The kids were creative and they were able to find what they didn't really know before . . . (Interview 2)

After categorizing students' questions, Yubin put them on a big piece of paper and asked each question to the whole class. To encourage students' responses, she gave a piece of chocolate as a reward for anyone who responded to a question. Yubin said:

No one slept during the class. Even a kid who completely gave up English and who always slept in my class—so I wasn't even able to see his face during the time I was teaching him for the whole year and a half—, that kid even asked a question. (Interview 2)

Although this strategy was a great success in the sense that it greatly enhanced students' participation in class, Yubin was not able to use it all the time because of the limited time until *suneung*, and because of her worry that repeating the same practice would cause students to become bored. Yet from this experience, she developed confidence about applying student-centered approaches more often in her class. "So I learned there that I can still do student-centered teaching with my high school students" (Interview 2), Yubin said.

Collaborative learning was another strategy often used among the four Korean teachers in this study to encourage students' participation. Minwoo used it frequently in his classes and found its effect on enhancing students' participation and learning. To my questions on how he came to use a collaborative learning strategy, he said:

There wasn't any critical incident. Actually, teacher-centered classes are easy to teach for me. It's because no matter the kids participate or not, I can just lead the whole class on my own. But I thought it's important to encourage students' participation in class. That's how I came to use it, I think. (Interview 2)

Minwoo said he was also influenced by one of his colleagues in the mathematics department who was an experienced teacher with a great interest in collaborative learning. Minwoo had many chances to talk with him about collaborative learning and

learned some strategies from him. Minwoo started using collaborative learning during his second year of teaching. As illustrated in the previous chapter, Minwoo used his own worksheet in every class. To integrate collaborative learning into lessons, he modified the structure of his worksheets and included problems that he had students discuss and solve together in groups. After using this collaborative learning strategy, Minwoo said he found mixed results:

> If I designed the worksheet well and managed the time wisely, it seemed to work well. But sometimes it didn't always work as I planned. Or the kids got noisy. The kids also said they like it because they learn from each other, but some kids said it's harder for them to concentrate on the lesson than a teacher-centered class. (Interview 2)

As Minwoo said, using a collaborative learning strategy was not always successful. It required careful planning and management by the teacher. Above all, Minwoo felt the limited time in class to cover the content was the most significant challenge to using it more often. This echoes the complaints of the US teachers, Chelsey and Jim, as well as some previous studies that indicated the difficulties of employing student-centered approaches under the pressure of teaching to the test (Agee, 2004; Watanabe, 2007). However, despite the time constraint and necessity of extra planning, Minwoo was, like Chelsey and Jim, constantly considering how to integrate collaborative learning into his lessons. He made this effort because he realized the positive impact of these student-centered strategies had on the students, especially on underperforming students. He said, "It seemed to help underperforming students. When I explain everything, sometimes they

don't get it. But when they work in groups, they seem to learn from their friends"
(Interview 2).

Jieun and Somi also tried collaborative learning strategies as a means to engage
their students in class. While it worked well in Jieun's English class, Somi found it was
ineffective for her students, most of whom were underperforming in mathematics. She
said, "To make it work, at least two students in a group should perform at average or
above. Most of my students weren't, so it didn't really work" (Interview 2). Somi also
said it was difficult for her to apply new approaches when teaching students whom she
perceived to be underperforming, uninterested, and unmotivated to learn. She added:

> What I feel really sad about my students is . . . these students are disregarded in
> Korean society because they are low-performing and many of them are from poor
> families. So they have really low self-esteem and are lethargic. They . . . they're
> afraid of making failure, so they never make any attempt. If they try out
> something but it doesn't work, they get angry and annoyed, so they never try
> anything new and they say "No, I can't do it. I know I can't, so I'm not gonna try
> it." Many kids were like that. So I couldn't really try any new teaching method
> with them. I asked them, "What kind of class do you want me to teach?" and they
> said, "We want it teacher-centered." (Interview 2)

In this comment, Somi said that her wish to try out a new approach in teaching
mathematics was not possible because of her students. She made an attempt to
incorporate student-centered practices for the sake of the students, but felt that her
students were not excited about it. If a student-centered practice is not welcomed by the

students, is it worth trying out? This is what Somi was unsure about. Because her students wanted a teacher-centered class, Somi kept teaching in that way. However, she felt it was not truly meaningful for students. That was why she started to use her own worksheet as a means to enhance students' participation. As described in the previous chapter, the worksheet contained a summary of the lesson content. Somi put several blanks on the worksheets and had her students fill in the blanks while they listened to her lecture. Moreover, Somi used a reward to attract her students to complete the worksheet. If they successfully filled in all those blanks, she put a stamp on the worksheet. If students collected a certain number of stamps, Somi rewarded them with a participation grade or candy. Somi was not certain whether such rewards had any educational meaning, but at least it helped students participate in class more. This kind of small reward was also used by the other high school teachers, Jieun and Yubin, for the same purpose.

Somi and Minwoo, the two mathematics teachers in this study, also cared about differentiating their classes from *hagwon* lessons. Because most of their students took shadow education that involved a lot of drilling of test problems, these teachers really contemplated about how to make their classes different from those *hagwon* lessons. Minwoo's use of his own worksheet, his support of collaborative learning, and his focus on getting students to understand the mathematical concepts were all part of his efforts to teach a different kind of mathematics class than those taught in a *hagwon*—one that was more engaging and still helpful to students. Somi, who had taught in a *hagwon* before she became a teacher, said her focus on teaching in school was very different from when she taught in a *hagwon*. When teaching at a *hagwon*, she concentrated on teaching problem

solving as much as possible using quick and easy solving strategies. At school, she focused more on helping underperforming students understand the concept rather than simply solving problems for them. As illustrated in the previous chapter, figuring out how to explain concepts using simple words was what she considered most when planning and teaching lessons. Although Somi and Minwoo were working with very different student populations, they both used their own worksheets rather than workbooks from publishers, and they both focused on teaching concepts to provide different instructions from those given in *hagwon*s. For both of them, these approaches were part of their overall efforts to make class meaningful for students who lacked motivation and interest in learning.

For the Korean teachers in this study, taking a student-centered approach in their practice also involved building stronger rapport with students. Besides using various strategies to engage students in class, the teachers made additional efforts to understand students and connect with them. One approach that all of them took was to try to have more communication with students. Although all of the teachers had a busy school day to teach and to complete extensive administrative work, they were eager to find time to talk with students in person. For example, Minwoo said at the time of the interviews that he had been skipping school lunch for about a month in order to save time to have one-on-one meetings with each of his homeroom students. Instead of eating lunch with other teachers, he ate a quick meal like cereal and spent the rest of the time meeting with his students.

Jieun, who was in charge of a high school senior homeroom, said she ran five meetings already with each of her homeroom students at the time of the interviews. The

primary purpose of these one-on-one meetings was to provide guidance in students'

college application process, and Jieun approached this in a step-by-step manner. She

began the first meeting with each student by greeting them and shaking their hands. She

said during an interview, "I learned from other teachers greeting and shaking hands when

I meet each student in person for the first time. I wasn't sure if it's necessary but it made

some difference [in their attitudes toward me]" (Interview 2). In the first meeting, Jieun

also used a special strategy, which she also learned from an experienced teacher. It was

having students draw a mind map to present who they were. Jieun explained:

> Instead of me talking the whole time, I gave homework to my kids. I asked them
>
> to draw a mind map, putting his or her name on the center and then make
>
> categories like myself, my family, friends, the status of their academic work, and
>
> the college they wish to go. When the kids brought it for the first meeting, I told
>
> them, "I don't know much about you yet, so please tell me about yourself." Then
>
> the kids told their stories based on the mind map, and I asked questions if I had
>
> any. It helped me understand my kids better. (Interview 2)

The first meeting helped Jieun and her students become closer and more understating of

each other. The relationships became stronger as she held more meetings, and she was

able to provide better advice that was specialized to each student. Jieun said, "I don't

think I'd done such one-on-one meetings with a teacher when I was in high school"

(Interview 2), and she mentioned that she was planning to have more one-on-one

meetings as the application season (fall) drew near.

Besides having a number of student meetings, Jieun also tried to comfort her students during her classes, discussing what the purpose of college is for them and why they needed to study hard for college. Instead of pushing students to study hard, Jieun said, "I tried to tell them that 'study' is just a tool for living a happy life in the future, so never make it more important than your happiness" (Interview 2). Because many of her senior students felt great pressure from *suneung* and college admission, Jieun also kept telling them that *suneung* and college do not have much impact on their future lives: "I told them about my friends who got really low scores on *suneung* but made a huge success in their career afterwards and another friend who went to a good college but became depressed of his life and became alcoholic" (Interview 2). She added:

> I tried to tell them it's [*suneung* and college] not all your life. It only has a small impact on your life. But I do mention that if they make an effort [in study and make it to a good college], it seems to be an easier path [to live a happy life]. (Interview 2)

What Jieun told her students—that *suneung* and college do not determine one's entire life—is, in fact, a contestable idea. Many Koreans who believe that getting a good job and making sufficient money are essential for a happy life would certainly disagree with her view. The point of Jieun's comment was not that suenung and college were unimportant, but rather that there could be various ways of living a happy life aside from getting accepted to a prestigious college and becoming a doctor or a lawyer.

As implied in Jieun's statements above, the Korean teachers in this study fully acknowledged that their students were highly stressed and unhappy. They all expressed

concerns that many of their students had low self-esteem and were afraid of leading their own lives. Therefore, the teachers tried various ways to help students be happier and have more confidence about themselves. The comments above that Jieun made in her classes are examples of what teachers did to try to cheer up their students. Moreover, Jieun, Somi, and Yubin used rewards to compliment their students' good work. These rewards were usually small, such as snacks, chocolates, and candies. Yet the teachers found it had an effect on students because they gained a sense of accomplishment and self-motivation to earn more through these small rewards.

Minwoo, the only middle school teacher, implemented a specific strategy called "*doorae*," meaning a small, collaborative group, to help to manage his homeroom. *Doorae* was several group projects run by his students to make a better homeroom where students grew close to each other and felt comfortable to be there. He put all the students of his homeroom in a group of five or six, and told them to propose a project that they would carry out over the semester. The students came up with various projects. For example, there was a "friendship *doorae*," which carried out several events to promote communications and relationships among the homeroom students, such as writing and exchanging friendly letters with each other. There were also volunteer service, music, and sports *doorae*, which all ran their own projects for the homeroom. When he began to teach in middle school, Minwoo found many students were selfish and apathetic to others because they competed with their friends for better scores and rankings on tests. Running the *doorae* in his homeroom was his own idea to enhance their community spirit by offering them a chance to initiate a collaborative project and make an accomplishment together. Imig & Imig (2006) suggest that practices like Minwoo's carried out by

beginning teachers who have passion and affection for students are more necessary in the context of strict accountability than previously, because community building is often neglected in such contexts. Minwoo started using this strategy in the first semester of his second year and, at the time of the interviews, he was considering how to improve and keep using it for the next semester.

From all of the teachers' accounts, it was evident that they had deep affection and consideration for their students. Before they began to teach, most of the teachers in this study did not specifically consider that taking care of students would be a primary concern when they began to teach. However, they all learned from their lived experiences during the first couple of years that it was at least as important as teaching their classes well. The three teachers' (Minwoo, Somi, and Jieun) change from content-centered to student-centered orientations implied that they were significantly influenced by their unhappy students, who made them greatly alter their beliefs and practices. Since realizing the necessity of working for their students, the teachers had all made various efforts to integrate student-centered approaches in both their teaching of classes and their managing of their homerooms. Although it usually required them to make extra time commitments, they were all eager to do it because they really cared about their students and wanted them to be happier.

Becoming a Better Teacher for the Sake of Students

As they developed greater interest in and affection for their students, all of the Korean teachers in this study expressed their wish to become better teachers for the sake of their students. Although there were slight differences in their specific goals, the teachers were alike in that they wanted to have better relationships with their students and

be more caring and supportive of them. For example, Somi said, "At the start of my job, I just thought I wanted to teach mathematics really well. But then I changed, and now I want to be more communicative and [I want to] relate to my students" (Interview 3). She added:

> I want to show my students the various lives of people and tell them their lives can be diverse like this. And tell them like, "You need to know what you want so that you choose a life you want to live on." [I want to] Talk with them a lot like this, although I might affect them just minimally . . . (Interview 3)

Somi's goal of being a teacher who can affect her students' lives was very similar to Yubin's wish:

> Raising their test scores isn't that important, I think. I want my students to be happy to come to school. I want my students to make many good memories with me. I want them to like English class and love themselves more by experiencing happiness. From various happy experiences, I hope they could find what they want to be, so I want to be a teacher who can affect my students' lives, rather than teaching English . . . (Interview 3)

Both Somi and Yubin's comments show that over time they came to put more emphasis on enhancing the lives of students than teaching content well after witnessing many students who suffered from academic pressure. It was an idea that was shared by all the Korean teachers in this study, and it represented a significant change in beliefs for three of the four teachers—Jieun, Minwoo, and Somi—who had initially put more value on teaching content.

To become a teacher who can support students' happiness, all the teachers felt that they needed to learn more about understanding and communicating with students. It was also an area they felt lacking in preparation for from their preservice education. Somi and Minwoo particularly highlighted this problem, and therefore they said they wanted to learn more about youth and counseling psychology. Somi said:

> I just want to know about human beings. And how to make a good relationship with kids, because teaching and learning occur within the relationships [between the teacher and students]. So I felt like I need to know more about the mentality of a human. That's why I want to learn psychology. (Interview 3)

Minwoo and Jieun also said they felt the need to have more diverse experiences and perspectives to guide their students to pursue a life they want to live. Minwoo said:

> Especially in terms of career guidance, I don't know much about it. I ask other experienced teachers if needed, but I want to develop a much broader perspective so that I can help my students like, "This can be a path you could follow." (Interview 3)

In a similar way, Jieun also indicated the importance for teachers having various experiences and being open to other ideas, which she thought was lacking in many beginning teachers, including her:

> I think it's good for a teacher to have various experiences. Most of the teachers, including me, they all used to be very good students in schools as well as in college, and they all passed the recruitment exam. They stay in school all the time, managing homerooms. But I found many of them are very conservative.

They don't feel like they want to try and experience new things, for example, like
going travel. They say they don't have enough money and time. Because these
teachers have insufficient experience, they have lack of experience to share with
students. (Interview 3)

In this statement, Jieun made the point that having diverse perspectives and experiences
was necessary for teachers to suggest various kinds of lives to students besides attending
college. As she indicated, many Korean teachers themselves had been successful students
in this test-oriented system, so they tended to be less understanding of student failure and
students' various interests besides academic work. Because she followed a path that was
similar to that of many other teachers, Jieun felt she was limited in her knowledge about
introducing her students to various ways of living through which they could be happy
without having the best scores and rankings on the test.

Since teacher attrition in Korea is minimal due to its many job benefits, none of
the Korean teachers in this study considered leaving the profession. "What kind of
teacher do you want to be?" seemed to be an important question to them because they
were all planning to work for many years until retiring and they needed to figure out their
purpose and how to manage the rest of their teaching careers. As they indicated, the
teachers all wanted to work for their students from their early years of working in test-
oriented schools and were hoping to learn more about various ways to help.

Pursuit of Balance Between Student-Centered Teaching and Teaching to the Test:

Korean Teachers' Lived Experiences

From the Korean teachers, it was evident that all of them came to realize the importance of supporting students' happiness and well-being. Based on this recognition, the teachers made various efforts to integrate student-centered practices into their teaching and homeroom management. Jieun, Minwoo, and Somi showed a notable change in their beliefs, which shifted from their initial focus on teaching content to an emphasis on being student-centered.

Due to a lack of Korean studies of beginning teachers, how to explain these changes in beliefs and attitudes remains a challenge. But we can make some conjectures based on the Western literature. Unlike the US teachers, all of whom possessed student-centered beliefs about teaching before they began to teach, the majority of Korean teachers initially put their major emphasis on teaching content in order to promote students' in-depth learning and achievement in their content. Once the Korean teachers began teaching, however, they came to realize that their practice was highly constrained by expectations that they teach to the test, which involved lots of drilling and reiterating tested content (Sorensen, 1994). Within such a restricted working context, there were limited chances for the teachers to carry out the kind of in-depth teaching they desired to engage in, which could improve students' learning, interests, and achievement altogether (Kostogriz, 2012; Palmer & Rangel, 2011). Furthermore, many of the students the Korean teachers were working with lacked motivation and interest in learning because they had already covered all of the same content in a *hagwon*, and they were tired of studying the same thing. This challenging situation may have caused the Korean teachers

in this study to contemplate what their roles as teachers should be and may have prompted them to think about what kind of practices they needed to implement within this context.

All of the Korean teachers in this study were deeply affected by their daily experiences witnessing unhappy students. Based on what they said about their experiences and their beliefs in the interviews, it seems that this experience was at least partly responsible for prompting them to gradually change their beliefs and practices in the direction of a more student-centered focus. The miserable condition of their students in test-oriented schools awakened the teachers' moral purposes, which they had not truly acknowledged at the beginning of their jobs. Along somewhat similar lines, Lasky (2005) has suggested that the moral purpose in teaching involves a teacher's deep motivation to be a safety net for students and to have an influence on their social and emotional development in addition to teaching them academic knowledge and skills. Kostogriz (2012) has offered a very helpful concept here. He called teacher's practice that involves care and support based on moral purposes "affective labor" (p. 402). He argued that teachers strengthened their affective labor when they were working in a strict accountability system that emphasized performative measures (e.g., standardized tests). He suggested that this is a way to react to the accountability system wherein students are treated as merely the products of their work. The change in the Korean teachers' beliefs and practices can be understood from the perspective of affective practice, and these changes are further discussed in the next section.

Similar to the US teachers, the way that Korean teachers carried out student-centered practices was by squeezing them in as much as possible within their

predominantly test-centered lessons. The Korean teachers also gained motivation to pursue student-centered practices from their students, just as the US teachers had. Similarly, their intrinsic rewards came from seeing changes in students' attitudes and behaviors as well as interactions with them. This again supports the findings from other research that suggest a teacher's care and affection for students can become significant to implementing student-centered practices within a test-based accountability system (Kostogriz, 2012; Lasky, 2005).

Comparison of US and Korean Teachers' Lived Experiences

Within the Test-Based Accountability System

Looking across the analysis of teachers' lived experiences of learning to teach within heavily test-based systems surprisingly reveals more similarities than differences between US and Korean teachers. Aside from the fact that three of the four Korean teachers' beliefs about teaching changed from being content-centered to student-centered while the US teachers all began teaching with student-centered ideas, the essence of the US and Korean teachers' experiences had many things in common. All the teachers in this study (either initially or eventually) thought that good teaching was student-centered, even despite overwhelming pressure to focus on preparing students for tests. Aligned with their beliefs, all of the teachers were striving in greater or lesser ways to integrate a student-centered approach in their practice. All of the teachers also aspired to carry out more student-centered practices continually throughout their professional careers. Based on these common features, I argue in this chapter that despite the fact that they worked within intense test-based accountability contexts, the teachers continued to implement some student-centered practices aligned with their beliefs and were willing to do more,

despite the challenges they faced from the accountability system. In this section, I explain this argument according to three points that stood out in all the teachers' lived experiences: reinforcing affective labor; upholding strong commitment to student-centered practice; and striving to create a balance between student-centered practice and teaching to the test.

Teachers' Reinforcement of Affective Labor

As noted above, Kostogriz (2012) suggests that teachers' care, affection, and relationship building with students can be ways for them to counteract the accountability system that defines teaching as a measurable performance. He calls this "affective labor"—a concept that is useful to help explain one of the findings of the study. As shown throughout this chapter, a common tendency found across all teachers' lived experiences was that they all cared about their students, had deep affection for them, and valued building intimate and respectful relationships with them. This is surprising, given that their work environments put many restrictions on the teachers, making it difficult for them to find time to interact with students and provide support and care. According to Kostogriz (2012), however, teachers feel their work is devalued when they are forced to produce measurable outcomes through their students' test performance. When a system only emphasizes visible and measurable outcomes in teaching, teachers come to insist on the value of other practices, such as affective labor, which yields unmeasurable outcomes. Kostogriz (2012) asserts the following:

> Attending to affect offers ways of understanding the genesis of ethics of care in education, more broadly, and the origin of teaching as a "caring" profession, in particular. The primacy of affective labor in teaching is associated with the

creation and modulation of affect in and through human contact, ethics of

responsibility, and communication. This labor is situated in proximal, face-to-face

contact zones where teachers and students experience teaching and learning as an

essentially corporeal and affective social activity. Ideally, the "products" of this

activity are feelings of trust and care, well-being and respect, passion and

excitement, satisfaction and happiness. These are the key intangible products of

the affective labor of teachers that lead to, and correlate with, the production of

intellectual effects such as knowledge, meanings, and understandings (p. 402).

This idea is reflected in many of the comments made by the teachers in this study, who

all recognized that they had dual responsibilities: to improve students' academic skills, on

one hand, and to promote students' development into fully formed people, on the other.

This notion resonates with Canadian secondary teachers' understanding of their roles as

explored by Lasky (2005). The Canadian teachers, who worked within an intense

accountability context, perceived supporting students' social and emotional development

to be as important as enhancing their academic skills. Some Korean teachers in this study,

such as Yubin, Jieun, and Somi, even mentioned that the former was more important

because it is rarely considered in Korea's strict, test-oriented education system, which

distorts the purpose of teaching and places importance only on raising students' test

scores. According to the teachers, teaching should involve more than simply raising

students' test scores (Kostogriz, 2012; Kumashiro, 2012; Spring, 2010; Tuck, 2013).

Since the teachers in this study worked within a system that reduced teaching to

mostly test preparation, the teachers reacted by increasing their affective labor. This was

a way for them to demonstrate that the emotional and caring aspects of teaching were as

valuable as improving students' academic achievement. This tendency is especially evident in the Korean teachers' lived experiences. Working within a strict test-oriented system and having less flexibility in teaching than the US teachers have, the Korean teachers all felt troubled by the fact that the primary purpose of their teaching was test preparation. For these teachers, all of whom had passed the competitive recruitment exam and all of whom were confident about their knowledge and skills in their field, the reality they faced in the school setting was discouraging.

Minwoo, Somi, and Jieun, who especially wanted to be good at teaching content, came to realize that this would be difficult to achieve. These teachers wanted to use various instructional strategies and integrate in-depth content and interesting resources in their lessons. In this way, they believed that they could promote in-depth learning and interest in content while still preparing students well for their tests. However, what they came to realize was that teaching to the test did not require innovative instruction strategies or in-depth content knowledge from the teachers. Rather for these teachers, there was repeated drilling and reiterating of the test content. Teaching to the test, which they were compelled to do, was inconsistent with what they considered to be good, effective teaching. Furthermore, because many of their students had already learned the content and experienced similar repetitive drilling at *hagwon*, the teachers I interviewed wanted to differentiate their teaching from the work at *hagwon* and make it meaningful to students. They also witnessed that many of their students were exhausted from long hours of repeated test preparation and lacked self-esteem and positive attitudes about their lives. Realizing the limitations of test-centered teaching and the need to relieve its negative impact on students, over time the Korean teachers in this study increased their affective

labor. Over time they came to feel that this was an urgent and necessary response to what they perceived to be the suffering of their students.

All the teachers in this study engaged in more affective labor to counteract the unjust, test-based accountability system wherein teaching becomes a mere delivery of a prescribed curriculum based on repetitive training in areas of tested content. In this sense, schoolwork was almost akin to factory work, and teachers were something like workers expected to produce well-made products (students who performed very well on competitive achievement tests) to satisfy the clients and consumers (policy makers, parents, and companies) (Gatti & Catalano, 2015; Kostgritz, 2012). To the teachers, this was experienced as a major undervaluing of their professionalism and a disservice to students because they seemed to be treated as products instead of as human beings (Kostogriz, 2012). As the teachers in this study recognized, teaching was not the one-way street that the system presumed. Rather teaching and learning always occurred through the medium of interactions between teachers and students (Kostogriz, 2012). This helps explain why the teachers in this study cared greatly about building trusting and respectful relationships with students—because they saw this as a precondition for engaging them in meaningful learning (Lasky, 2005).

Engaging in more affective labor was the teachers' effort to try to restore meaningful teaching and learning as opposed to teaching to the test under the accountability regime. Engaging in affective labor emphasized that the immeasurable and intangible outcomes of a teacher's practice were as important as the measurable outcomes (Kostogrtiz, 2012). Moreover, it was a way that the teachers in this study could find

meaning in their work and establish a sense of professional accomplishment (Lasky, 2005) by influencing students' attitudes, behaviors, and relationships with the teacher.

Upholding a Strong Commitment to Student-Centered Practice

Having affection for and caring about students, all the teachers in this study attempted to implement student-centered practice as much as possible within the constraints of the accountability system. In many cases, integrating a student-centered approach in lessons required extra planning for the teacher, but the teachers in this study were eager to do that and aspired to do more as they became more experienced. The teachers' willingness in this study to carry out more student-centered practice strays somewhat from the major findings of previous studies suggesting that many new teachers surrender to accountability demands (Agee, 2004; Gatti & Catalano, 2015; Loh & Hu, 2014). What these studies have generally found is that many beginning teachers enter the teaching profession with a reform-oriented mindset, aspiring to use a constructivist approach. Some teachers are greatly affected by their preservice education in developing constructivist, reform-oriented beliefs. However, the problem is that many of the teachers' school contexts emphasize a different kind of practice—teaching to the tests— that conflicted with their initial beliefs and their learning from preservice education, which can cause severe tension (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012). At the beginning of their careers, the teachers believe that they can combine a student-centered approach with teaching to the test, and they often make an attempt to do exactly that. However, many studies have concluded that many beginning teachers eventually give up their beliefs and conform to the accountability system (Agee, 2004; Gatti & Catalano, 2015; Loh & Hu, 2014).

Previous research suggests that there are two major forces influencing new teachers to relinquish their student-centered beliefs and practices. One is the heavily test-based accountability system that creates an institutional structure demanding that each school and teacher produce evidence of their performance through students' test scores. In this situation, a teacher's performance is constantly monitored by internal authorities to ensure that the teacher is doing good work (Agee, 2004; Gatti & Catalano, 2015). This monitoring is daunting for new teachers, because they are often in the most vulnerable position in schools. Another source suggests that many new teachers comply with the system to prove their professional ability. In this respect, Loh & Hu (2014) argue that students' test results are not only viewed as proof of a teacher's performance, but also as an "inscription device" (p. 19) that constructs a teacher's self- and public image. If a teacher's quality is defined by his or her performance in raising student achievement and is assessed by students' test scores, many teachers will strive to prove their effectiveness by teaching to the test. According to Loh & Hu (2014), beginning teachers are more likely to be affected by such regulation because many of them are uncertain about their professional abilities. Some US studies also suggest that if beginning teachers feel significant conflict between their initial beliefs and anticipated school practices such that they lose autonomy and control in practice, then they are likely to be dissatisfied and leave the job within a few years (Gatti & Catalano, 2015; Ingersoll, 2009). These sorts of challenges were mentioned by the US teachers in this study, yet they were not severe enough to cause the teachers to completely relinquish their student-centered practices, as compared to the teachers depicted in those studies. Although the US teachers felt restricted by the accountability system and concerned about being evaluated based on

their students' performance on tests, they all kept some extent of autonomy that allowed them to practice their student-centered beliefs. In fact, none of them expressed any significant fear about sanctions from external authorities. A greater source of pressure for the US teachers came from within the teachers themselves in that they felt they must help their students pass and do well on the tests because they did not want to see them fail or become discouraged by the results. Thus the teachers' commitment toward their students was a fundamental source of teachers' self-pressure. This internal pressure seemed to have a greater impact on teachers' practice than the external pressure (e.g., administrators), although internal and external pressures were intimately related.

Across the two contexts in which I carried out this study, it became clear that the teachers' commitment to students was the key that enabled both US and Korean teachers to carry out two conflicting practices simultaneously – teaching to the test and student-centered practices –because both helped their students navigate the test-based accountability system. For example, although Jim admitted that he fully taught to the test, he tried to incorporate student-centered approaches as much as he could in his lessons. He continually made attempts to squeeze various learning activities into his lessons, such as the mini-debate activity, because he believed they could promote students' critical thinking skills and engage them in learning. These student-centered practices are not highly concerned with the test, but Jim made an extra effort to integrate them because he was certain that they were meaningful practices to promote student learning. For Jim, helping his students to do well on the MCAS exam was important, but promoting their critical thinking skills and engaging them in learning were also crucial. Therefore, Jim constantly looked for chances to achieve both goals – teaching to the test and student-

centered teaching-- in his lessons. Other teachers in this study showed similar attitudes. All the teachers in this study believed that both test preparation and student-centered practices are necessary to foster students' survival and wellbeing in the test-based accountability system and to promote meaningful learning in such a difficult context. Thus, all the teachers in this study actively sought ways to implement both practices in their lessons.

Although the test-based accountability system may have a negative impact on students, Palmer & Rangel (2011) suggest that teachers could "buffer" (p. 633) the negative impact by incorporating a student-centered approach in their directed, teacher-centered lessons. They argued that this was possible because the teachers were fully committed to "authentic learning, to knowing and serving their students as individuals, and to the ideal of education as a way to improve their students' hopes for the future" (p. 633). This commitment did not diminish despite the strict accountability demands that deprived them of much of their autonomy in teaching because of the state standardized test. Looking into the teachers' practices, Palmer and Rangel (2011) suggest that "who the students are and what teachers believe specifically about their students" (p. 635) play an important role in a teacher's implementation of the accountability mandates at the classroom level. Based on her study of Canadian secondary teachers, Lasky (2005) also indicated that the accountability system had a limited impact on altering teachers' notions of professionalism and student-centered beliefs. In my study, it was clear that the teachers' sense of moral purpose and commitment to students and authentic learning stayed firm despite the pressure and restrictions from the system. Like Palmer and Rangel (2011), Lasky (2005) proposes that teachers who are committed to students are capable of

reducing some harm to their students by compromising their desired practices with the system's demands. This fits very well with my findings about both US and Korean teachers in this study who continued to carry out student-centered practices.

Striving to Create a Balance

Another noteworthy commonality found in this study between the lived experiences of both US and Korean teachers is that they all made constant attempts to balance student-centered practices with teaching to the test. The way that the teachers in this study worked to create a balance resembled the practice of experienced social studies teacher Margaret (total 37 years of teaching with 22 years teaching 8th grade US history), depicted in a longitudinal qualitative study conducted in Texas (Neumann, 2013). In exploring Margaret's teaching, Neumann (2013) found that Margaret was successful in playing the accountability game while satisfying her goal to promote students' authentic learning. Most of her lessons were teacher-centered and focused on covering the content included in the state's standardized test. However, she supplemented these lessons with a variety of student-centered activities such as hands-on tasks, student projects, and thought-provoking exercises. This is similar to what the teachers in this study attempted to do, except that Margaret was more proficient in using and integrating a wide variety of student-centered practices because she was far more experienced than the beginning teachers in this study.

In his case, Neumann (2013) asserts that it is possible for teachers to reconcile their student-centered goals with accountability demands, and that testing mandates are not always detrimental to students. Whether tests are imposed or not, he suggests that teachers can still teach the important, essential content of the curriculum, as this is the

basis of students' in-depth learning. Therefore, student-centered teaching does not necessarily conflict with teaching to the test. The issue for Margaret as well as for each teacher in this study is the limited time allotted for teaching to and beyond the test. Because the system limits teachers' instructional choices, there is a competition for time during the lesson between student-centered practices and teaching to the test (Neumann, 2013). Neumann's finding is echoed in the practices of both US and Korean teachers in this study, as they all struggled to find time between and during their lessons to squeeze in student-centered approaches.

Another important point made by Neumann (2013) is that although accountability demands do have an impact on teaching, they are not the primary factor driving a teacher's classroom practice. In line with Lasky (2005) and Palmer and Rangel (2011), Neumann stresses that teachers' beliefs and commitments play a significant role in guiding their practice and integration of a student-centered approach. If a teacher fully conforms to accountability demands, then it will not be necessary for him or her to create a balance in teaching. However, many teachers, including the US and Korean teachers in this study, do make an extra effort to balance their personal teaching goals with required teaching toward the test. As seen in the teachers in this study, a strong commitment to students is the driving force that enables teachers' constant effort to create balance in their classrooms.

Conclusion: Teacher Agency in a Test-Based Accountability System

The lived experiences of both the US and Korean teachers in this study show that these beginning teachers were to a certain extent able to implement their own ideas about student-centered practice, despite constraints from the test-based accountability system.

Although the system had a strong influence on the teachers' practice, their beliefs about teaching and their considerations of student learning and well-being also played a role in their planning and practice. In this respect, this study aligns to a certain extent with some of the previous studies indicating that the impact of testing mandates can be mediated by individual teachers' classroom practices (Lasky, 2005; Neumann, 2013; Palmer & Rangel, 2011). In other words, teachers can play the role of a mediator who buffers the negative consequences of testing on students.

Although test-based accountability systems have created working conditions that constrain teachers' autonomy regarding teaching, the teachers' lived experiences in this study show that teacher agency still matters in a test-based accountability context. For these teachers, testing mandates illuminated the importance of affective labor and--somewhat ironically--triggered their motivation to persist with student-centered teaching. My study unpacks some of the conditions that allow for this paradox--teacher agency becoming stronger and student-centered practices increasing within a test-based accountability system.

A teacher's decision about whether to fully adopt teaching to the test or to integrate student-centered practice primarily depends on to the extent to which the teacher is willing and able to take advantage of his or her agency on behalf of students even if there are restrictions from the working context. As this study shows, when teachers are committed to students and are willing to take action for them, they sometimes enact student-centered practice, regardless of the constraints from the system. This tendency was reflected across all the teachers' lived experiences in this study. To a certain extent, the teachers had some agency in deciding how much they allowed the

testing regime to determine their practice. Because the teachers were strongly committed to students, they did not let testing entirely drive their practice. Rather, they strove to integrate student-centered practices as much as possible and whenever they could. Because this was a decision made by the teachers themselves and not one forced by authorities, it was not as likely to be diminished by external factors or constraints.

Chapter 7. The Meaning of Learning to Teach in a Test-Based Accountability

System: Conclusion and Implications

This phenomenological study of secondary mathematics and English teachers in the US and Korea was conducted with the purpose of understanding the lived experiences and their meanings for beginning teachers who were learning to teach in the context of intense test-based accountability. In this concluding chapter, I highlight the meaning of teaching and learning to teach in a test-based accountability system based on my study of beginning teachers' lived experiences. I then discuss the consequences of testing mandates for public schooling based on a comparison between the US and Korean teachers in this study. Finally, I outline some of the implications of this study in three major aspects: policy, practice of teacher education, and research.

The Meaning of Teaching in a Test-Based Accountability System

Policymakers who implement neoliberal education reform in many developed and developing countries support the view that raising test scores is a primary responsibility of schools, which is carried out primarily by teachers (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012; Spring, 2010). The teachers in my study were no exception to this. They worked hard to be sure that their students were prepared for high-stakes tests, and they worried about the consequences of these tests for their students' wellbeing and their future educational and other choices. However, my analysis of the teachers in this study also suggests that even in a strict, test-oriented system like Korea, teachers sometimes do more than simply prepare students for tests.

In essence, the meaning of teaching for the teachers in this study was to do well by their students. That is, they wanted their teaching practice to be educative and

beneficial for their students. In this sense, test preparation was part of their teaching when they worked in a test-based accountability context because tests were unavoidable and had a strong influence on their students' futures. For example, Chelsey and Alice explained that they offered MCAS preparation because it was required for a high school diploma, and good scores on the MCAS could help students with college admission and gaining scholarships. The teachers also said they did not want to see their students fail on the test or get discouraged by the results. Thus, their MCAS preparation was carried out as a way to help students survive and do well within the current school system. This was similar to viewpoints of the Korean teachers I studied, all of whom taught explicitly to tests. Jieun, a high school senior English teacher, said teaching to the test was a must for *suneung* and college admission. None of the US and Korean teachers in this study was in favor of teaching to the test, but it comprised a significant part of their teaching practice because they believed it had significant educational and life consequences for their students. Of course teaching to the test is not generally understood as a student-centered activity or a part of teaching that is student-oriented. However, and somewhat ironically, my analysis revealed that teaching to the test by both US and Korean teachers was carried out by the teachers with a student-centered purpose and goal: their students' survival and success in a test-based school system. By accepting teaching to the test as part of the practice they engaged in for the sake of their students, the teachers in this study resolved to a certain extent the contradiction they experienced between their student-centered beliefs, on one hand, and school and/or school system-demanded test preparation, on the other. This is how they justified engaging in an imposed way of teaching that they did not approve of but needed to follow.

The teachers' perceptions of teaching to the test as a practice for the benefit of students was the key that prevented them from experiencing complete submission to the test-based accountability system. Because the teachers had a clear sense that they needed to teach to the test for their students--not in order to please their administrators or for their own benefit as effective teachers—engaging in test preparation did not erode their student-centered beliefs. As the teachers came to understand the limitations and side effects of teaching to the test and as they realized that this conflicted with their beliefs and expectations about teaching, they were more willing to make extra efforts that would alleviate its negative effects on students and increase its positive implications for them. This is well illustrated by the Korean teachers, who all significantly increased their "affective labor" (Kostogriz, 2012) over the course of their beginning years of teaching, especially in comparison with the very early period when they had just begun teaching. There is an irony in what my study revealed: working within intense test-based accountability systems, the teachers I studied started to care more about their students' wellbeing. The Korean teachers in particular put more effort into focusing on meeting their students' affective needs when they were working in a highly test-oriented education system. In other words, as these teachers were socialized in a system where they were expected to fully teach to the tests, they also came to realize the value of student-centered teaching and engaged in greater affective labor, the importance of which was generally neglected by the system.

Ironically for these teachers, the meaning of teaching in a test-based accountability system included a far clearer vision of student-centered practice than they had had when they began. A strict intense test-based accountability system, which is

generally regarded as suppressing student-centered practice, provoked these teachers to deeper understandings of the value of student-centered practice. Because test-based systems generally undervalue student-centered practices and may affect students negatively, the teachers I studied, who became aware of this situation over time, developed stronger beliefs and practices centered on students. Over time, then, in the case of both the US and the Korean teachers in this study, the teachers learned ways to mediate to some extent the negative effects of testing on their students and the negative effects of teaching within an intense accountability context on themselves as teachers.

The Meaning of Learning to Teach in a Test-Based Accountability System

Feiman-Nemser (2001) suggests that teacher learning at the beginning stage involves the following tasks: "learn the context—students, curriculum, [and] school community, design responsive instructional program, create a classroom learning community, enact a beginning repertoire, and develop a professional identity" (p. 1050). Similarly, Lampert (2009) and Lasky (2005) assert that developing the practice of teaching and forming teacher beliefs are the most important tasks of beginning teachers' learning to teach. This study of US and Korean teachers shows tasks like these were part of what the teachers accomplished during their early years on the job. Yet understanding these tasks only goes so far in explicating the nature of learning to teach in a context of intense test-based accountability.

As studies have pointed out, a teacher's working context is a significant factor that influences teacher learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Cooper & He, 2013; Flores & Day, 2006). What, then, do the lived experiences of both US and Korean teachers suggest about the meaning of learning to teach in a test-based accountability context? In

connection with the meaning of teaching, as discussed in the previous section, the teachers' lived experiences of learning suggest the following: teachers learned the negative effect of testing on students; they realized the importance of engaging in affective labor and the necessity of implementing student-centered practice; they learned to integrate some student-centered practices into teaching to the test; and they formed strong beliefs and goals to support their students in all aspects—not just academically, but in their lives in general. In short, an important part of the meaning of beginning teachers' learning to teach in the context of test-based accountability was coming to understand the significance of student-centered practice in this context and to enact it as much as they could in ways that were consistent with their beliefs.

Although there was significant learning for both US and Korean teachers about how to include student-centered teaching within a test-based accountability context, it should be noted that these practices had limitations, as indicated by the teachers. For example, external factors, such as the lack of time and too much content to cover for the tests, constrained the teachers from enacting student-centered practices as much as they wished. Furthermore, the teachers in this study were still in the process of learning how to enact student-centered practice. This is well illustrated by Minwoo and Somi, who talked about their trials of using collaborative learning strategies in their mathematics classes to enhance students' participation. In Somi's case, collaborative learning approaches did not seem to work well with many of her under-performing students, so instead of continuing this strategy, Somi adopted an individual reward system based on the worksheets she made. When students completed a certain number of worksheets successfully, they would be given a reward in the form of snacks, chocolates, or candy.

Somi found this strategy worked better than collaborative learning for her students because it helped students gain a sense of accomplishment and participate well in her lessons. In contrast, Minwoo found that collaborative learning strategies had mixed results with his students. Some students told him that they liked to learn from their friends, but some other students were concerned that the class became noisy, so that it was hard for them to concentrate on the lesson. To enact collaborative learning while controlling the class, Minwoo learned that he needed to do more careful planning. As seen from these teachers' cases, student-centered practice was not always successful when it was implemented in the teachers' classrooms. Most of the time, the teachers in this study felt that they need to do more fine-tuning of the practice and that they had a lot to learn. However, the teachers found that their attempts to use student-centered approaches resulted in more positive changes in student learning and participation in class than conventional teacher-directed lessons did. Thus, all these teachers were willing to implement those practices more often, although they were still in the process of learning how to use the practices well and to integrate them into their lessons.

Neumann (2013) asserts that it is possible for a teacher to balance student-centered teaching and teaching to the test if the teacher is committed to the students. Consistent with this assertion, all the teachers in this study made efforts to create a balance in their practice, although in most cases a perfect balance was not achieved, which is not surprising, given that all of the teachers I studied were beginners. Unlike the experienced social studies teacher whom Neumann (2013) described as being successful at playing the game between test-based accountability and enacting her student-centered beliefs, the beginning teachers in this study were not as skillful in their attempts to create

balance. Rather the teachers in this study were still learning to use various student-centered strategies and they wanted to learn more and do more. They engaged in a continuous cycle of trying things out and reflecting. In this way it may be the case that beginning teachers who work in test-based accountability systems may gradually improve their capacity to create a delicate balance between student-centered practice and teaching to the tests.

When Testing Dominates Public Schooling

This study compares the lived experiences of US and Korean beginning teachers learning to teach in test-based accountability systems. Using a phenomenological research design, the primary purpose of this study was to reveal commonalities and differences between the US and Korean teachers' experiences to uncover the essence of the phenomenon of interest—beginning teachers' learning to teach in a test-based accountability system. There were many commonalities, as I have noted above, but there were also many differences in the teachers' lived experiences in each country since they worked in distinctively different education systems.

As I have shown throughout the previous chapters, teaching to the test was far more intense in Korea. Delving into the Korean teachers' lived experiences suggests that Korea is perhaps an extreme case where testing dominates public schooling and has an inordinately large impact on individual students' lives. As a Korean native who grew up in this society, this is a reality that I am used to. However, many Americans who know Korea for its high ranking on international tests or know that it has been praised by American and other policy makers would be surprised to know that its intensive test-oriented schooling has caused many negative consequences in society. During my time

studying in the US, I have witnessed US policy makers' striving to improve public schooling and teacher education by pointing to and calling for methods that imitate the policies and practices of top-performing countries, including Korea. I am concerned that the current reform movement in the US, which emphasizes high-stakes testing, will move public schooling in the direction of Korea and other high-performing Asian countries, which I think would be a mistake. I address points about why US policy makers need to reconsider the direction of reform based on the comparison between US and Korean teachers in this study.

Compared to the US, there is no doubt that schooling in Korea is highly test-centered. For teachers, it can be a depressing work context that highly constrains them from utilizing their professional knowledge and improving practices, because explicit test preparation does not require in-depth knowledge and skills, as illustrated by the Korean teachers. In Korea, *suneung*, the national curriculum, and teaching are tightly aligned and connected with one another, especially in high school. With this tight coupling, teaching becomes the delivery of the national curriculum, which is simultaneously geared toward *suneung*. Compared to the US teachers in this study, the Korean teachers had far less flexibility in teaching. This is particularly clear when comparing the English teachers' style of teaching. Although Jim was constrained by MCAS and Dana designed her lessons based on the Common Core Curriculum, both had quite a bit of room to choose reading materials, in-class activities, and assignments. In contrast, this was almost impossible for the two Korean high school senior English teachers, Jieun and Yubin. In their *suneung*-centered English classes, teaching was mostly reduced to test preparation, which involved a lot of drilling and memorizing. As Spring (2010) indicates, teachers

who work in such a context are rather like "technicians" (p. 11) who simply deliver information as predetermined by the curriculum and the test. Although teachers might well possess in-depth knowledge and skills concerning teaching content, there is not much space allowed for the teachers to enact these in practice or learn from teaching a test-centered education system.

It is well-documented that many Korean teachers are unhappy in the test-centered education system and that their students are unhappy as well (Goo, 2014; Y. T. Kim, 2013; Um, 2013). Consistent with other studies and analyses of the Korean system, the teachers in this study remarked that many of their students experienced miserable conditions (Y. T. Kim, 2013; Lee, 2003; Um, 2013). The teachers reported that their students studied for long hours every day, went to various *hagwon* or got private tutoring after school hours, and fell asleep in their classes because they were tired or bored from endlessly studying. Korean studies indicate that Korean students experience pressure from many sources –schools, *hagwon*, and parents –all emphasizing that college is the most important thing and that getting good scores and rankings are absolutely necessary (H. J. Kim, 2013; Sorensen, 1994). Obviously this pressure is huge for young students to cope with, and there are many adverse effects in Korean schools (Goo, 2014; Lee, 2003; Um, 2013). Some students become extremely stressed and even commit suicide after getting bad results on tests; many students suffer from health issues; and some students have behavioral problems in schools. Some of these situations were referred by the Korean teachers in this study as they described their students, and there are numerous Korean documentaries, books, and news articles suggesting that test-centered schooling is a fundamental cause of these problems (Kang, 2009; Kim, 2013).

Although Korean students have shown remarkable results in several international comparison tests and are indeed "high-performing" according to those comparisons, US policy makers and the general public may not recognize that this is because the students are constantly trained at school, at *hagwon*, and at home to memorize important content and produce correct answers for test questions (Sorensen, 1994). Thus, many Korean students are indeed quite skilled at taking tests, but it is doubtful whether the repetitive test preparations that seem to be requisites for these outcomes actually produce meaningful learning, a concern expressed by the Korean teachers in this study. Furthermore, studies have increasingly shown that many Korean students are unhappy despite their high performance (Bang Jeong-Hwan Foundation, 2013; Seoul Metropolitan Government Office, 2013). This raises many questions. Is an education system that produces remarkable results on tests but depresses many teachers and students a good exemplar to praise and emulate?

Implications for Policy

In the sections below, I deliberate on the implications of this study in three areas: policy, the practice of teacher education, and research. This study offers several suggestions for US and Korean policy makers. I discuss the implications for policy separately for each country, as they operate distinctly different educational systems.

Implications for the US

The US teachers' lived experiences with testing suggest several implications for policy. It should be noted that none of the US teachers in this study rejected testing, but they rather suggested that it should be used for the right purpose, which is to identify student progress and provide appropriate interventions. Hargreaves and Shirley (2012)

also support testing for that purpose and assert that policy makers should consider how to test and use the results wisely. Another common concern raised by all the US teachers in this study was that the high-stakes tests they prepared their students for were also used (or were likely to be used) for assessing teachers' performance. The teachers were worried about carrying the entire burden of the responsibility for their students' performance on tests given that there were many other uncontrollable factors, such as students' home environments and academic backgrounds, that influenced the test results. Even Alice, the US teacher in my study who insisted on the necessity of standardized tests to assess students and school performance, was against the idea of using test scores to evaluate teachers. The teachers' concern about being evaluated based on their students' test scores has been noted in many previous studies (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Vernaza, 2012). My study adds to those voices that urge policy makers to reconsider using standardized test scores for teacher evaluation. Policy makers need to seek ways to reflect the teachers' concern in developing a more effective teacher evaluation system that is truly for improving teaching and learning.

The US teachers in this study agreed that certain parts of standardized tests assessed valid knowledge and skills and were useful data for assessing areas of student learning and needs. Yet they all perceived that the tests had limitations and required further improvement. For example, Dana said a better alignment of the test items to the Common Core Standards would help her to design lessons reflective of the standards. Jim and Alice advocated including more problems that assessed essential real-life skills, such as critical thinking skills for English and problem-solving skills for mathematics. Jim also indicated that some of the English problems on the MCAS test were inappropriate or

unfair to bilingual students and students with special needs. He added that there were too many test problems and the test periods were too long for middle school students. The teachers' comments regarding the limitations of the current MCAS exam suggest that the format and questions for a standardized test should be carefully designed to properly assess valid and essential skills of the subject.

Dana and Jim also pointed out that there were too many tests and different kinds of assessments operating in school, such as state tests (e.g., MCAS), school term exams, district-wide assessments, and scholastic aptitude tests (e.g., SAT and ACT). For beginning teachers, it is challenging to prepare their students well for all kinds of different tests. In this regard, Dana suggested merging several tests into one simple nationwide test. As per her suggestion, policy makers may want to consider reducing the number of tests in order to lessen the burden of excessive and repetitive testing on both teachers and students.

Implications for Korea

The Korean teachers' lived experiences suggest that the amount of administrative work assigned to beginning teachers in addition to teaching is excessive, a problem that is also indicated in much of the previous literature (Kim, 2003; Um, 2013). This was another source of challenge for Korean teachers in addition to the general constraints of the test-oriented educational system. The teachers felt that much of their administrative work was unnecessary and time-consuming, making it difficult for them to spend time on lesson planning, improving their teaching, and interacting with students. Given that new teachers need extra time to adjust to teaching and learn how to manage several tasks,

policy makers need to find ways to control the excessive amount of work of these teachers.

To support new teachers' smooth transition and adjustment to school, a school or district-wide mentoring program could be considered that would take place throughout a semester or a year. In Korea, each province and metropolitan education office offers a new teacher orientation by school level (e.g., elementary and secondary) before teachers start to work. This typically lasts for a few days up to a week and provides lectures and workshops about various topics such as classroom management, instructional strategies, and a tutorial on the school administrative system. However, all the Korean teachers in this study said the orientation was not very helpful. Just like their complaints about aspects of their preservice teacher education programs, the teachers indicated that many of the orientation programs were irrelevant to their school contexts and did not provide either practical skills or useful tips for work. Instead of an orientation for every new teacher from all different schools, a school or district-wide mentoring program could be a more effective way to assist as it would provide sustainable, on-the-job support to the new teachers, specific to the new school context.

The Korean teachers I studied indicated that testing had always been a part of their lives. As students, the teachers took many tests, including *suneung*, the national and provincial achievement test, school term exams, high school admissions tests, and a number of practice tests for *suneung* in high school. They also took the teacher recruitment exam in order to quality to be hired as a public school teacher. The teachers were used to living with constant tests, which is common for many other Koreans too. As shown from these teachers' experiences, the amount of testing is excessive in Korea.

However, it is doubtful whether just reducing the number of tests would have any effect on relieving the pressure on students. If *suneung* and the current college admission system stay in their current forms, just removing a few tests will not lead to many positive effects because many students would still be pressured to study hard for *suneung* and teachers would still be required to teach to it.

As the teachers in this study indicated and as other Korean scholars and educators have noted, a whole transformation of public schooling is necessary, which involves the reforming of *suneung* and the college admission system (Y.T. Kim, 2013; Um, 2013). Because test-centered schooling is so ingrained in Korean society, a simple, quick solution is impossible to find, and it is likely that the impact of any simple solution would be very limited in bringing about meaningful change on a large scale. In addition, the Korean government has not been successful in developing and implementing a long-term plan for education reform (Kim, 2012; Yoo, 2009). When a new president is elected, the previous reform program is often abolished or revised to a great extent. This creates a complete lack of consistency. As a result, the Korean education system remains as it has been for many years, leaving many students and teachers unhappy. Because test-centered schooling has persisted in Korea for decades, it is unlikely to be resolved in a short period of time. It would seem essential for policy makers to develop a strategic and coherent reform plan with a long-term perspective.

Implications for Practice

This study also has several implications for the practice of teacher education in both the US and Korea. In both countries, it would seem that beginning teachers might benefit from more opportunities to learn about students, better preparation for working in

a test-based accountability context, more support as they adjust to teaching and learn on the job, and more opportunities to develop teacher capacity for change over time.

The Need for More Opportunities to Learn about Students

My analysis of teachers' lived experiences suggests that both US and Korean teachers felt a great need to learn more about classroom management, understanding students, and communication skills. Their preservice teacher education programs prepared the teachers well for teaching content, but were limited in terms of preparing the teachers to develop practice with regard to dealing with students. Because the teachers lacked preparation in these areas, they all had difficulty in their first year with student-related issues. It is true that much of this work is context-bound and can be learned only through experience. However, there are some aspects of this that could be prepared in advance of teachers actually having full-time classroom responsibility during the preservice teacher education period, such as the psychology of students by developmental stages, classroom management strategies by school level (i.e., early childhood, elementary, and secondary), and communication skills and relationship building with students. Moreover, the Korean homeroom teachers in this study wished they had learned counseling strategies during preservice education, which would have helped them build rapport with their homeroom students and provide effective guidance to their lives in general. Teacher preparation programs in both the US and Korea may consider building into their programs opportunities for teacher candidates to learn more about classroom management, psychology of learners, and basic-level school and youth counseling strategies. By building these opportunities into the program, student teachers could take courses and have classroom-based field experiences specifically intended to offer

information and skills relevant to the age groups they were going to teach. The quality of these experiences is also important. Given that all of the US and Korean teachers believed that the major goal of preservice teacher education was to prepare them for future practice, these opportunities should focus on teaching practical knowledge and strategies that could be used and applied in school settings.

How to Prepare Candidates to Work in a Test-Based Accountability Context

This study also raises questions about how teacher education should respond to the test-based accountability demands that will face the teacher candidates they are preparing. What stance should preparation programs take toward test-based accountability and how should it prepare candidates to navigate test-based accountability systems where pressure to teach to the test is intense? In the case of the US, this is a very complex matter because many preparation programs, whose mission and goals are related to diversity and social justice, emphasize practices that may conflict with the teaching-to-the-test approach that current test-based accountability systems seem to demand (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Agee, 2004). Many current US programs' emphases on constructivist approaches and student-centered practices are, in fact, not encouraged by the test-based accountability context. As seen from Chelsey and Jim's experience in my study, this discrepancy can cause significant conflict for beginning teachers when there is a major mismatch between what teacher candidates learned and believed they could do based on their experience in the preparation program and what they are actually required to do once they get to school. This problem also exists in Korean teacher education, although it is not the same kind of conflict between student-centered and test-centered teaching. Rather in Korean teacher education programs, preparation programs generally

focus heavily on content knowledge, but they tend to do much less in terms of teaching prospective teachers how to utilize this knowledge in test-centered schools. In either case, preparation programs currently seem to be unsuccessful in adequately preparing candidates to manage the challenges they will encounter in test-based accountability systems.

It is important for teacher educators to inform the candidates about the reality of their future workplace. Teacher candidates need to know what their "real" work will be like, what challenges they are likely to encounter, and what the larger social and political factors are that will likely affect their practice. Informing them about the reality does not mean telling candidates they are expected to teach to the test and so they must simply accept this and know how to do it. However, instructing teacher candidates to oppose test-based accountability and fight it would not be a wise approach either, because beginning teachers are often in the most vulnerable position in schools. For this reason, it seems unrealistic to urge new teachers simply to raise their voices against testing and embark on a major battle to resist it.

Instead of instructing candidates what to do or which stance to take, it may be most appropriate for teacher educators to provide many opportunities for teacher candidates to deliberate on various educational issues and controversies, including testing and high-stakes accountability. They need to have information about these problems, including various ideas and suggestions raised by different groups. For example, concerning using student standardized test scores for teacher evaluations, teacher candidates need to be able to understand the rationale and evidence used by those on each side of disagreements, including both those supporting and those opposing using test

scores. After reviewing various ideas related to the issue, teacher educators need to allow and support teacher candidates in deliberating on how these issues will influence their practice in school, what stance they want to take, what challenges they should expect, and how they will react to them. By deliberating on various educational issues and controversies, teacher candidates can develop further understanding about their future workplace and about the larger context of the education system, and contemplate how they might handle some of the anticipated challenges.

It would be also useful to provide opportunities for teacher candidates to hear from beginning teachers who had graduated from the preparation program and have been teaching for two to three years concerning how they navigate the test-based accountability system. Specifically, the beginning teachers could share details of the discrepancies they find between what they learned in the preparation program and what they encounter in schools. They could also talk about the pressure they encounter to teach to the test and the ways they have devised to manage it and to balance teaching to the test and the student-centered teaching. By informing teacher candidates about the challenges they are likely to face and how experienced teachers actually deal with them, the novice teachers could envision their future work context better and understand that there is still more learning they need to achieve by themselves following their preservice education.

Support to New Teachers

All of the beginning teachers in this study wanted to engage in more student-centered practices and were optimistic that they could do so as they become experienced, despite the pressure they felt within the test-based accountability system. To help teachers put forth constant effort within this challenging system, teacher educators need

to seek ways to provide effective support. As suggested in much of the previous research, a mentoring program that involves beginning teachers, experienced teachers, and teacher educators could be a way to ease beginning teachers' pressure and struggles (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Within these programs, experienced teachers offer practical advice to beginning teachers and address their specific issues, and teacher educators guide beginning teachers as they learn to reflect on their learning on the job and plan their future professional growth in this system. Another method to consider is conducting collaborative inquiry with beginning and experienced teachers about how to manage the conflict between student-centered teaching and accountability demands. Paugh (2006) found that this kind of collaborative inquiry facilitated by a teacher educator helped beginning teachers share their conflicts with colleagues and enabled them develop practices that reflected their student-centered beliefs while still being responsive to the accountability demands.

Finally, to change the test-based accountability system, which depresses student-centered teaching and tends to undervalue teachers' work, the most powerful strategy might be developing teachers' capacity as change agents. As my previous study showed, sometimes an individual teacher's practice—made public through writing and publication—can be influential enough to prompt change in other schools and even in an entire education system (Ro, 2016). Such innovative practice by an individual teacher is often transferred through teacher learning communities and can be transformed into an enhanced form as other teachers modify and apply it to their classroom setting (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Ro, 2016). Yet if the practice is only shared within the community of like-minded teachers, it is limited in its effectiveness to a small number of

individual teachers' classrooms. For example, collaborative learning strategies in Korea have been introduced and transmitted to a teacher learning community called the "Korea Cooperative Learning Association" (Kim, 2008). These strategies are acclaimed and used by many Korean teachers, but only if they have had an opportunity to know and learn about these strategies. To make this into a wider movement that could contribute to transforming the current, teacher-directed teaching pervasive in Korean schools, these kinds of strategies would need to be transmitted and shared beyond the current community (Ro, 2016). Teacher educators' cooperation is necessary in transmitting and enhancing such practices and to develop them into a powerful movement to bring about change in a larger context—beyond individual teachers' classrooms and schools. Thus the task remaining for teacher educators is to figure out how they can develop teachers as change agents who can realize innovative practices, and how to collaborate with them. Specific practices to develop teachers' capacity and strategies for collaboration should be defined and enacted with both preservice and inservice teachers.

Implications for Research

This section discusses the implication of this study for research in three areas: research on teachers, teaching, and test-based accountability; phenomenological research on teaching and teacher education, and comparative research.

This study suggests that, despite the constraints from a test-based accountability system, teachers may be able to carry out some student-centered teaching while also meeting accountability demands. This is somewhat different other studies in this area that chronicle the negative effects of testing and test-based accountability on teaching (Abrams et al., 2003; Berryhill et al., 2009). However, there are a few studies that present

findings that are similar to mine (Neumann, 2013; Palmer & Rangel, 2011). Whether and how student-centered teaching can be practiced in combination with teaching to the test needs more exploration.

All of the beginning teachers I studied were greatly influenced by their students. Both the US and Korean teachers said that significant learning had emerged from their relationships with students as they worked to develop the skills of managing them. Although students certainly an important factor in beginning teachers' learning, this study is limited in its ability to explicate how and in what ways the teachers improved or changed their practice as a result of their relationships with students. More research would be required in this area in order to understand the nature of beginning teachers' learning related to understanding and managing students and to provide effective support in this area where the teachers struggled the most, especially at the beginning of their time in schools.

As I have shown, my study suggests that teachers came to put more value on affective labor when they worked in a stricter accountability context. This is surprising in a certain way given that there is huge pressure on teachers to teach to the test, and engaging in affective labor requires extra work and commitment from the teacher. Building on the arguments developed by Kostogriz (2012), this study explains that the teachers' increasing affective labor was part of their resistance toward the test-based accountability system, which devalued other important practices of teaching. To examine whether this assumption applies to other cases, more studies would need to be conducted related to teachers' affective labor in high-stakes accountability contexts. Further exploration is needed about why and how affective labor becomes significant in a test-

based accountability system and how and whether it buffers the negative effect of testing and test-based accountability.

Another finding of this study is that the teachers' maintenance of their student-centered beliefs about teaching was the key that enabled them to integrate student-centered practice with teaching to the test. Yet how such student-centered beliefs are implemented in practice needs still more exploration. More research is necessary to understand the relationship between teacher beliefs and practice in a test-based accountability context. This study also reveals a somewhat different tendency in beliefs of the US and Korean teachers. While all the US teachers initially had student-centered beliefs and maintained these throughout their early years, three of the four Korean teachers who had focused on teaching content significantly altered their beliefs from content-centered to student-centered. My finding about the US teachers is different from some previous studies in the US that found that teachers are more likely to relinquish their student-centered beliefs and conform to the accountability system (Agee, 2004; Gatti & Catalano, 2015). More research is needed to explore what allows some beginning teachers to maintain their student-centered beliefs despite strict accountability mandates. Regarding the Korean teachers' alteration of beliefs, more research needs to be done to find out if it is a common tendency for Korean beginning teachers to become more student-centered while working at highly test-centered schools. It is important to know whether and how the alteration of beliefs occurs and what prompts Korean teachers to engage in student-centered practice.

This study is one among a small number of studies that explores beginning teachers' learning within test-based accountability contexts, and it is clear that we need

more studies in this area. Although my study suggests that significant teacher learning occurred within test-based accountability contexts, my study can only suggest some ways to support teachers' constant learning and growth within such a system. More studies need to be done that examine various ways to support beginning teachers' learning within test-based accountability system, such as induction programs, teacher learning communities, and professional development. Although it is clear that beginning teachers are those who need the most support to survive and grow within this challenging system, research related to supporting new teachers in this context is particularly scarce.

Phenomenological Research on Teaching and Teacher Education

This study is one of the few phenomenological studies conducted to understand teachers' lived experiences pertaining to a specific phenomenon. In Chapter Two, I indicate that a phenomenological approach has rarely been used to study teachers' experiences. In particular, most studies that have explored teachers' experiences regarding testing and test-based accountability used qualitative or mixed-method case study approaches, and few used a narrative inquiry approach. These approaches are useful to obtain in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences within a single context and to look specifically into individual teachers' experiences. However, these approaches are limited for establishing broader understanding about the phenomenon – that is, teachers' experiences with testing and test-based accountability – which consist of several people's experiences from multiple contexts (Creswell, 2012). What common experiences do beginning teachers from multiple contexts and backgrounds share regarding testing and test-based accountability? Using a phenomenological approach, this study suggests an answer to this question.

Although this study offers an argument about the essence of beginning teachers' learning to teach in the context of test-based accountability, it should be noted that the suggested essence could be one among the many others that explain the phenomenon. From a phenomenological perspective, reality is not "a given" that a researcher uncovers. Rather it is constructed and reconstructed through the interactions of researcher and participants (Laverty, 2008). Therefore, this perspective assumes there could be multiple realities rather than just one regarding a certain phenomenon. This study suggests an essence of beginning teachers' experiences of learning to teach in the context of test-based accountability, yet there could be different essences regarding this phenomenon. More phenomenological research would expand our views and understanding of this phenomenon.

From my experience conducting the phenomenological study, I suggest that this research approach also requires further improvement. Because of its very strong emphasis on finding common substance or structure – the essence of participants' experiences—it is possible that a researcher may neglect other meaningful differences during the process of analyzing and interpreting the data. The differences in individuals or contexts may not suggest an essence that is shared by every participant of the study, but the differences could still offer some meanings to understand the phenomenon. In this study, I strove to address differences along with commonalities, yet I felt restricted in highlighting and further explaining those differences because the focus of phenomenological research, as described in the literature, is clearly on commonalities. From my point of view, some differences in individuals or contexts may suggest another kind of reality (essence) that illustrates the phenomenon if further explored with more participants. My suggestion is

that a stronger methodological framework could be developed in phenomenological research that could resolve the issue of neglecting meaningful differences of participants' experiences focusing too much on the search for commonalities.

Comparative Research

This study looks into beginning teachers' lived experiences of a common phenomenon in two different education systems. Using phenomenological research design, I focused on understanding the essence of beginning teachers' experiences of learning to teach within a test-based accountability system. Thus, the emphasis of this study is more on exploring the common substance or structure of individual teachers' experiences regarding the phenomenon, rather than on highlighting the differences between countries. However, I do compare and illustrate differences throughout all of the chapters. This study suggests that there are noticeable commonalities among the teachers' experiences despite their very different education systems, yet it requires more explanation about the differences found in their experiences. A study that compares two or more high-stakes accountability contexts would provide further understanding about whether or not the commonalities apply to other education systems or there are more distinctive differences that suggest other perspectives regarding this phenomenon.

It would be also useful to compare high-stakes and low-stakes accountability systems. There is only one previous study that compared teacher perceptions of accountability by country, each of which emphasized different types of accountability, including performance-based accountability in England (high-stakes) and professional accountability in Finland (low-stakes) (Müller & Hernández, 2010). This study found that teachers tended to be critical about accountability policies, regardless of the education

system and whether or not there were low or high stakes involved. This kind of comparative research could reverse our assumptions and expand understanding of this important issue. More comparative studies between high-stake and low-stake systems are thus required to examine such previous findings and offer new ideas and suggestions about testing and accountability.

Comparative research could focus on questions about implementing effective accountability policies, supporting teacher learning, and meaningful transformation of public schooling. These questions might include: What is the meaning of teacher quality as understood by different education systems? What kinds of accountability policies are implemented in different educational systems and how do they influence teaching and learning? What are some innovative practices of teaching in a test-based accountability system that may be applicable to other contexts?

Conclusion

This study was conducted to understand the essence of beginning teachers' learning to teach in a test-based accountability context. By looking into the teachers' lived experiences in two different education systems – the US and Korea – this study suggests that carrying out student-centered practices along with teaching to the test is possible, and in fact, becomes more significant in an intense test-based accountability system. Although the test-based accountability system was indeed a challenging work context for these beginning teachers, significant learning occurred in all of the teachers in this study, which acknowledged the importance of affective labor and enabled their constant execution of student-centered practice. However, this study suggests that more

research and support by policy makers and teacher educators are required for teachers'

constant learning and growth within a test-based accountability system.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

Participant Consent Form (English)

Lynch School of Education, Boston College
Informed Consent for Participation as a Subject in "Beginning Teachers in the United States
and Korea: Learning to Teach in the Era of Test-Based Accountability"
Investigator: Jina Ro

Introduction

- You are being asked to participate in a research study that intends to broadly document your lived experience as a beginning teacher with test preparation as one of your primary job responsibilities.
- **You were asked to participate in this study because you meet all three criteria required by this study: (1) first, second, or third year in the profession; (2) teaching mathematics or English in secondary school; and (3) experience in preparing students for tests.**
- Please read this form. Ask any questions that you may have before you agree to be in the study.

Purpose of the Study:

- This study aims to develop implications for improving pre-service teacher education and make suggestions for policy and educational reform, based on analysis and interpretation of your lived experience.
- This study will recruit participants who are secondary mathematics or English teachers from the Greater Boston Area (United States) and the Seoul Capital Area (Korea). Three to five participants will be recruited from each country.

What Will Happen in the Study:

- If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to participate in a series of three interviews, during which you will be asked to discuss your experiences and thoughts about your life as a beginning teacher and your experience of preparing students for tests.
- Each interview will last 60–90 minutes and they will be scheduled based upon your availability.
- **Each interview will be audio-recorded.**

Risks and Discomforts of Participating in the Study:

- I might pose a question that you find uncomfortable or which, for whatever reason, you would prefer not to discuss. If this occurs, you do not need to answer the question.
- This study may include risks that are unknown at this time.

Benefits of Participating in the Study:

- I hope to draw on ideas expressed in these interviews to make suggestions about how to improve current pre-service teacher education and to develop policies and carry out education reforms that are meaningful and supportive for teachers and students.
- **Although you will probably not receive any direct benefit from participating in this study, I hope your participation will provide you with opportunities to express your opinion and reflect on your experience as a beginning teacher. Once the research is complete, I will provide you with a copy of the research findings so they can be used to inform your future work.**

Payment:

- **A $50 stipend will be made to you for your participation in all three complete, recorded interviews. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you will receive a $10 stipend for each complete, recorded interview.**

Costs:

- There is no cost to you to participate in this research study.

Confidentiality:

- A specific investigation of your personal experience may disclose your identity to someone who knows you in person. In order to protect your identity, I will use pseudonyms for your name, the name of your school, and your school location.
- I will keep all records of this study in a private locked file and make every effort to ensure that no information is disclosed without your approval.
- All electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file, and access to the records will be limited to the investigator only. However, sometimes either the research board at Boston College, which oversees human subject research, or the investigator's academic advisor may have to review the materials and tapes.
- You will have an opportunity to review anything I write that involves a description of your opinions and your work. If you have concerns about the accuracy or potential impact of any writing, I will address your concerns and reflect your feedback on my write-up.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:

- Your participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your participation at any time, for any reason.
- You may refrain from answering any question I pose, for any reason.
- **There is no penalty or loss of benefits for not participating or for stopping your participation in this**

study. A decision to withdraw will not affect your relationship with your school or with Boston College.

Contacts and Questions:

- For questions or more information concerning this research, you may contact the investigator directly at (+1) 617-510-8982 or via e-mail at roji@bc.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Marilyn Cochran-Smith, at (+1) 617.552.0674 or via e-mail at cochrans@bc.edu.
- If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Director, Office for Research Protections, Boston College at (617) 552-4778 or irb@bc.edu.

Copy of Consent Form:

- You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records and future reference.

Statement of Consent:

- I have read the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to participate in this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

Signatures/Dates:

_____ Check here if you will allow me to tape-record your interview.
_____ Check here if you do not want to have your interview tape-recorded.

_____   _____

Date   **Consent Signature of Participant**

                              _____
                              Print Name of Participant

E-mail Address of Participant: _____

APPENDIX B: Interview Protocols

Introduction

I would like to sincerely thank you for participation in this study. I see that it might not be easy to talk about these issues with anybody, especially with someone you do not know. I want you to know how much I appreciate your participation and your thoughts. I plan to use the information provided by you and other teachers to educate myself and other committed to teacher preparation experiences of beginning teachers within the context of test-based accountability. Hopefully this will enable us to become more aware about what we must do to ensure that the goals of teacher education program are met and be able to provide more meaningful sources of support to beginning teachers. Remember that everything you tell me will be kept confidential, which means that only I will be aware of your identity. I'm going to ask you several questions about yourself and your experiences as a beginning teacher. Please stop me at any point you have questions, or need me to clarify something.

Interview I: Participants' past lives before they were teachers
- Describe your life before joining a teacher education program.
- What kind of student and son or daughter were you? How was your life balanced between school and family? How were your relationships with your teachers, parents, brothers or sisters, and friends?
- What aspects, incidents, or events in your life influenced you to become a teacher? How did you end up becoming a teacher?
- How did you decide which program to enter? How was your life as a student teacher in the program? What courses, professors, or activities were meaningful to you? How was your experience student teaching? How were your relationships with professors, teachers, and other student teachers? Were there any challenges in your program? What was your life like outside of the program?
- What kind of teacher did you hope to become? Were you prepared to help students with test prep? What did you think your work would be like?

Interview II: Details of participants' present experiences
I want to thank you again for participation in this study and for being so generous with your time and availability. Before we move on, I would like to know whether you had any thoughts/feelings/reactions to our last interview. Is there any information that you might like to add to what you already told me?
For today's interview I would like to start by talking some about:
- How did you end up working in this school? What are the features of your school? Describe your student population and neighborhood area. Describe your typical day in school, from beginning to end.
- When, how, and where do you prepare for teaching? What source(s) do you consult

when preparing for teaching? What is your classroom teaching like? How do you start class? How do you lead the class? What kinds of assignments do you give students? How do you encourage student participation? How do students respond to your teaching?

- How do you prepare students for tests? What is your focus when you prepare students for tests? How do you plan and organize your instructions to prepare students for tests? What sources or materials do you use, and where do you find them? What importance does test preparation have on your job as a teacher? How much pressure do you feel regarding test preparation? How do students respond to your test preparation and tests? How much pressure do students feel? How do your students perform on tests? What do you feel about the test results? Do the results influence any aspect of your life as a teacher? Did you expect this kind of work before you became a teacher?
- How are your relationships with the principal, colleagues, and parents at school? How often, and to what extent, do you communicate with each? Do you receive any requests from them regarding test preparation? Do you collaborate with them regarding test preparation?
- What is your life like outside of work? What challenges do you experience as a beginning teacher? What are the happy moments in your life at school? What rewards do you receive from your work (besides money)?

Interview III: Participants making meaning of their experiences as beginning teachers
I want to thank you again for participation in this study and for being so generous with your time and availability. Before we move on, I would like to know whether you had any thoughts/feelings/reactions to our last interview. Is there any information that you might like to add to what you already told me?
For today's interview I would like to start by talking some about:
- How do you assess your transition from student teacher to beginning teacher? How do you perceive your performance as a teacher overall? How are your relationships with the principal, colleagues, parents, and students at school? Do you receive feedback from any of them? What do you think of their feedback?
- What do you think of test preparation as a part of your job? How do you think you manage test preparation? To what extent do you think test preparation is important to your job? Does test preparation have any influence on your perception of teaching? Do you think of teaching and test preparation as different types of work (is test preparation an add-on to your job)? What meaning do you think tests and test preparation have in your job as a teacher?
- What is it like for you being a beginning teacher in the United States/South Korea? Do you think your life as a beginning teacher would be different if you were in another country? Is teaching different from your perceptions before you were a

teacher?

- o What do you envision your future life as a teacher? Are you planning to stay on at your job? If not, why? Do you think test preparation will have any influence on your future life as a teacher? How will you manage test preparation in the future?

Closure of Interview Protocol

These are all the questions that I planned to ask you.   Is there anything else that I forgot to ask that you want to add?   What has the experience of talking about these issues been like for you?   How did you feel during the interview?   How are you feeling now?   Can you think of ways in which I can improve the interview?

Feel free to contact me anytime if you have any question or concern regarding this study. Thanks so much for your contribution.

APPENDIX C: An Example of Interview Summary (Jim's Second Interview)

- o Second year of teaching 7th grade
- o School context: A diverse school (racially and socioeconomically); suburban, lower-class middle school; about 50% White, 25% African, 25% Latino; large and growing group of ESL students; 75% reduced lunch; teachers are mostly white and female; have good collegial relationships
- o Lesson planning: Has flexibility in lesson planning; tries to incorporate iPad into lessons; strong focus on engaging lesson; refers to curriculum map, standards, and what 8th graders learn
- o Same lessons can change depending on student population (p. 5-6)
- o Lesson routine (p. 6): "guided lecture"; emphasis on engaging lessons
- o Has many different types of assessments throughout the academic year: MCAS, DDM
- o MCAS exam is integrated into teaching (p. 7-8): "disguised 100%" (p. 11)
- o How teaching to MCAS occurs (p. 12)
- o Good students tend to care more about MCAS scores
- o MCAS ties to teacher evaluation: student growth percentile (SGP; p. 9); takes up half of the evaluation
- o Self-pressure:
  - Feels pressure because he wants to prove his effectiveness, but not sure if the test is valid evidence
  - More nervous about MCAS this year than last year because he wants the scores to reflect his effectiveness since he now has more confidence in teaching
  - The pressure of teaching to the test comes from himself: he always wants to achieve well and generate strong evidence that supports his effectiveness
- o Views on testing/test prep:
  - Not quite opposed to the MCAS, but there are so many other tests and preparing for all of them is overwhelming (similar to Dana)
  - Thinks MCAS is unfair for ELLs (p. 12)
  - MCAS constrains teaching many other interesting things (p. 13)
  - Didn't expect test prep to be so important before he began to teach
  - Test prep requires specific skills and strategies from teachers (p. 17)
- o Gets rewards from students: concerned about motivating students; more engaged with students (p. 17-18)
- o Feels like he's doing better than last year: communicating with students and having more influence on them

APPENDIX D: Code Table I: Past Experiences

Code/Name	Jim	Dana	Chelsey	Alice	Yubin	Jieun	Somi	Minwoo
Category I: Family Backgrounds and Childhood Experiences								
Had supportive parents passionate about education	v		v	vv				
Had caring, supportive parents less concerned about education		v			v	v	v	v
Had an influential teacher		v	v			v	v	v
(K) Studied hard for college admission					v	v	v	v
(K) Had stressful high school life due to study pressure					v		v	v
Used to be a good student	v	v (behaviorally)	v	v (academically)	v	v	v	v
Had cultural conflicts/identity issues				v				
Naturally attracted to teaching	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Category II: Preservice Teacher Education (PTE)								
How to choose the subject/school level to teach	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
How to choose the preparation program	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
How PTE curriculum is organized	v		v	v	v	v	v	v
Difference between school and college mathematics			v	v			v	v

What I liked about PTE	v	v (English courses)	v	v	v	v	v	v
What I didn't like about PTE	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Influential learning from PTE			v	v	v			
What I learned from practicum	v	v	v		v			
Had positive practicum experience	v	(not much support)	v	v	v	v		v
(K) Problem of short practicum					v	v		
Comparing practicum and 1st year			v					
Had positive TPE experience	v		v	v	v			
(US) How ended up teaching at the current school	v	v	v	v				
(K) Preparing for the teacher recruitment exam (TRE)					v	v	v	v
(K) Learning from TRE preparation experience							v	
(K) Discrepancies between PTE and TRE					v	v		v
(K) Discrepancies between PTE/TRE and inservice teaching					v	v		v
Considered a different career path		v		v	v	v	v	
(K) worked in *hagwon*							v	

Wanted to teach the content well	v	v	v	v	Wanted to help students be happy	v	v	v
Was prepared in teaching content	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Felt the needs to know and teach the content well	v	v		v		v		v
(US) Wished to teach in a diverse school		v	v					

APPENDIX E: Code Table II: Experience on the Job I

Code/Name	Jim	Dana	Chelsey	Alice	Yubin	Jieun	Somi	Minwoo
Category III: Teaching to the Test (TTT)								
Lesson planning	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Had lesson routine and structure	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
(K) Tried different teaching strategies other than lecture					v	v		v
(US) Test-taking experience as a student	v	v	v					
(US) Test prep is integrated into lessons	vv	v	vv	v				
(US) How to prepare test prep lessons	v		v					
(US) How test prep is carried out	v	v	v	v				
(US) Preparing for other tests (etc. SAT, ACT...)		v	v	v				
(US) Had pressure to prepare students for MCAS	v	v	v	v				
(US) Comparing teaching between MCAS-tested and untested class		v	v					
(US) Comparing teaching to the	v		v					

test and regular teaching practice								
(US) Comparing pressure between tested and untested grades		v						
Comparing American and Korean education				v	v			
How students respond to teaching to the test	v		v		v	v		
Frustrated by teaching to the test	vv	v	vv	v	vv	vv	v	v
Perceptions on testing and teaching to the test	v	v	v	v (positive)	v	v	v	v
(US) Positive aspect of MCAS	v	v	v	v				
(US) Against to use test scores for teacher evaluation	v		v	v				
(US) Frustrated by teacher evaluation based on MCAS	v	v						
(US) How teacher evaluation should be		v	v	v				
Must do test prep not to fail my students	v		v	v	v	v	v	

APPENDIX F: Code Table III: Experience on the Job II

Code/Name	Jim	Dana	Chelsey	Alice	Yubin	Jieun	Somi	Minwoo
Category IV: Student-Centered Teaching (SCT)								
Importance of student engagement	v	v		v		v	v	
Importance of students experiencing the world/various perspectives		v						
Student impact on teachers	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
dealing with behavioral issues	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Teaching content is easier than dealing with students			v	v		v	v	
Teaching struggling students		v		v		v	v	
Felt the need to motivate students	v					v	v	v
Wants to do student-centered teaching	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
The meaning of student-centered teaching	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
How to manage/build relationships with students	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
The impact of family SES on student achievement		v				v	v	v

(K) Shadow education experience as a student				v	v	v		v
(K) problem of shadow education				v	v	v	v	v
(K) Comparing *hagwon* lessons to school							v	v
Comparing my backgrounds with students'	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	
Hope to be a role model for students		v	v					v
Hope to learn more about understanding students	v	v	v		v	v	v	v
(K) Importance of promoting student interest and happiness					v	v	v	

APPENDIX G: Code Table IV: Experience on the Job III

Code/Name	Jim	Dana	Chelsey	Alice	Yubin	Jieun	Somi	Minwoo
Category V: Teacher Learning								
More learning done on the job	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Importance of developing behavioral management skills	v	v	v	v				
What I would have done differently		v						
(US) Hope to teach in a diverse school		v	v					
Had difficulties at the beginning	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
(K) New teacher orientation was not helpful					v	v	v	v
Used to work overtime		v	v		v	v	v	v
(K) Too much administrative work					v	v	v	v
(US) Time management issue		v	v	v				
Had constraints, less autonomy in teaching	v		v	v	v	v		
Learning from experienced teachers			v		v	v	v	v
Managing relationship with parents		v	v			v	v	v

Managing collegial relationships	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Things to work on	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Wants to do better at teaching content		v		v				
Had high job satisfaction		v	v	v			v	